The Age of Reorganization

A Roma’s Life in Hungary

Report between 2002 and 2006

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Roma policy of the government – Ernő Kállai
It is not wise to base one’s views on anger or fear. This is something already the Romans were aware of. However, Hungary seems not to recognize this truth at the beginning of the 21st century. The dominant Hungarian society often regards the most numerous minority in Hungary with anger or fright. Not only extreme parties but also often members of the latest generations are suspicious of and have prejudices against the Roma crowds that are hit by unemployment, their birth rates other than that of the majority and the growth of their proportion within the society at large. A nation that is rather confused and full of resentment and complaints, when it comes to the Roma—just as in case of other social phenomena—it is not inclined to face the real context and phenomena (like deep poverty, ghettoization, devaluation of life and hopelessness). Our goal in this volume is to give up this attitude. The overview of the present and possible future of the Roma in Hungary indicates that regarding per capita monthly income 82% of the Roma in Hungary live under poverty level. It must be added, not voluntarily. It is a fact, forgotten by now, that 95% of the Roma men had a regular job or were employed and besides they received family allowance and health service. Considerable masses of Roma society started towards a consolidated lower middle-class life. The vague changes in welfare between 2002 and 2006 did not modify the structure of welfare distribution; in the first phase of the governing period they increased the welfare expenses instead. As it was published in our previous volumes, the income conditions of the Roma have been getting ever worse since the transition. In 2002 more than three fourth of them belonged to the lowest income fifth. Income related deep poverty, however, is closely related to exclusion from labour market.

Nevertheless, in the course of the period in question considerable efforts were taken in the fields of anti-discrimination legislation, integration pedagogy programmes, and new funding programmes.

Every considerable change is hindered by individual ministries that determine themselves what kind of programmes they want to implement in favour of the Roma, and how much they will spend on it. This situation did not allow the government to generate actual changes in the life situation of the Roma, focusing on essential issues.
Failed intentions appear throughout the period in question and a continuously changing system of institutions naturally goes with them.

Not surprisingly, disappointment has prevailed among the Roma. An important symptom of this is the emergence of a demand for individual politics (which has been rather unsuccessful up till now). Presumably, it is not far when the Roma will be an individual factor in political life of Hungary. And it might generate new fears and even stronger hate in the Hungarian society which is already in a rather poor mental state.

Törzsök Erika
AN OVERVIEW: THE ROMA’S PRESENT AND THEIR POSSIBLE FUTURE IN HUNGARY

The number of the Roma in proportion of the population at large

The number of the Roma was 320,000 in 1971, 470,000 in 1993, and 570,000–600,000 in March 2003. Currently, their number exceeds 600,000. A part of them immigrated in the country during the fifteen years between 1990 and 2005 from Transylvania and Slovakia. The number of the Roma population will be 700,000–750,000 in ten years’ time, by 2016, and 800,000–850,000 in twenty years’ time, by 2026.

The total population of the country was 10,352,000 in 1971, and 10,142,000 in 2003.

The proportion of the Roma population in comparison to the population at large was 3 percent in 1971, and 6 percent in 2003. In ten years’ time the this figure will be between 7.5 and 8, while in twenty years’ time somewhere between 8 and 9 percent. The number of births has been low in Hungary for a long time now. The number of children born per 1,000 inhabitants in Hungary was 14.5 in 1971, and 9.3 in 2003. The number of births among the Roma population has also been declining, though at a much slower pace. The number of children born per 1,000 Roma inhabitants was 32 in 1971, and 25 in 2003.

151,000 children were born in Hungary in 1971. Amongst them 7%—or 10,000—were Roma. In 2002, 95,000 children were born. Amongst them 16%—or 15,000 children—were Roma.

Geographical distribution and settlement segregation

The number of the Roma population is the highest in three Northern counties. One-third of the Roma live in Borsod, Heves and Nógrád. Their proportion is very high in comparison to the population at large of these three counties: 13% in Borsod, 16% in Heves, and 14% in Nógrád. This proportion will grow in the future. In twenty years’ time the Roma’s proportion will exceed 20% in all the three counties.
One fifth of the Roma live in three Eastern counties: in Békés, Hajdú and Szabolcs counties. Their proportion in comparison to the whole population of the counties is 11% in Békés, 7% in Szabolcs, and 6% in Hajdú. The proportion of the Roma is also high in Baranya, Somogy and Szolnok Counties: 7% in Baranya, 9% in Somogy, and 6% in Szolnok. The Roma’s proportion is the lowest in Komárom-Esztergom and Pest Counties.

The geographical distribution is coupled with segregation. The growing number of the Roma, the decreasing number of the non-Roma, and the growth in the proportion of the Roma is automatically followed by increasing segregation. Segregation is also increased by the ever growing differences of the settlements. Many settlements of the Northern and Eastern parts of the country, and those in most of the Lowland and Southern-Transdanubia have become declining settlements, whole towns and districts are now declining towns and districts. Other settlements, towns, and districts managed to avoid this fate. Marketable people and families left declining places, but poor people and the Roma stayed or moved in. Impoverishment of some people and enrichment of others had the same effect. Segregation will further increase in the next seven years.

The Roma and schooling

By March 2003 the eight grades of general school was completed by 82.5% of the 20-24 year-old youths. However, the eight grades completed were not of real value in each case. Most of the Roma children complete their studies in general school not at the age of 14-15 years but much later. The later they completed their general school studies, the less real knowledge lay behind.

For a long time, a very small number of Roma children was admitted to technical or secondary schools, and a large proportion of those enrolled eventually dropped out. Since 1997, however, the number of the Roma children enrolled at secondary schools has increased. 24.5% of Roma children completed the eight grades went on to study at secondary school. We do not know yet how many of this 24.5% will have maturity exam. In 2003 only 5% of the age group 20–24 had maturity exam. In twenty years’ time the proportion of those completing secondary school of the age group 20–24 will surely be around 20%. It is real possibility, as the proportion of families with regular income and living standard above poverty level is about 20%. These families under-
take the costs of education since it became evident in the 1990’s that completing the eight grades of elementary school is not enough to have a job.

Other than bad financial conditions are also in the way of Roma children’s achievements at school. Three years at nursery school is necessary for the children to do well at school. According to a survey in 2003 42% of age group 3–5 Roma children attended nursery school and 58% did not. Another barrier is the segregation of school age Roma children. A form of this among others is when Roma children are enrolled at special needs schools.

*The Roma at the Labour Market*

The number of the Roma between 15 and 74 years was 380,000 in 2003. 80,000 of them—21%—were employed. Also 21% of them were registered unemployed. The proportion of employed individuals is generally low in Hungary, and especially low amongst those with education of only eight grades of elementary school, and even lower amongst those with less education. The Roma share the fate of the people with low level of education but the proportion of employed persons is even lower than amongst non-Roma with the same level of education.

In the central and Western parts of Hungary the proportion of employment approached the European average, in Northern and Eastern counties, however, on the Lowland and South-Transdanubia it is much worse than the European average. Most of the Roma live in these regions but the proportion of employment amongst them is much worse than amongst the non-Roma inhabitants of these regions.

*Incomes*

The average monthly income per head in Roma families in January 2003 was HUF 20,900. The average monthly income per capita in Hungary as whole in 2001 was HUF 40,000, while in the autumn 2003 it was HUF 60,000. The Roma’s average per capita monthly income in January–February 2003 slightly exceeded the half of the national average per capita monthly income in 2001 and it was a bit more than the third of the national average per capita monthly income in the autumn 2003. The average per capita monthly income was less than HUF 15,000 in the 41.5% of the Roma families, between HUF 15,000 and 20,000 in 20% of the families, between
HUF 20,000 and 30,000 in 19.6% of the families and over HUF 30,000 in 19% of the families.

Out of the HUF 20,900 was regular income from work as much as HUF 8,800, and pensions, aids and supports amounted to HUF 12,100. In families where none of the adults had a regular job (in the 56% of the Roma families), the average per capita monthly income was HUF 14,900. In families where all adults were earning, the average per capita monthly income was almost HUF 40,000. In these families the average monthly incomes from work were HUF 33,083, and the pensions and supports amounted to HUF 6,470.

There is a great difference between Budapest and the villages. In Budapest the average per capita monthly income was HUF 33,000, while HUF 13,000 in the villages. The regional differences are slightly less but they are still rather great. In the three Eastern counties (Szabolcs, Hajdú and Békés) the average per capita monthly income was HUF 12,000, while in the industrial area of Budapest it was HUF 29,000. And as for the incomes from work, the average of them in the East was HUF 3,000, 11,000 in the West, and 18,000 in the industrial area of Budapest.

The national average in 2003 was HUF 59,767; that of the first decile was HUF 19,173, the second decile’s was HUF 29,589, the third’s was HUF 36,548, and the fourth’s was HUF 42,175. In 56% of the Roma households it stayed below the average income level of the first decile. Further 12% stayed below the average income level of the second decile, and 18.5% belonged into that group. 23% of Roma households exceeded the average income level of the third decile, but the average income level of the fourth decile was not reached even by those Roma households where all adults were earning.

Living conditions are more realistically characterized by the income per consumption unit. Throughout the studies on the Roma in 2003 we used OECD scale 2 when calculating the income per consumption unit: the first adult in the household counts as 1 unit, the next adults 0.7 each, and each child as 0.3 units. In our article we also use this scale. This way the average income per consumption unit in 2003 was HUF 36,200, incomes from work were 20,200, and pensions were 15,900.
Distribution of Roma households according to monthly income per capita and consumption unit, respectively

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income categories</th>
<th>Income per capita</th>
<th>Income per consumption unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HUF 0–14,999</td>
<td>41.5 %</td>
<td>10.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUF 15,000–19,999</td>
<td>20.2 %</td>
<td>10.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,000–29,999</td>
<td>19.5 %</td>
<td>28.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30,000–X</td>
<td>18.8 %</td>
<td>50.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
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</tbody>
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According to Household Panel Survey; (TÁRKI’s annual, cross-sectional survey) the monthly income per consumption unit in 2003 was HUF 81,800. It is known from an article by Janky Béla in Társadalmi Riport (Social Report) in 2004 that in the first decile the upper limit of the income level per consumption was HUF 37,600, that of the second decile was HUF 47,800, that of the third was HUF 54,600, that of the fourth was HUF 61,900, and that of the fifth was HUF 78,600; and 65% of the Roma belonged to the first decile, 15% of them to the second decile, 7% of them to the third decile, 3% to the fourth decile, 5% to the fifth and sixth decile, and 4% to upper deciles. According to Janky’s calculations, in Hungary 370,000 Roma belonged to the poorest million of the inhabitants in 2003, and two-third of the poorest 300,000 people were Roma.

In Europe nowadays the 50 or 60% of the average income is generally regarded the poverty limit income. According to András Gábos’ and Péter Szívós’ calculations the ratio of the poor was 15.9%, considering the 50% of the average as the limit; this ratio was 13.2%, when calculating with the income per consumption unit instead of income per capita. When the 50% of the average income is regarded as poverty limit income, three-fourth of the Roma belongs to the poor.

In Hungary a traditionally calculated data is the poverty limit. During the period of single-party state poverty limit had not been calculated for a long time, but in 1968

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and in 1984 restarted these kinds of calculations, and these data have been public since 1991. According to these calculations one third of the population, 3 million people live under the poverty limit. Taking into consideration the average monthly income per capita, 82% of the Roma live under the poverty limit.

Possible Changes

Any changes in the employment of the Roma may not be expected before the prevalence of the effects of completing secondary school by Roma youths; and not only from that point but in its ratio as well. As it said above, in 20 years’ time the proportion of those completing secondary school in the age-group 20–24 will increase to 20 percent. As a result, in 20 years’ time the ratio of the employed Roma population will increase from 21 percent to 33. The change will take place gradually, in a hardly perceptible way at the beginning. After 2014 another change will start, too. This change will be a dramatic fall in the number of work-age people. In 2004 the number of work-age people was 6,400,000. In 2025, as a result of the much earlier decrease in the number of births, it will be 700,000 less, 5,700,000. In 2004 the number of employed people was 3,900,000.

This number has slightly changed only for years now, and this trend will remain for the next few years. The number of employed people in proportion of the working age people was 62% in 2004. Assuming that the number of employed people will be 3,900,000 even in 2025, and the number of then working age people is known, 5,700,000 persons, the number of employed people in proportion of the working age people will increase from 62% to 68%. The decrease in the number of working age people will terminate unemployment and will create labour shortage. In consequence of this, the employment of Roma people will dramatically increase. As seen, the growing number of Roma youths completing secondary school will increase the number of employed Roma to an expected ratio of 33%. As a result of the fall in the number of working age people, this ratio will increase at least to 60%. As the proportion of the employed Roma will become the treble, their incomes will be substantially changed.

(István Kemény)
2002

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

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

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

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2 Based on the archives of the websites of Népszabadság, Romapage and Rom.net
the number of Roma students receiving scholarship has become thirteen times more in 2001. As he said, the way of the Roma to their rise leads through work and learning.

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

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

The Hungarian Roma Parliament asks the Roma to support MSZP, rather then Fidesz which is in a kind of league with the MIÉP, as in his opinion the socialists are ready to adjust their Roma policy to the Roma’s real problems. On the contrary Béla Osztojkán,
the vice president of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government thinks the governing parties made it clear that they are not willing to co-operate with István Csurka’s party.

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

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

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

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

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

The Prime Minister is counting on the minorities’ participation in preparation of laws as well as in the would-be National Council which is going to replace the second
chamber of Parliament. Péter Medgyessy promises, amongst others, to establish new institutions for the benefit of the minorities.

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

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

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

Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy will be the president of the Roma Coordination Council which is to be established in September. The Roma Coordination Council will take part in preparation and realization of the government’s strategy for Roma affairs as well as in harmonizing the activity of different ministries. The government has not decided about the composition of the board of 21 members yet, but it is taken for granted
that non-Roma experts will be involved in it: the Under-Secretary is counting on the participation of Antal Csongor, the director of Autonomy Foundation. Aladár Horváth, leader of the Roma Civil Rights’ Foundation, the councillor of Roma affairs to the Prime Minister will take part at the meetings, too. Of the Roma politicians, Flórián Farkas, chairman of the National Gypsy Self-Government and Lungo Drom and a Fidesz national assembly representative is expected to be a member of the Council. Recently, in a broadcast discussion Jenő Zsigó, the leader of the Roma Parliament sharply called a fatal failure the fact that the Socialist party nominated László Teleki, the (other day resigned) deputy chairman of the National Gypsy Self-Government as their representative and then as an under-secretary. Mr Zsigó thinks, that Mr Teleki, whom he qualified as of stone-age thinking and a kapo, has repressed the Roma in Hungary for eight years. In spite of this critical remark, the Under-Secretary would welcome the president of the Roma Parliament in the new co-ordination council.

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

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

Within the Ministry of Employment Policy and Labour a Directorate for Equal Opportunities has been established. At a press conference on Wednesday Péter Kiss minister introduced Katalin Lévai, the head of the new institution. The three secretariats of the Directorate will deal with employment rehabilitation, equal opportunities for men and women, and labour market programmes for the Roma.
None of the political forces may build its policy on hatred, since who arises hatred, that is doomed to failure, Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy said at a wreath ceremony for the memory of Roma holocaust in Nagykanizsa last evening. In front of the only memorial for the Roma holocaust, the Prime Minister said: Hungarian society has historical debt to the Roma. According to Medgyessy the Roma in Hungary suffered not only of Nazi genocide, but after 1945 of discriminating practice of the left wing authoritarianism also caused severe damages since the Roma were not officially recognized as an independent nationality for decades. The Prime Minister said, the Roma population is the main loser of the transition therefore the new cabinet has to improve the Roma’s situation urgently. Amongst the first steps the Prime Minister mentioned the establishment of the Under-Secretariat for Roma Affairs, the appointment of commissioners dealing with Roma affairs in six ministries, and the increase in the budget funds for Roma children’s education by forty percent.

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

On Thursday an electoral coalition was established by the Forum of Gypsy Organizations of Hungary, the Democratic Roma Organization, the National Association of Roma Organizations, Roma Civil Rights’ Foundation, the National
Association of Roma Intellectuals, the Integration Roma League, the Association of Roma Women of Public Life, and the New Roma Round-Table. According to their cooperating agreement the main goal of their coalition is “to replace Lungo Drom led by Flórián Farkas, and reformation and democratic re-structuring of the National Gypsy Self-Government”.

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

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

The parents, who had enrolled their children at Mihály Antal Foundation School, blocked the main road leading from Jászladány to Jászkísér with almost eighty cars, trucks, tractors, and motorbikes. This week this has been the second movement of the parents, who are protesting because the Administrative Office of Szolnok County, referring to the infractions of the law when establishing the institution, withdrew the school’s licence to operate. As it is well known, according to the local Gypsy self-government the private school is discriminating as the poor and mainly Roma families cannot afford the monthly tuition fee. The Ministry of Education and the ombudsman took a similar standpoint.
As many as fifty Roma have been forced to live in tents in Paks for two weeks now, since the local authority demolished their houses as being life-threatening buildings. The seven homeless families are trying to buy houses in the nearby villages, but each settlement refuses that the Roma move in therefore the owners of the chosen properties usually call off the bargain. It is to be feared that the Roma camping near Paks cannot find flats for themselves before the beginning of the winter.

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

As it is clear from the account of the mayor, the notary of Paks, the head of the county administrative office, and Aladár Horváth, the chairman of the Roma Civil Rights’ Foundation were also present at the house, and they thought that the family from Bedőtanya should not move in here, as it were dangerous for them. They warned the family, already on their way, to turn back. The family did so, and the police, thinking that the danger was over, left Németkér. After eight on the Thursday evening several hundred people from the village invaded in the estate sold, and they began to destruct the house.
When the police arrived, the roof tiles were missing in patches of several square metres, and no windows or doors remained intact. The building attacked became temporarily unfit for use. Yesterday the police attempted to record the extent of demolition. It is evident now, that on the basis of the footprints in the dust it cannot be determine who had participated in the destruction, and, therefore, who committed criminal offence. The detectives cannot count on the help of the local inhabitants either.

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

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

In line with the electoral law anyone may be a candidate of a minority provided he or she undertakes to represent that minority. That is how in Jászladány Mrs Gabriella Makai Dankó the local mayor’s wife, Mrs Gellért Nagy, the vice president of the foundation running the ill-famed private school, János Balogh, the official in charge for constructions at the self-government, and Árpád Tolvaj, local electrician stood for election and won as representatives of the Roma, although none of them are of Roma origin. The only representative of Roma origin is Mrs Rita Suki Banya who is regarded now a traitor by many of the Roma in Jászladány.
With the leadership of Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy the Council for Roma Affairs is to be established this week, László Teleki, the Under-Secretary of State for Roma Affairs announced in Budapest on Monday. In accordance with the government decision Elemér Kiss, the leader of the Prime Minister’s Office will be the new chairman of the Interministerial Committee for Gypsy Affairs, and his deputy chairman will be Mr Teleki. Earlier, the Under-Secretary of State suggested the appointment of six Roma commissioners into different ministries. The government theoretically supports the suggestion, but in its recent decision the government did not define the ministries where the posts of these commissioners should be created.

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

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

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Forty to fifty Roma families are returning to Hungary from Canada every month. They are people who emigrated there over the past five years but have failed to secure refugee status or residence rights. Some statistics indicate that at least 5,000 Hungarian
citizens applied to the Canadian authorities for refugee status, about 300 of whom were able to satisfy the agencies considering their cases. The Canadians declared the remainder economic migrants and returned them to their country of origin. Some time ago the Hungarian authorities undertook to give returnees the possible assistance.

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

Candidates for the Democratic Roma Coalition (DRC) obtained 52 of the 53 seats on the newly elected National Gypsy Minority Self-Government in voting at the 11th January electoral assembly as, with a single exception, only individuals representing this organization appeared on voting papers. Apart from DRC candidates, only Elemér
Farkas, who was sponsored by the Democratic Alliance of Hungarian Gypsies, gained a seat in the self-government. At the assembly, with some 2,700 electors registering their attendance, a total of 1,347 individuals actually voted at the ballot boxes late on Saturday night. Lungo Drom did not participate in the voting; its supporters had previously left the hall to travel home because the protests that the party had lodged with the national Electoral Commission (NEC) over the assembly were rejected as unfounded. The highest number of votes was received by the NGMS’s previously serving deputy chairman, Miklós Pálfi, whilst among the DRC candidates for chairmanship Vilmos Kövesi came in third and Aladár Horváth in 26th place. At a press conference early on the Sunday morning, after the declaration of results, Aladár Horváth promised a democratic system instead of the ‘despotic’ one-party system and personality cult that had characterised the NGMS hitherto, laying emphasis on the importance of humanity in the ‘Roma transition’ that was now being ushered in. Vilmos Kövesi stated that the new NGMS would be working in close partnership with the current national government to further the interests of Hungary’s Roma population.

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

The elimination of segregation and the Roma populations’ integration into the dominant society is regarded as its principle by the Democratic Roma Coalition. In case of its victory the Coalition, gearing up for the March elections to the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government, would reconstruct one third of the existing Roma shanty settlements within the next three years. “Experts have now worked out what needs to be done to close up the gap for the Roma population; all that has to be done is to start to implement it,” announced Aladár Horváth, one of the three leaders of DRC. The grouping intends to enter the March 1st election without declaring a candidate for the
chairmanship. In reference to ideas about the provision of habitable housing, Orbán Kolompár noted that so far, of the HUF 300 million earmarked by the NGMS under Flórián Farkas’s leadership for its construction programme, only 48 million had been spent. Mr Kolompár feels sure that this amount could be multiplied threefold from EU sources. He also spoke about demolishing the 460 Roma ghettos in Hungary currently providing dwellings for almost 100,000 people. As he expressed: “The houses in the shanty settlements have to be bulldozed and homes fit for human beings constructed in their place,” As to implementing the item on slum clearance in the medium-term government programme that was accepted six years ago, no government has, as yet, accepted so much as a single draft decree. According to a briefing given by Aladár Horváth, the Prime Ministere’s advisor on Gypsy affairs, the DRC wants to reach agreement with the government on the technical aspects of the plans so that at the very least one third of existing slum housing are cleared within three years. The alliance would like to set up a network of Roma social assistants who would maintain contacts with local schools, the local minority self-government and social institutions. Mr Horváth considers that a consolidation programme is needed to support families that have been caught in tax trap. He declared that if the Coalition wins, the new NGMS would step in with all available means to fight segregation of Roma children at school.

The poverty index of Hungary’s Roma population is the treble that for the country as a whole, while the support provided to them by self-government is quadruple. Thus, Roma are employed somewhat more on public work projects, though such jobs are rather looked down by the society at large. These are among the findings of a survey commissioned by the national Association of Local Self-Governments from the Social Research Institution Rt. According to the survey, the Roma tend to live in greatest deprivation in settlements where their numbers are relatively small. Examining social inequalities the research found that in settlements where the Roma form under 2 per cent of the population the chances that Roma children will attend a school in another village or town fall to one half that for the population as a whole. With higher ratios the chances of attending a school in a more distant district do grow, but this never attains the average mobility; or put it in another way, Roma children are always relatively at a disadvantage as compared with their non-Roma contemporaries when it
comes to entering the school of their parents’ choice. The survey shows that such
inequalities are not affected by the size of the settlement in question.

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

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

Radio C, the only radio station in the world that is broadcasting to a Roma audi-
ence round-a-clock, is facing serious financial difficulties. László Teleki, Under-
Secretary of State for Roma Affairs, has revealed that György Kerényi, Radio C’s head
of programming, recently put in a request to his office for a HUF 30 million grant
package. Teleki has offered Radio C HUF 6 million from the discretionary budget
available to him, and he will be seeking to make up the remainder of the total from
other government sources. Aladár Horváth has announced that the National Gypsy
Minority Self-Government will launch a collection to assist the station. The HUF 30
million will only provide a temporary respite. In a press release altogether HUF 70
million to pay off is accumulated debts and still remain on air for the rest of the year.
One in ten Roma youngsters do not complete their elementary education—that is one of the findings of a survey carried out by Delphoi Consulting, an advisory and research firm, under the guidance of psychologist Ferenc Babusik. According to the study, 97% of non-Roma children complete their elementary schooling by the age of 15, whilst for Roma children the ratio is just 70-75%. There is also a substantial difference between Roma and non-Roma youngsters in regard to further education. More than three quarter of Roma children who complete their elementary education go on to a trade school which offer little in the way of useful qualifications, whilst only 15% enrol in a vocational middle school, and fewer than 7% continue studies in grammar school. For non-Roma pupils, some 47% go to trade school, and almost one in five—18.5%—wins entry to grammar school. The summary of the results of the study takes the view that nowadays gaining vocational qualification without passing the regular secondary school diploma leaves people a short step away from finding themselves unemployable.

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

In Hungary the average level of registered unemployment is 6%, but among the Roma minority it can run as high as 60%. This year Ministry of Employment Policy and Labour has allocated HUF 10 billion to programmes aimed at helping
those in the Roma minority into work, said Gábor Csizmár, under-secretary of state at the ministry.

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

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

According to a recently published survey, 15 percent of Roma respondents who were questioned in five Central and Eastern European countries admitted to being more or permanently hungry. A sizeable generation of the Roma is now growing up whose members often go without sufficient food, are in poor health, attend inappropriate schools and as a result are likely to find they have relatively few opportunities on the job market.
Aladár Horváth was relieved of his post as chairman of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government at an extraordinary meeting for the re-election of officials held by the body on Wednesday. The majority of representatives who sit in the body were present and they unanimously chose Orbán Kolompár, hitherto the NGMS’s executive chairman, as their new leader. Mr Kolompár asked Mr Horváth to continue to cooperate, promising that there would be mudslinging within the NGMS. Mr Horváth, who lost the body’s confidence, because—among other things—he was seen as a divisive figure, described as irregular the fact that the extraordinary meeting had been called, and he anticipated that legal consequences were likely to follow.

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

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

One week before children go back to school, it is still impossible to learn exactly how many of them will be attending the Mihály Antal Foundation School in Jászládány and how many will remain at the local self-government elementary school. Anna Berkes, director of the latter, stated that it will only become clear on 1st September, the
day the new school year commences, how many pupils will have transferred to the pri-
ivate school. Ibolya Tóth, headmistress of the foundation school, earlier indicated that
two hundred and four children had applied for admission to classes there. It may be
recalled that the foundation school began the school year at this time in 2002 but was
forced to close its doors on 2nd September due to its failure to obtain the Ministry of
Education identification number that is needed to operate. This year, however, the min-
istry has issued a number to the school, thus allowing it to announce that it would be
opening from the start of the academic year of 2003-4. A meeting that was held to pro-
mote enrolment provoked scandalous scenes when the headmistress refused to accept
letters of intent from a number of Roma parents. Ms Tóth claimed that in the cases of
seven children who had sought admission late in the day the school would only be able
to enrol them by setting up an eleventh class, instead of ten classes, on which earlier
plans were based. The foundation that finances the private school’s operations, howev-
er, did not have enough money for that, the headmistress said.

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

At its session on Tuesday, by unanimous decision, the National Assembly’s
Committee for Human Rights, Minorities and Religious Affairs agreed in principle
to set up a parliamentary committee to look into the matter of compensating Roma
individuals who were persecuted in Hungary during the Holocaust. With the
Committee giving over the meeting agenda—at the original suggestion of the Roma
Civic Grouping (RCG)—to informing itself about the situation with regard to com-
pensation, the motion was put to the committee by Flórián Farkas (Fidesz). In line
with the decision, the proposer of the motion will submit a detailed motion within the next two weeks. At the meeting, István Makai, the RCG’s chairman, explained that, despite the good intentions of the German, Austrian and Swiss governments who were funding the programme, the compensation process was a labyrinthine and lacked transparency. As he himself put it, although for Hungarian Romas subject is ‘the most momentous issue of the post-transition period,’ it nevertheless remains ‘a big black hole’ for them.

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

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

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

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

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

Social scientists at the Szolnok-based Lowlands Scientific Institute, which is an affiliate to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences’ Centre for Rgeional Research, have produced an analysis of the reasons for conflicts between Roma population, and non-Roma population, and possibilities of alleviating them, in the three northern Lowlands towns of Jászladány, Mikepércs and Nagyhalász. According to the survey, the majority of those questioned in Jászladány agreed with the proposition “Every Roma has a right to be taught in the same school classes as non-Romas.” In contradiction to that, though, are other findings which demonstrate that the driving forces of prejudice lie
not far below the surface, with most people seeing conflict in community as having an ethnic colouring. Jászladány’s inhabitants consider that this could be reduced through a joint effort by local self-government and the state, and they would even see the county self-government as having major role in reconciliation efforts. Prejudice against Roma minority groups in Jászladány is strong, though it does differ significantly in degree from that found nationally. For those questioned, all other ethnic groups were preferred to the Roma on a so-called ‘sympathy scale’, and only groups that are ‘stigmatised’ on account of their lifestyle—alcoholics, drug addicts, skinheads—scored worse. In accordance with this, for instance, the majority of the non-Roma would not want to work in the same workplace, or live in the same street as the Roma.

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

2004

Judit Berki, the ex-leader of the Office for Roma Affairs, whose department was removed from the Office of the Prime Minister and placed under the Governmental Department for Equal Opportunities, did not accept the leadership of the new office,
the Directorate for Roma Affairs, which was offered to her. “In this new body within a new structure, I do not think that I would have a chance to represent the Roma affairs in the long run,” she commented her decision.

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

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

The Act on Equal Opportunities has come to effect this year but the administrative office, which is to take measures in line with the new Act, will be set up only next year. A penalty up to HUF 6 million may be imposed on the law breaker if the complaint is judged to be founded. The money is not awarded to the person who suffered discrimination on account of his or her sex, ethnicity, race, religion, age, sexual orientation, or
political affiliation. He or she is rehabilitated, while the amount of the penalty is spent on the implementation of the equal opportunities programme. In case of discrimination, individuals as well as civil organizations are entitled to commence proceedings.

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

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

István Hiller, the Minister of Culture appointed Katalin Kállai as a commissioner for Roma affairs. She is responsible for maintaining communication with organizations rep-
resenting the interests of the Roma, with Roma self-governments and other government- 
tal organizations. Her further duties include representing the Ministry in the preparatory 
processes for government decisions concerning Roma issues and to coordinate different 
Roma related tasks within the competence of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage.

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

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

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

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

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

Roma Intellectual Resource Centre should be established in Heves County in order that the county is able to submit tenders for support from financial sources for catch-up programmes. That was said at a meeting for Roma leaders of Heves County with the participation of László Teleki, the Under-Secretary of State for Roma Affairs.
At the meeting several questions were asked about when funds for the abolition of Roma slum colonies would be available, when certain Roma self-governments might obtain computers, what could be done in order that Roma workers were employed legally in the fields of agriculture, and how subsidies were available for children’s schooling. László Teleki informed the participants that for the purposes of abolishing the Roma colonies, the Government Office for Equal Opportunities had applied to the European Development Bank for loan. In order to obtain the sum of HUF 10.5 billion, the government’s guarantee and government decision are needed. The decision should include which settlements’ Roma colonies will be demolished by the end of 2006 and at what pace. Hungary has passed the first phase of the competition. According to László Teleki the five operative programmes of the National Development Plan provide almost unlimited financial opportunities for the Roma.

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

The Supreme Court awarded HUF 100,000 per person as indemnity to six Roma families from Zámoly that were granted asylum in France. According to the binding
judgement seven years ago the local authority had the families’ houses illegally demol-
ished as the families had no opportunity to appeal against the decision on demolition.

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

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

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

Less than expected, as many as eighty people were present outside the Police
Headquarters of Kecskemét to commemorate Richárd Jakab, a 19-year-old Roma
youngster who died while subjected to police measures. The vigil in candlelight,
organized by the Roma Foundation for Civil Rights and the Roma minority self-gov-
ernment of Kecskemét, was interrupted by an incident. A middle-aged man appeared
on the spot carrying placards with inscriptions like: ‘We are fed up with hysteria’ or
‘The defender of the order deserves praise’. The participants of the demonstration
attempted to send the man away but then, as failed to obey, it came to blows. The plac-
ards were taken away from the man and torn into pieces. The man, who was allegedly a private person from Budapest, ran across the street but a few minutes later three women, with the victim’s mother among them, followed him and got him down. They were whacking and kicking him and broke his glasses; the man suffered minor injuries in his face. The man—who was freed by some civilians and journalists—left by car. Aladár Horváth, the chairman of the Roma Civil Rights’ Foundation who was on the spot said that the Roma present there thought the incident to have been deliberate provocation and also felt humiliated in their mourning. In connection with the case of Richárd Jakab he added: “We are aware of the fact that everybody is bound by law, nevertheless, the execution of it does not normally lead to death.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The National Gypsy Minority Self-Government wants to launch the first national Roma radio channel; it was announced by the chairman of the NGMS after a talk with the leader of the media authority. György Kovács, the head of ORTT stated, as far as he knew there was no free frequency available. “By the end of November the concep-
tion should be worked out,” said Orbán Kolompár adding they would negotiate about financing no sooner than the conception is ready.

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

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

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

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

Discrimination against the Roma is widespread in the European Union, not only in the ten members newly accessed in May; this emerges from a report carried out by
the European Centre for scrutinizing the phenomena of racism and xenophobia. The report observes that for many people the accession of the Central and Eastern European countries was the first occasion to face with the problems of the Roma, the Sinti or the ‘travellers’. Although cases of discrimination were not unprecedented in many of the former 15 member countries but the public attention was rarely drawn to them. The report published in Vienna pointed out that the European Roma population of some 8 million suffered discrimination in employment, obtaining flats, and education. Most of them lived in poverty and did not access to education, work and public services, and many of them are stuck on the periphery of the society.

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

2005

2004 was undoubtedly the year of constructions: one of the greatest achievements is that the government set aside funds for abolition of the Roma slum housing, said László Teleki, the Under-Secretary of State in the Ministry for Youth, Family and Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities. His statement referred to the fact that the budget for 2005 accepted the other day includes a HUF 800 million item necessary for launching the programme to demolish the colonies. According to Mr Teleki there
is no reason for being satisfied with the situation of the Roma but it is an outstanding fact that in the year of 2004 the Public Foundation for Roma in Hungary was able to spend almost HUF 1 billion for the incitement of Roma pupils and students with good achievements. He mentioned as another achievement that employees of Roma origin work for several ministries and public offices. Commissioners of Roma affairs and further four raporteurs of Roma affairs work on the implementation of programmes providing opportunities. The under-secretary of state thinks that the efforts taken in the fields of education and employment will gradually have their results in the next five or ten years.

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

At the end of the year it is important to speak out straight that there has been no change in the quality of the Roma’s situation, stated Tamás Csík, the chairman of the MSZP’s national Roma division. He thinks that the construction should have already been completed long ago, and real results should have been achieved. On the contrary, as the Roma politician of the larger government party says, the government’s measures were rather superficial. Mr Csík forecasts for 2005 that it will be the year of the truth: Roma people will realize that nothing has happened for their benefit during the last fifteen years. He urged the Roma leaders, both on the left and the right wing, with whose participation nothing had happened to draw the conclusion and get out of the way of professionals and those who are ready to take the necessary steps.
Police believe a fraud of HUF 50 million has been committed in connection with the competition conducted by the Ministry of Education for Roma youths. The investigation found 300 students to have attempted to receive money illegally. The recommendations required to the scholarship are affixed with the official seal of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government. During house searches Police arrested, among others, 292 receipts for registered letter addressed to the Public Foundation for Roma in Hungary with the addresses of those receiving scholarship, and 50 sheets of paper with the official seal of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government in its right corner and with signature of György L. who is one of those who pass judgement about the scholarships. György L. told the Police that a man had visited him from the Students’ Self-Government at University of Szeged, introducing himself as Ferenc Nagy. The man brought several hundred applications with recommendations. György L. signed all of them without checking. In connection with the sheets of paper with an official seal and a signature or a signature only he said that the signatures on them were not of his, the official seal must have been affixed on them while he was away from his room. During the investigation a graphologist will scrutinize the signatures.

Hungary is the co-organizer of the Decade of Roma Inclusion. The program officially will launch in Bulgaria on 2nd February. Its four main fields cover housing affairs, health situation, the problems of education, and employment conditions, said Kinga Göncz, Minister of Youth, Family and Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities on a meeting on Friday held with the participation of the leaders of national Roma and civil organizations. At the event László Teleki Under-Secretary of State for Roma Affairs explained that the restructuring of the work on Roma affairs within the government had been begun. The meeting was held with the participation of eighty guests from the 19 counties and Budapest. Kinga Göncz emphasized the importance of the fact that together with the Roma in Hungary 8-9 million Roma from other counties have accessed to the European Union, consequently, the government has to handle the Roma integration and the connecting tasks as priorities. The minister mentioned also as an issue of importance the expected amendment of the Minority Act as a result of which the conditions of the minority self-governments may considerably change. She called a significant measure the establishment of the Office for Equal Treatment which
was required by the act on antidiscrimination. The office is being formed and it is expected to commence its operation in a few weeks’ time. According to László Teleki these programmes should put a stress on sports and culture “through which the discrimination against the Roma could be further reduced.”

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

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

In the next few weeks the changes in the management of the MSZP’s Roma division, for which two socialist politicians left the party, will become obvious, said the president of MSZP. István Hiller also pointed out that “MSZP’s Roma policy did not reach the Roma themselves.” To the question to whom it reached he answered: “it took form of documents therefore it was hypocritical.” According to the politician reason for the recent withdrawals is that not everyone can agree with “what has happened in
connection with Roma policy behind the scenes in the Socialist Party during the last
two months.” He said MSZP’s management trusted Katalin Kállai who was in charge
of Roma affairs in the body.

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

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

“There are and there have been some problems we have to face when shaping and
implementing the Roma politics of the government because the situation of the Roma
often do not improve to the extent we would like in spite of the government efforts,”
states Andor Ürmös in his account to the employment subcommittee of the
Parliament’s employment and labour committee. He added: the mid-range government
programme for the integration of the Roma helped with this, too. According to Andor
Ürmös further elaboration and reconsideration of the programme is needed. As for the
operation of the Interministerial Committee for Gypsy Affairs Mr Ürmös said the min-
istries’ activity in the committee was still not sufficient.
A security company was fined for HUF 500,000 as they are not willing to employ Roma people. This is first time that someone is sentenced in line with the act on equal opportunities.

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

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

Out of the forty settlements invited to the programme for the clearance of Roma colonies only nine bidders were awarded support by the Ministry of Youth, Family and Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. To the tender such settlements were invited on the territory of which there are colonies and the inhabitants of which live both socially and geographically separated. 17 settlements bade in the second round these settlements “aimed at a solution of the problems of those living at the Roma colonies via elaborating the housing and social issues in a complex way.” The following settlement
will take their share of the HUF 680 million support: Dencsháza, Hencida, Galambok, Kerecsend, Kisvaszar, Szentgál, Táska, Tiszabó, Uszka.

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

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

The candidate to the body of minority representatives who received the largest number of votes at the minority elections cannot obtain his seat; this is the decision made by the Constitutional Court yesterday. According to the board the related paragraph of the Minority Act, which has already been passed though not promulgated, violates the principle of direct and equal suffrage. Therefore Constitutional Court cancelled this paragraph.
The Foundation of Chance for Disadvantaged Children has proceeded against the city of Miskolc since they think in several general schools of the city Roma children are segregated. According to the foundation the segregation is created in schools after unification of institutions, one attended mostly by Roma children and one mostly attended by non-Roma children from better background. Although the catchment areas were unified the facilities of the schools and the ratio of Roma and non-Roma pupils remained. According to the self-government of Miskolc the unification was the first step of Roma integration and their pedagogical programmes will promote further catching up. They previously said that the foundation had proceeded against the municipality without having been informed about the local conditions.

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

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

At a press conference László Teleki, the Under-Secretary of State for Roma Affairs accounted about the Roma related programmes launched by the government during the last three years. Of the measures for the purpose of Roma integration Mr Teleki emphasized that for two years now in the nursery schools meals are granted for free to those in need. Thanks to this measure, the number of three-year-old Roma children attending nursery school has increased with the third of the earlier number.
According to the under-secretary of state the number of Roma students and pupils who receive scholarship has increased from 10 thousand to 23 thousand in the last three years and none of the bidders were rejected referring to lack of resources. The clearance of Roma colonies started this year is to be continued next year: HUF 400 million is set aside from the budget and further HUF 1 billion is awarded by Council of Europe Development Bank for the programme. Flórián Farkas, a Fidesz national assembly representative said: “László Teleki was boasting of the Medgyessy-Gyurcsány government’s Roma policy again. It made it clear again that the government of the luxurious left is insensible to the more than half a million Roma living in poverty. In the representative’s view, the previous government created the opportunity for Roma youths for studies in higher education. The socialist-liberal government, however, let the Roma youths down as they did not pay their scholarship needed to their studies. “The government wants to fill the gaps of the budget through forcing poor Roma families to credit the scholarship to the government,” he wrote in a communiqué today.

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

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

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

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

Orbán Kolompár the chairman of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government asked the presidents of the parties and the leaders of the parliamentary factions to make a decision about the advantageous seats of the minorities in an extraordinary session. They suggested that the text of the Act on Self-Governments in force before November 2005—which made it possible to obtain a seat receiving one fourth of the otherwise necessary votes—should be reinserted in the text of the current act; they also suggested that the draft amendment submitted by Flórián Farkas and László Teleki—according to which the candidates of minorities could obtain a seat at the municipal elections if they received the half of the average votes received plus one—should not
be supported. In accordance with an earlier decision by the Constitutional Court the parliamentary representation of the minorities should be granted by law; however the Parliament has failed to pass such an act so far therefore it has been committing constitutional default for fourteen years now. “The National Gypsy Minority Self-Government is really sorry because the parliamentary parties do not feel their responsibility in connection with the issue of the minorities’ representation. So we ask the Constitution Court that the Parliament may pass make the necessary regulation before the municipal elections in autumn” said the spokesman of the national self-government. Lungo Drom accuses the MSZP with sabotage; a bill that would have provided advantageous seats to the minorities at the municipal elections was submitted but MSZP did not put it on the agenda before 13th February, and eventually, on the last day of the plenary sessions MSZP, referring to some fallacious pretence, made it impossible to pass it.

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

According to the plans of the Ministry of Education by 2008 there will be no segregated schools. Although in consequence of the steps towards creating equal opportunities in education the segregation within education has lessened to a certain extent, the differences in opportunities and indices of segregation are still dramatic. It emerges from the data of the Ministry of Education that of the Roma children attending general school, who are amounting to 11-15 percent of the total school-age population (as many as 100-138,000 pupils), at least 28,000 are learning in classes of Roma majority, and in 73 percent of homogenous Roma classes in general schools with normal curricula the pupils are taught according to simplified (catching-up or remedial) curricula. It is rather problematic that schools admitting disadvantaged children in large num-
ber operate with staff and facilities worse than the average. In spite of the aggravation by law almost fifth of general school age Roma children attend remedial, special needs school or remedial class (in case of non-Roma children this proportion is 2 percent); whilst in Hungary the index for identifying children as special needs is more than double as the average in the EU.

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

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

*(Ernő Kállai)*
THE ROMA ONCE AND NOW

In 2003 István Kemény found that vast majority (72%) of the Roma families lived segregated: 42% of them live on the edge of settlements 2% at some distant from settlements, 6% in Roma colonies, and although 22% live within the boundaries of settlements, but they are surrounded predominantly or exclusively by other Roma families. The history of the Hungarian administrations’ Roma policies in the decades after the World War II (and more or less during the 16 years after the transition) consisted of plans and measures aiming at the improvement of the Roma people’s housing conditions, programmes for the clearance of Roma colonies, or with more modern terms: settlement integration projects.3 During the last 60 years considerable amounts of money from the state budget were expended, great efforts were taken, and the only result is that the housing conditions of the Roma are slightly better but in comparison with the housing conditions of the dominant society they are still as far from those and almost as much segregated as the once were.

The situation of settlement is only one feature of the life situation, nevertheless it is perhaps the most important one as being fundamentals determining other opportunities for success as schooling, living opportunities, connections, health and welfare services; therefore it is an obvious phenomenon of social inequalities for an observer, and for those living in it an everyday experience of exclusion, being the ‘other’ and impossibility of accession to socially recognized goods.

The historical past

About the beginning of the history of the Roma in Hungary we have only scattered sources. The West, though initially accepted them with some curiosity, soon cut itself from the Roma, therefore the wanderers coming from the South and South-East stuck at the neighbouring territories. The mobile Roma groups appear in the settlement units of a mostly rural, partly warrior society offering their metallurgic, entertaining, trading and other additional services. We have no clear picture about the way of life of

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3 Nowadays the modern plans include further—education and employment—elements as well even though the emphasis does still fall on settlement/housing situation.
these wanderers but it is for sure that wandering is not the same as aimless rambling. The wandering life has its own regulations which are basically determined by living and the connections with the settled-down society (within which there might be binding customs and traditions referring to the order of wandering and movement). Some kind of planning is required even in order that different groups do not disturb each other and their movement is harmonized. It is another type of movement when a group is forced to leave its usual territory and in search of a new territory of living it has to intrude mostly or completely unknown territories and find out the conditions and customs of that place, look for and establish new connections, learn the country and seek for camp sites fit for longer stay.

We can read about tents and huts. Huts are never built for a one-night but for longer stay. (Huts and tents are used even during the period of settling down; as there are evidences to it from Hungarian prehistory.) Presumably, they visited the neighbouring settlements from such temporary colonies offering their services. Another pattern is also possible according to which they are mobile from spring to autumn and for winter they build more protective accommodations.

Near military centres larger permanent settlements (in the sources: ‘Gypsy towns’) were also established quite early. It does not necessarily means a large number of families settled down rather fluctuating Roma groups that met permanent public needs. The question is whether there is any continuity between these military settlements and those living there later.

The early period of settling down is rather uncertain. It is not known whether Roma groups moving on a larger territory how kept contact, how they harmonized their activity and movements, and what kind of community consciousness held them together. Who might have been the first to quit who settled down? The answer to the question with a touch of romantic sentiment is as follows: the members expelled, or excommunicated on account of some crime could have settled down in the neighbourhood of the Hungarian people. There must have been examples of such cases; nevertheless, rather than the expelled ones, the first people to quit might have been families of gifted people, prone to undertake, good at establishing connections, furthermore, presumably members of not only one but several related families. The peasant communities needed metallurgists clever with their hands who carried out minor
repairs. The first to settle down might have been people who were able to do blacksmithing and metal-working. Their speciality was the mobile workshop where they could do work the blacksmith of the village could not.

The hierarchy of the Roma at the time is not known. It can be seen that Roma people at urban settlements did jobs that are rather looked down (Hungarian inhabitants did not undertake such jobs: cleaning of cesspits, ditching, dogcatching, and assistance to executioners). These groups settled down outside the town walls. However, it is not clear to what extent they had connections with the groups of metallurgist, the later musicians, and the woodworkers, who appeared sporadically quite early, or if they were identical with them.

What can be taken for granted is that at early times, in the 16th and 17th centuries a slow and natural process of settling down began. The first groups of different size appear on the edge of villages, outside the town walls, later on sporadically some families and smaller groups got with settlements. Alongside this process, however, there were groups still wandering or partly settled down whose number was permanently growing as new Roma groups arrived from abroad.

The centralizing state of the 18th century wanted to make order and aimed at complete assimilation of the Roma. It took the point of view that the way the Roma were living was good for neither their neighbours nor the Roma themselves; therefore, if necessary, they should be forced onto the right way. The will underlying these texts is rather obvious: they wanted to keep away the Roma from the hereditary provinces, while through conversion of the Roma people they also wanted to strengthen Catholicism (any growth in the number of the Church led to extra funds for the clergy).

This period of four decades, which can be regarded—putting it in an up-to-date way—as an action or set of actions in order to settle the Roma down and demolish their colonies, which took for rather long time. These measures provoke very similar questions as the later ones:

*The Roma are treated as homogenous population.* The Roma population of that time had an inner division, they had arrived at different times, from different directions, even the way they joined in the local division of labour was not the same. Their partly settled down— provisionally mobile—way of life and wandering way of life searching for their place took various forms. Neither do measures of nowadays take
into consideration the division of the 20th century Roma population, its historic groups, or the inner hierarchy of the people living together.

Houses of the Roma should be built scattered among those of the Hungarian population, as far as it is possible. The directive of Joseph II is repeated almost word by word in the texts of party resolutions and projects. The term “as far as possible” gives way to maintenance of the segregation. In the 18th century single areas were marked out for the groups of “Neohungaricus” population, the same way as in the 20th century the sites of the new Roma houses are usually in one block.

Regarding a larger territory (e.g. a county), new colonies should be established sporadically or should the Roma groups unified on a single spot. Many people in the 18th century agreed that The Roma could not be disciplined and integrated into the dominant society therefore they should be left where they were, outside the society to live up to their standards. Racist in the 20th century have the same point of view speaking about surrounding Hortobágy with barbed fence. Even in the recent years some allegedly scientific studies suggested that larger depopulated territories should be settled in with Roma people.

Processes of settling down and assimilation go together. In the 18th century the measures for settling down or resettling the Roma population failed to be implanted partly because the Roma fled away with horror of further connecting measures as separation of children, prohibition of their language and clothing, confiscation of their horses, and localizing them. In the 20th century there is no need for such rough measures as the Roma have already given up a considerable part of their tradition. Anyway, there is no programme aimed at settling down, including the projects of our days, without the intention of teaching the Roma the way of life considered appropriate (as timing, spreading out money, organizing activities, family planning, raising children, hygiene, and cooking habits).

This was the time when the scheme of the Roma settlement structure, remaining up till now, was shaped. Manorial bailiffs, village and town magistrates marked out areas for the groups to be settled down. In many cases this was rather resettlement than settling down, moving of existing permanent or temporary colonies with tents and huts to designated lands. These designated lands usually were on territories that had not been used otherwise (for neither cultivation nor construction) as they were not utilizable.
Colonies of a few families are being formed on the edge of villages, suburbs, and manors. According to some posterior explanations the reason for building the houses of the Roma on the edge of the settlements lays in the dangerous nature of their profession, as a black-smith shop may easily cause fire. It is against this explanation that the Roma of other professions lived there too. The houses to build should have walls in accordance with the ruler’s suggestion, with chimney, and with the construction the help of the manors and village magistrates were counted upon. In lack of works on local history, we do not know the process of these constructions (and even if there were such works, it is questionable how much of these events the contemporary sources would have found worth recording). Anyway, we know much more about the results.

Some families did not build their houses among other Roma families but in row of houses or they received deserted peasant cottages. There were other families in special situation that settled down not in line with Roma related measures but in accordance with colonization of the dominant society, arriving to a settlement together with the colony group.

Roma people from these two lines—together with the those already having settled in sporadically—are the ones whose Roma status was later eliminated (the records in registries—about births, marriages, and deaths—did not include the remark ‘new Hungarian’ or something similar any more). These people probably became assimilated to the neighbouring groups; and if the neighbouring group was not Hungarian, sometime later they assimilated together to their Hungarian society. The traces of families that were integrated when settled down cannot be found at the settlements any longer.

On the basis of contemporary and later reports, retrospectively it may be thought that in comparison to this assimilated group of several strata the number of those who established colonies on designated lands was much higher. The quality of the constructions in the colonies was not taken as seriously as in the cases of those who built their houses in the streets within the villages or towns. The ‘wretched shanties’ of the sources might have occupied an intermediate position between the earlier huts and the local poor Hungarian houses. Even mobile groups had their traditional technology of building sound accommodation; it was flexible enough to use building materials found on the spot.
These might have been small colonies since the number of the people moving together was not high. No more relating families lived together than the territory was able to provide the living for; however, for the time of the temporary settling down in winter several groups might have been concentrated on a single area. The process of settling down as well as the way the lands were marked out was changing place by place and period by period. At some places one to three families were settled down sporadically whilst elsewhere several groups together were attempted to be settled down. The latter, we assume, might have been less sound formations.

As the territory of the designated lands was limited, this foreshadowed a later characteristic of the colonies, their crowdedness; what seemed to be enough for some families at the beginning—as the growth of the population was not taken into consideration—later it resulted hardly liveable conditions. We are prone explain an event from its result: we think Roma people, due to some inner characteristics, like living in each other’s body vicinity and this is part of the traditional organization of their community life. Although we might have seen them only in this closed, cuddling-together defence but we have realize that once they have larger spaces, they use it quite happily and they shape their communal organization in this larger space as effectively as in the smaller one.

There are further consequences of designating the site of a colony. One of them comes from natural endowments; the designated lands often had not been used for construction or cultivation because they were polders, marshy territories or in danger of flood. Another consequence comes from its location and its spatial relation to the settlement. The edge of a village or a town is the scene for the communal services of the settlement; it is the place for brick-making and adobe-making sites, carrion pits, dumps, scaffolds, and later cemeteries. The Roma community is settling in this environment; their living space is far from the central life of the settlement: the spatial relation and the hierarchy of the living spaces are expressions of the social distance.

Settling down presumably was not complete. We know about persecuted groups that wanted to withdraw themselves, but the mountains, woods, and caves did not provide safety since in order to earn their living they had to move in inhabited settlements. Settling in often provoked tenses, sources inform us about ‘escaped’ Roma people, destroyed houses and huts set on fire; because the majority rejection turned against not only those settled in rows of houses but against those as well who lived in colonies.
The decades of the absolutism’s Roma policy provided a basis for the relationship between the Roma and the dominant society for centuries:

– forced measures—even if they were not executed and were used just as threatening—made it clear for the Roma that their survival depended on either their hiding way of life, which was hopeless on the long run, or they had to obey the order determined by the power and to the way to social acceptance led through giving up their Roma identity. So the possibility of a hypocritical life strategy or schizophrenic self-surrender built in the relationship.

– at the time of settling down/resettling the Roma, although scattered—today we would say integrated—localization of them was intended, in most cases colonies of various size were established (either on family basis or the groups were forced to form colonies). This determined the lasting structure of the Roma’s localization and the scenes for settlement and social segregation.

Changes in living conditions and housing affected the living opportunities as well. Discriminative regulations preventing the free movement made it hard to keep up the traditional professions (metallurgist’s craft, entertainment, trading, sporadically wood-working); at the same time, new professions appeared that satisfied the needs of the villages. As colonies were established on the edge of settlements, Roma people working with mud also appeared; in their cases living place, working place and the source of row material, clay pits on the edge of settlements, were on the same spot. Local auxiliary jobs (as day labour, inferior house work, transporting), however, needed permanent relationships. The Roma adopted domestic industry methods from their neighbours which they had not dealt with before (basketry, rope-making, and sieve-making). A characteristic of all these jobs that they have mobile phases (search for row materials, selling of the products) and phases rather bound to place (stocking, the process of production), not unlike the old professions, black-smithing and metallurgist craft or the later wood-working that would become widespread on arrival of new groups. Different professions may exist temporarily complementing each other. Flexible interaction between living activities and ways of life may be observed with variable contents and among changing conditions.

Up to this point this study has been about a group regarded homogenous nowadays, descendents of whom are called romungro or Carpathian Roma, Hungarian
Roma. They might have been once members of very different groups with different traditions perhaps speaking different languages or dialects.

Mobile groups continued to arrive from abroad up till the World War I even though in decreasing number. The newcomers had difficulties with finding their places in the coexistence which slowly had been becoming peaceful.

Some of them specialized on wood-working (cutting, processing, making goods and peddling or exchanging them for food). They were often hired by manors; colonies of earth lodges for a couple of families were built on the edge of the woods belonging to a lord or being commonage. In their case, just like in that of the mud workers, working place, living place and the source of raw material were jointed together. Inhabitants of colonies far from inhabited places went around the neighbouring settlements. The colonies were always moved according to work opportunities; sometimes they stayed at the same place for years. The way of living conserved the simple construction method using up raw materials that were present everywhere and providing mobility. With the change in living opportunities wood-working lost its importance and was replaced by odd jobs in the fields of forestry and agriculture. However, the colonies on the edge of woods continued to exist, later they might have moved closer to the settlements; some decades ago typical beash earth lodges were still standing in South-Transdanubia.

The other large group of them, whom we would call vlach nowadays, was, at least at the beginning, in more difficult situation. Metallurgists (black-smiths, metal products makers and repairers) lived in large number among the Roma population already settled down. It is difficult to say to what extent they had opportunities in this field, nevertheless, some of them did live on metallurgist craft and trade. Their mobile groups often were up against the law and violated the regulations prohibiting horsekeeping. They set up easily movable tents and wind-screen-like huts, they slept in their carriages, sometimes even a bed was put on it. Their life was determined by the possibility of fast movement in case of danger.
The census in 1893 shows the changes of that century. The data of dwellings calibrated to the current territory of Hungary show the following proportions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Permanently settled</th>
<th>Staying at one place for a longer period</th>
<th>Wanderers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Houses</td>
<td>63,6</td>
<td>36,7</td>
<td>10,0</td>
<td>58,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shanties or huts</td>
<td>35,0</td>
<td>54,9</td>
<td>17,6</td>
<td>36,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underground dens</td>
<td>0,6</td>
<td>2,8</td>
<td>1,8</td>
<td>0,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tents</td>
<td>0,8</td>
<td>5,6</td>
<td>70,3</td>
<td>3,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In spite of the small proportion of the wanderers they determined the public sentiment towards the Roma; they were the most visible group and the got most often in contact with the authorities. It emerges from contemporary reports as if settling down still were the most important issue of the Roma. Local measures were taken in order to limit their movement, one after the other, and the Minister of Interior Affairs passed his notorious decree in 1916; however, the way of settling them down is not discussed anywhere.

Mobile groups of small number of people arrived during the 19th century’s last and the 20th century’s first decades. The had characteristic communities like carpet sellers, Vend and Sinto showmen and whetters. It was a consequence of their activities that they were moving from spring to autumn and stayed at their accommodations in winter. Tradesmen who thrived more easily and especially the showmen sooner had the opportunity to build some kind of houses on the edge of the woods where colonies of families working together were established; then these winter quarters became permanent. The whetters more in want mostly lived in tents and temporary shanties.

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4 Although it was intended to be an extensive survey it was not since great proportion of the integrated Roma were left out as well as the elite group of musicians and some regions e.g. the whole territory of the capital. When filling in the questionnaires some important questions like the extent of being settled down or spatial segregation were determined by subjective judgement of the interviewers. Therefore the numbers should be accepted with reservations.

5 The public regards the newcomers as Vlachs which misleading in the case of showmen and whetters.

6 In the ‘50s and ‘60 families of some whetters still lived in tents.
The majority of the Roma has always worked and lived with difficulties and in more miserable circumstances than the poorest of the Hungarian society. This difference still existed in the first half of the 20th century and the reason it did not increase was the fact that the living conditions of the Hungarian people living in poverty worsened. The Roma domestic industry usually meeting the needs of peasant households was overshadowed by the mass production of goods, however, their living opportunities were not fundamentally taken away as for the goods offered by the Roma the peasant farm might pay with their own redundant and unsold products or discarded tools of their household. With opportunities lost, a growing number of the Roma—as they were cheap labour force—found odd and seasonal jobs in agriculture so they integrated in the crowd of the agricultural proletariat. Their living circumstances did not change radically, but presumably in space as they drove closer to a settlement and wandering groups were lodged in abandoned outbuildings.

Vast majority of the Roma lived in poorly built houses that had small surface area or in structures regarded as shanties and a smaller proportion of them lived in earth lodges. There are also town-dwellers among the Roma; they meet needs of the inhabitants of market towns those living village-like suburban areas of industrial towns; there are some colonies of blacksmiths and tradesmen on the edge of the capital, too. Living places of the town-dwellers differ from those of the villagers only in the level of administration. The only exceptions are the successful musicians who live under civic circumstances though in the poorer areas of the towns. The majority of the musicians, however, live in colonies.

The rural and urban non-Roma poor lived under miserable and unhealthy conditions, too, and living spaces and location within settlements are segregated. There are poor districts, slum areas, ghettos in the towns and edge of the village (“low end”) and streets of the poor at rural settlements. And there are (ineffective) programmes to relieve the poor, charity, and there are researches carried out by committed sociologists who will not let the collective conscience of the society get satisfied; but all these do not reach the Roma themselves. Poverty of the Roma colonies somehow avoids the attention even of the greatest minds.

Presumably they noticed that as other important social phenomena of their age but they might have been afraid that the prevalence of ethnocentric public thinking, and the connecting hostility towards the Roma, would endanger their activity if they had advocated for the Roma.
Approaching our days, the picture becomes clearer and more complicated. We have growing number of official reports on the living circumstances of the Roma, a new generation of sociographers and sociologists began their carrier in the ‘60s and ‘70s who, alongside attesting the prevailing situation, took efforts to collect historical memories. When comparing the conditions of the past and recent past one will have the impression that the conditions of the past are relatively simple and transparent unlike those of the recent past. The only reason for that might be our much less knowledge of the past than of the recent past. The older forms of the Roma settlements and coexistence / segregation might have been more variable than it emerges from the scattered sources. Zsolt Csalog, who is ethnographer and sociologist, studied the phenomena from a special double point of view; he writes: “… the Roma-image our generation could create for itself does not reflect a kind of ‘prehistoric original’ state; it is rather the result of a secondary, general and radical loss of social status. The slum replacing the honest poverty: it is the mournful consequence of a nation’s catastrophe.” It is not known which older values have been preserved by the framework the colony-life—which many generations of the Roma were born into—and which of them have been overwritten. In the latter part of the 20th century the term ‘archaic colony’ carries important positive contents (disregarding the cosy arrangements of the society): a colony might be called ‘archaic’ if the site of the colony was chosen freely or relatively freely by the community itself, or though they settled down to a designated land but the location of the dwelling units are arranged according to the order and traditions of their own and the community may live in the space arranged that way according to its own order and customs.

Even if once existed such colonies, cannot be found any longer only different phases of the community life’s decomposition and, sometimes, reorganization. Understanding the origin of the historically shaping Roma is possible via studies of the main type’s local history. The observer has to take into consideration the political conditions—which are rather difficult to trace—as they launch changes, and modify the communities’ self-movement; and all these cause hardships to the observer.

In the course of the World War II the persecution of the Roma was incorporated in state programmes, and eventually it aimed at the total liquidation of the Roma. Intimidating raids had been carried out even before but now the police stepped further.
According to the zeal of the authorities, working age men and women were removed by force from the colonies. Their way led to labour camps, reception camps and some of them were taken to death camps.

Trials after 1945

Although they were redeemed of mortal intimidation, the new world did not bring essential changes in the living conditions of the Roma. Even those who had been working in agriculture did not receive anything from the re-allocation of the land that restructured the society.8 However, where they obtained some land, not more than one or two acres. For the period between the division of large estates on the one hand and the establishment of the state farms and the beginning of peasant farming on the other the very existence of the Roma became threatened. As the agricultural workers on the pre-war large estates and the have-nots received land, the state farms lost a part of their potential permanent and seasonal workers; they needed the labour force of the Roma. In the ‘40s and ‘50s Roma families moved in abandoned servants’ quarters and outbuildings all over the country. With the help of the state farms the Roma living in traditional colonies in the neighbourhood were moved over to newly established colonies. These were located according to the state farms’ point of view. The housing estate, some of the raw materials, and the skilled workers (carpenters, chimney-builders, masons) were provided by the local council and the state farm; in most cases even places for education of the Roma children were given nearby the colony. This process—in the course of which the Roma took the place that was created after the new rich stood out of the agrarian proletariat, and partly due to the state farms’ increasing need for labour force as a consequence of the forced production—cannot regarded as insignificant, nevertheless, it left intact the settlement conditions of the majority of the Roma although the number of those employed in the state farms increased among them.

We have a general picture of the ‘50s on the basis of a confidential study that summarizes council reports. György Pogány and Géza Bán wrote in 1957: “At least 80% of he Roma in Hungary live under inhumane conditions, in crowded shanties on 5-6

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8 A historian today would say that the Roma were not prepared for the regulation on re-allocation of the land: they did not required land.
square meter surface area without an appropriate roof. Their colonies are usually situ-
ated on the worst areas of the settlements, far from roads and potable water. The Roma
colony is the last where electricity is installed, etc. In their environment is usually
dumps, cattle-runs and underground water territories are found. Even the colonies on
the edge of towns are incredibly crowded. (…) Nowadays a growing number of the
Roma have brick walled houses with tiled roof, mainly in industrial areas. (…) Very
rarely and only in some regions the Roma are allocated flats, though these usually are
rather primitive and of bad quality.” They estimate the number of the shanties all over
the country to 25-30,000. They have a solution in four points to the ‘Gypsy issue’ as
employment”, and only the next on is “4. Improvement of their housing conditions” as
the first step of which houses should be built by loan on healthy estates; these houses
should have large surface area, a room and a kitchen, tiled roof, adobe walls and base-
ment, according to their concept. They do not refer to segregation.

34 settlements in Somogy County and 4 in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County was
studied by a survey aimed at “learning the environmental and personal hygiene of the
Roma” in 1960. The description of living conditions corresponds the summary from
1957. (Deviation in the ratio of the shanties may come from the fact that the former
was based on council reports while the data of the latter were registered personally by
health workers. On the contrary to the health workers, the council was more interest-
ed in giving a dark picture in hope of subventions.)

Taking into consideration the data on the knowledge of language, in Somogy
County mainly Beash Roma were asked while in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County
mainly Hungarian Roma. It is not known if the survey was extensive so the size of the
colonies cannot be set. In addition to the 267 houses and 296 shanties 4 tents were
found (three in Nemesdéd and one in Magyaratád.)

Fourth of the houses have floor, three forth of them have earthen floor; the furni-
ture is poor, even in floored houses there are not everywhere beds, tables and chairs.
Beds can be found in less than half of them, tables in one third them, and chairs only
in one fifth of them. Accessories of the civil life as carpets, curtains cannot be found
even in houses. Bed clothes are used in nine tenth of the houses and in one third of the shanties. In more than half of the shanties four or more persons sleep in one bed.

Houses are also very crowded; in fourth of them there live six persons in one living-room. More than half of the shanties cannot be aired, from sixth of them no wells are available, dwellers of these shanties have water from springs. There is no toilet to as many as third of the houses and to four fifth of the shanties. Electricity is installed in less than half of the houses and in a single shanty (It is not a real shanty, isn’t it? – G. L.) 60 % of the shanties are heated by oven; it is a characteristic of beash way of construction.

In the ’50s drastic measures were taken against the Roma in the Soviet Union (police procedures, labour camps, settling to unbroken lands); therefore in the countries of the Eastern block decrees had to be passed regarding this question so party decisions were prepared.

On 20th June 1960 the Politburo of Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party passed a resolution entitled “On some tasks relating to the improvement of the Roma population’s situation.” The starting point of the resolution is the principle that the Roma population “despite certain ethnographic peculiarities, (…) does not constitute a nationality.” It is not explained in the text itself but from other contemporary sources it is known that the Roma were excluded from the group of nationalities on the basis of Lenin’s criteria for becoming a nation (common language, common territory, common economy, and common mentality expressed in culture). The official ideology questioned the very existence of the Roma language; it is obvious from the text of the decree as it uses the ‘Gypsy language’ term between quotation marks. The resolution, defining the Roma as not a nationality, dissolved the Cultural Association of the Roma in Hungary established in 1957. “This group of people is completely scattered now and lost its quality of nationality. The Roma are not a nationality, to their problems the solution is the total assimilation,” as the official standpoint is made clear by Károly Turóczi in his article mentioned above. Once they do not con-

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9 The document was not published. A summery of it was written presumably for the intellectuals which appeared in Valóság [a monthly] in 1962 with the title ‘On the social integration of the Roma’. The article by Károly Turóczi includes several quotations without references. The party decree was published a decade later for the first.
stitute a nationality, the Roma have to adapt to the dominant society; the resolution classifies the Roma on the basis of the extent of their adaptation.

The description of the categories and the proportions attached to the classes are rather surprising. The number of the Roma population in Hungary is estimated to 200,000; it corresponds the data by Pogány and Bán but seems low in comparison to the data of 320,000 included in the results of a national sample survey ten years later. The collection of the material for preparation of the party resolution might have been a summary of the local councils’ data; this form of data collection should be used with reservations: it is questionable how seriously the local leaders take the task, what they regard more advantageous if they round up or down; what kind of information they have, especially at larger settlements, and we have the evergreen question of who is regarded as Roma. Many of the Roma who rose above their peers do not identify themselves as Roma (they might be urban, educated people with university or college degree, and musicians, and there are families that want to assimilate at smaller settlements as well). It is doubted whether these groups were taken into consideration.

The number of the colonies is 2100. In this case the question, an evergreen question again, is what is regarded as a Roma colony by the informant. Neither the party resolution nor the following regulations offer essential proof to this issue; in some cases the quantity limit for a colony is four and more houses in other cases this limit is more than four houses. However, the figure of 2,100 might be accepted as a starting point; at the turn of the ‘50s and ‘60s vast majority of the Roma population lived in obvious spatial segregation and at settlements it was clear where the Roma colonies were. But it cannot be taken for granted that each colony was counted separately. Several colonies might have been established in the different areas of a settlement especially where Roma communities of different origin lived as every group wanted to establish its own living place. It is dubious, to what extent these groups seemed to differ from each other to the outside world and especially the administration, particularly where they were forced to live close to each other. In this sense, 2,100 seems to be the lower limit.

We have no trouble with the first category except the number attached to it seems unfounded as this group is the most difficult to trace: “The integrated Roma reached the general economic and cultural level of the population, they gave up their Roma way of life and were usually living scattered. Approximately 30% of the Roma population
belongs to this category.” How could their proportion increase from 20% to 30% in less than four years’ time? I would be eager to ask the author of this passage what he or she meant by ‘Roma way of life’?

The second category: “Roma undergoing adaptation (further 30%) living shanties at separate colonies, on the edge of a village or a town, in most cases they have just odd jobs; Their cultural level is very low.” They might be the Roma living at colonies. Taking the figure of 200,000 as the number of the Roma population and that of the 2100 colonies, on the basis of the proportion attached to this category, that is 30%, there should have been colonies of 28-29 persons in 4-6 shanties; armed with the knowledge of the contemporary conditions, these data are obviously far from the reality. What is for the author that the description of the circumstances at the colonies is plausible and true to facts: “These are situated on unhealthy territories that are impossible to approach from autumn to spring (near woods or marshes); their inhabitants live in structures inappropriate for human beings to live in, or in huts dug in below the ground level. Communal supplies are of extremely low level and hygienic conditions are horrible at the colonies. Their water supply is bad if there is at all, they have no toilets and the abandoned environment all are bedmates of contagious diseases.

The third category is the most shocking one: “Vast majority of the Roma who are not integrated (partly settled down and wandering) are not employed, they avoid honest work, live day to day, and live off the society. They often change their living places, and have the lowest level of culture. As many as the 40% of the Roma (and 60-70% of them in some counties, e.g. in Bács-Kiskun and Zala) belong to this category. This description suggests that as many as 80 thousand people, some 14-15 thousand families, live partly settled down or wandering. However, there is no trace of such mass migration in contemporary accounts and later memories. The representatives of mobile professions, such as trading, itinerant industry, and itinerant services, may not be called wanderers but on ideological basis. In case of these professions the families have their permanent lodging and, according to the nature of the profession, for some period of the year, a part of the family, or parts of several families together leave this permanent place of residence to carry on trade or to be engaged in some itinerant industry for some weeks or months, then they return. The question is what intention drove the political leaders to falsify the situation that much. Usually, what was on the
agenda in the Soviet Union that soon had to become an issue in our country as well. Severe police measures were taken against the ‘rambling’ Roma in the Soviet Union of the ‘50s. A resolution by the presidency of the Supreme Council decreed their forced employment and settling down. We do not know the actual way of life of the Roma there and in short of reports it cannot be taken for sure what ‘rambling’ could have meant. Anyway, it seems the Hungarian politicians wanted to ‘outherod Herod’: the party leadership was eager to prove they could step against the ‘rambling elements’ and if there had not been such, Roma colonies still could be regulated. However, the changes in the political situation prevented the implementation of these plans, but it is a rather different matter. Nevertheless, the fact that the first Roma related regulation was drawn no sooner than three years after the resolution of the Politburo, what suggests at least some hesitation on the part of the upper leadership.

The resolution states: “Jobs and settling down have important role in the improvement of the Roma population’s situation but, at present, creation of these two conditions is hindered in many ways.” Further on explaining the tasks it says: “Gradually, it should be achieved that the Roma population live together with the surrounding people without being segregated at permanent places of residence, they are employed permanently, their health circumstances improve and their cultural level rise.” This is the last time the “permanent place of residence” have been mentioned as a requirement. The party resolution brought into the common knowledge that 40% of the Roma in Hungary are nomadic, then they soon dropped the issue. Afterwards the political leadership passed different resolutions about the clearance of the Roma colonies and the term of “partly settled, wandering” Roma would appear in official and authoritative texts only exceptionally.

We may only guess why such a position was taken right at that time. It is not an irrational assumption that their prior intention was to liquidate both the Cultural Association of the Roma in Hungary and the ideas represented by it. “In connection with the Gypsy question there are still a lot of wrong views are prevailing. Many perceive it as a nationality question and they suggest the Gypsy language should be developed, they also suggest to establish schools and colleges where the Gypsy is the language of education and format Gypsy cooperatives. These views are both false and harmful since they preserve separation of the Roma and slow down their adaptation. The Cultural Association of the Roma, however it achieved some results as helped drawing the attention of the councils
and some social organizations to the problems, is inadequate for playing an important part in re-shaping of the Roma population.” It sounds rather straight: it was rather threatening at that time if someone was blamed with ‘false and harmful views’.

It seems possible that the falsification of the real situation when it came to the categories of the adaptation level besides its relation to the Soviet measures it also aimed at underpinning the negation of the Roma’s being a nationality. The ‘integrated’ Roma were not to be concerned as they gave up the ‘Gypsy way of life’ and lived scattered and at the average economic and cultural level of the population at large. The groups ‘undergoing adaptation’ and ‘not adapted’ are of more concern. The majority—57%—of those belonging to these two groups are ‘not adapted’, they are nomadic, work-shy people living off the society at the lowest cultural level, and they are illiterate, according to the party resolution. So the text suggests that the majority of the Roma are not suitable for representing any national culture.

According to the resolution “gradually, it should be achieved that the Roma population live together with the surrounding people without being segregated at permanent places of residence.” The term ‘without being segregated’ was later interpreted by some that the contemporary leadership was against ghettoization—we would say now segregation. Taking into consideration the wider context, it is better to say they were for assimilation and not against separation. The anti-segregation point of view approaches the issue on behalf of the minority suffering of discrimination; the pro-assimilation viewpoint regards the interests of the dominant society as priority. It is important to keep in mind this distinction since the attitude of the political life and that of the regulations passed after the party resolution are determined by this for the next years and decades. The pro-assimilation viewpoint, as it is driven by other than the interests of the minority, is not picky regarding its tools, and prone to change its intended steps—even against its declared principles—choosing the easiest way.10 This

10 This became obvious too soon. Károly Thuróczi in his article on the party resolution cited above is rather joyful when writing the next words: “It is good and relieving to see or read and hear about Gypsy families that were able to come out of the wretched circumstances and left the unhealthy and smoky shanties, and who, as a result of their work, moved into new environment or, at least, could build a new and healthy flat on the site of the old and unhealthy one. There are some places where not just a few families but whole Gypsy colonies became free of the disastrous circumstances of Gypsy life. Such an example is the village of Babócza on the edge of which an entire separate village was established—with electricity installed—on the site of the old, neglected and unhealthy Gypsy colony.” Then he adds dutifully: “The best, of course is, if the Gipsies obtain houses within towns and villages among the other people.”
is the root of the later processes when a new colony is built on the site of the old or somewhere else though but in separation again; and that the old colonies’ infrastructure is never developed as those colonies are to be demolished, although in a lot of cases in more than in several decades’ time.

No sooner than three years after the party resolution was released was the first related regulation passed.\textsuperscript{11} It is the Resolution 2014/1964 (V.4.) of the Revolutionary Labourer-Peasant Government on “the clearance of the colonies not meeting the social requirements”. With this, the euphemistic name for the Roma colonies was born.\textsuperscript{12} One can only guess what might have lain behind this; perhaps the government did not want to hurt the Roma; or did not want to shock the dominant society in the period of social consolidation; and a further possibility might be that in the years of opening they did not want to draw the attention of the West to the ‘Gypsy question’. In the text itself the actual target group is referred to once only: in the first sentence, in brackets. “In order to demolish the colonies (constituted of Gypsy, cave and other flats) not meeting the social requirements and to move the people living there into appropriate flats, the Government has passed the decree as follows:...” We have here another unexplained term, the ‘Gypsy flat’. According to the party resolution the colonies should be demolished in the framework of the 15 year plan for housing development. The programme was launched in 1960 so they thought to demolish the colonies in ten years’ time.

Relocation of the colony habitants was intended by the government decree via new tenement flats, allocation of council flats and “construction programmes in the country providing construction loans.” The estates needed for the construction programme were to be granted by the executive body of local council. State-owned estates were provided for free or could have been purchased. The first detached houses of the programme were built according to the Ministry of Construction had to be “of suitable surface area, with electricity installed, appropriate floor, one or two rooms, a kitchen and pantry furnished with shelves, and necessary outer buildings.” The houses should

\textsuperscript{11} It was not published, it had the qualification of ‘2000’, was a little confidential and it was filed as „For official use only”.

\textsuperscript{12} The adjective had a bright carrier. Now and again, even nowadays can be read in official texts though nobody knows what it means. In this sense it is a predecessor of another term used for other conditions but with the same habit: that of ‘severely disadvantaged’ which is a later invention. In line with spirit of the era, the typist sometimes misspelled the word ‘social’ and then the text was on ‘colonies not meeting the socialist requirements’; as in the article by Imre Zagyva published in the Közigazgatási Tájékoztató in 1970.
be constructed by artisans’ cooperatives, or, in case the would-be owner is a cooperative member, by construction brigades of the cooperative or artisans.\textsuperscript{13} For the purposes of construction loans may be granted through OTP. The conditions for this are as follows: an estate (private or granted by the council), the constructor should be employed permanently for two years at least and receive an average salary of HUF 1000 per month; the allowance for loan should be recommended by executive body of the local council or its secretary; and a licence for construction. 10 percent of the loan for construction should be provided by the owner in cash, construction material or work. The upper value of the loan may be HUF 65 000. Guarantor is not needed, and there should be not charged expenses to service costs and forbearance money.

The first programme for clearance of colonies was started that way. It turned out soon that the conditions for loan should be eased. Otherwise there would be no enough owners to build, and the amount of the loan should be raised otherwise there would be no enough construction company either. In the latter half of the ‘60s, at the dawn of the New Mechanism another conception emerged; the colonies disturbing the townscape should be demolished first without taking into consideration individual circumstances.\textsuperscript{14} Where the authority could not enforce this principle, the unwanted view was screened with hedge. Funds for flood and polder-related damages were also used for programme for clearance of the colonies; this was easy to carry out as many of the colonies were situated on polders or territories exposed to flood. New buildings were usually constructed on sites of similar location.

The most important feature of building new houses was the choice of the estates, in terms of technique as well as principles. The regulations passed after the party resolution do not mention the requirement that the Roma should build their houses among

\textsuperscript{13} As it can be seen, the state construction industry is not listed. The ‘60s were years of huge construction projects so the state construction companies were needed at places thought more important by the leadership.

\textsuperscript{14} This provoked ideological chaos within the party. The position of the Agitation and Propaganda Committee of MSZMP KB in 1968 reads as follows: ‘The special programmes originally aimed at providing financial support to worthy Gypsy families wanting to emerge on the basis of individual judgement. This goal was coupled with another point standpoint: it was the claim for clearance of colonies that are in way of the implementation of urban development programmes or are situated nearby main roads, railroads, resorts, and tourists’ centres at a faster pace without taking into consideration if the inhabitants of such colonies do have the necessary financial and social conditions or do not. (…) In order to maintain the original goal of the programme as well as its educative effect and motivating power, it would be necessary to distinguish the cases of those whose support should be judged individually from that of the colony inhabitants who are necessary to relocate disregarding their individual conditions.
the houses of the Hungarian population; and it is not spoken about in later party eval-
uations either. The programme for clearance of the colonies preserved and conserved
the Roma population’s segregated way of settlement. The Hungarian society made
clear, neither for the first nor for the last time, that they want to keep the Roma off both
physically and in a figurative sense. The regulation determined the size of the estates
to be 350–450 m² but there were houses built on even smaller plots, very close to each
other. The ownership of these lands are usually unclear (socman land, purchased gen-
tleman farm, state-owned land, common pasture or private property with a line of
inheritors). Nevertheless, houses were often built on the sites of old houses if the place
was enough. It was not rare that neighbouring lands were attached to the colony and
the sites for houses were marked out there. A similar solution was when the street lead-
ing to the colony was extended and the new sites were marked out alongside. Councils
often marked out estates on the grounds of old manors (but not on separate farms as it
was prohibited by law). Roma people could receive a building site within a settlement
practically only in case if they were ambitious, respected people maybe thriving in pol-
itics. The council staff did not bother where the families had come from; at settlements
where there were several colonies the sites for the new house were marked out on a
common territory and the inhabitants of different colonies were moved into each
other’s neighbourhood. The forced coexistence provoked many conflicts later on, and
in some cases the families did not even move in the strange environment when they
were moved from one colony to another.

The regulation made it possible for the families to take part in the construction
reducing or substituting their obligatory contribution to the expenses. However, the
constructors insisted on relying on their own labour force partly because that way they
could build the houses in mass production without harmonizing their work with the
families, but partly because they could use the construction materials uncontrolled,
often using remains of demolished buildings, and would-be dwellers did not keep an
eye on them. The houses had many of serious building defects: crumbling stairs, crack-
ing walls, window frames not fitting, doors not closing, walls getting drenched due to
lack of eavesdrops, unusable attics, and walls getting mouldy due to bad foundations.

The houses built according to standard design proved to be small for large fami-
lies. The design was later amended but the quality of construction did not improve.
The size of the estates did not change either and on such small territory there is no place for gardening and animal husbandry even if the families were willing to do.

It soon became clear that the original plan (demolishing the colonies in ten years) is not sustainable due to the shortage of funds and building capacity, the clumsy administration and the quiet resistance of the councils. Cheaper and less complicated solutions were looked for. According to the local possibilities, two main ways of relocation became general.

One of the solutions was to use buildings or group of buildings maintained by the state, some companies, state farms or councils that had become or were becoming vacant. For example housing estates for factory workers on the edge of industrial towns, army barracks, servants’ quarters, some blocks in poor quarters worth nothing but razing. In these buildings a special group of the society had lived shaping their environment, the garden belonging to the flat, the shed, the common toilet, and the interior of the flat the common areas in and outside the house, to their own taste. The previous dwellers moved to new or better flats or houses while the Roma families removed from the colonies got into a material environment that carried the traces of strange lives. They moved from a colony to another and instead of their own they found themselves in unfamiliar spatial organization. It took considerable time for them to shape the place to their community’s taste—and they did not always succeed in it since the circumstances were so much inflexible and resistant (for example in the case of an army barrack). The situation was even more difficult if some of the old dwellers remained in these buildings that blamed the newcomers for the dissolution of their own community and regarded the new families’ organization and space occupation as offence to their own customs and traditions.

The other solution was to use abandoned private houses. The socialist administration always had a confused attitude to the private property. It took rather long time to extend the colony clearance related loan to purchase of second hand flats. The amount of purchase loan was less than that of the construction loan and was enough for houses located on estates of low value, houses of poor quality or which were very

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15 The miner colonies were paid special attention. In consequence of the reorganization and rationalization of mining several mines were closed, or their production was reduced, and the relocation of the miners was supported by extraordinary regulation. The old miners’ flats were assumed to be used well in the programme for the clearance of colonies.

16 It was prohibited to construct on sites officially marked for slum clearance.
old. This version of colony clearance was coupled with the conception settlement network development and a list of settlements of high importance was determined by a regulation where it was not possible to purchase houses with loan. So the Roma were directed to settlements without importance. While during resettlement to state owned buildings several families or all the inhabitants of a colony were included, with purchase loan the families moved one after the other, continuously, between limits but with more opportunities for individual initiations. These families could decide when they wanted to move, they could choose the suitable house from a limited supply. We are talking about declining villages here from where the active and more well-to-do population moved away due to the living conditions becoming unlivable (or made systematically unlivable). Consequently the value of the properties in these villages fell to low level that the amount of the loan was enough to buy them; this process was fastened by the Roma’s gradual moving in. The history of the decline of villages and their becoming ‘Gypsy villages’ as well as their society was described by Gábor Havas.

When Roma families moved in old peasant cottages within a village they faced peculiarities and difficulties similar to those who moved in a group of buildings. They got into a living space that had been built and refined by a group with different organization and activities. They had to place their own family organization and activities in it. Since the spaces here were larger and more flexible and also due to their greater spatial independence they could do it with more success. As for the rest of the village community, however, their situation was as difficult as that of those moving in blocks of flats, if not more difficult. The old villagers connected a family—with its history and customs and economy—to a house. They look at the newcomers’ life not in their own but in comparison to their predecessors they expect the new dwellers to live to the standards of the old ones. They regard them as intruders even if, indirectly though, they themselves called the new comers in their village. These tensions of coexistence often lessened and helping relationships were formed, especially when the new comers were not from far but from the colony of a nearby the village. The first to move in were always the most ambitious families that were able to adapt and in a way they prepared the common sentiments for the others’ arrival.

The abandoned colonies were usually demolished at least in case of relocation by authorities. Just like two hundred years earlier, all the regulations and directives
warned the local authorities to prevent the repopulation of the colonies. Once the old living places were crushed or burnt in a more modern age they were bulldozered.\(^{17}\) If families left the colony one after the other a part of it always remained inhabited. Those could move who met the requirements to receive loan (had regular job, appropriate income, and were able to contribute to the costs of the construction—either from support by their employer or from personal loan).

The elderly\(^{18}\), disabled people and more unfortunate families remained. The situation of inhabitants of these remnant-colonies was hopeless, they could not expect any kind of development or the improvement of communal supplies, the community of the colony had fallen apart, and the supportive relations had loosened.

From the community’s point of view the history of the colonies where the new houses were built on sites attached to the colony or houses close to the colony were purchased was more fortunate in comparison to the situation of those described above. The different mode of living must have had its affect on the community’s hierarchy; it made the existing differences more obvious or reinforced them but the system of relations remained essentially untouched.

It can be laid out, however, that the decades of the colony clearance affected deeply the colony communities’ life regarded as traditional (though, keeping in mind Zsolt Csalog’s notice, it was traditional only to a limited extent). The community’s system of relations was disturbed, restructured, and—sometimes—annulled, its values were changed even by the mere fact that these measures promoted the process of individualization. It is often heard that no new values came to the place of the old ones. On the contrary, something else came to their place. The responsibility of the individual decision and the importance of the relations to the dominant society increased. The dominant society rejected the readiness to change the values and kept the Roma—even

\(^{17}\) Both moments have some excessive cruelty an expression of the idea that we do not respect your homes where you were born, made love, had children; and just because we want so we raze them to the ground.

\(^{18}\) The plan obviously did not consider what to do with the elderly. The newly married couples built their own houses next to their parents’ if they could afford it, so the elderly remained alone when their children moved away; sometimes, however, if they lived together, the parents did not want to move when the young couple decided to leave the colony. The number of the people in this group is not high since among the circumstances of the colonies only few people lived until their old age. Political recommendations encouraged their placing in old people’s home but both the elderly and the old people’s homes rejected this suggestion.
among the new circumstances—in their settlement segregation. Not surprisingly, the Roma’s answer to this is seclusion and sometimes opposition, if the mode and the extent of them are different in the individual groups. The settlement changes alone cannot be blamed for this. Majority of the Roma became agrarian or industrial proletars. After stimulations for choice of value they found themselves integrated into the lowest grade of labour division.

Researches by Katalin Berey explored the political background and technical details of this two-decade process. By the mid-80s 10-11 thousand detached houses had been built and second hand houses were purchased in approximately the same number in the framework of the colony clearance. It is true, flats in colonies were demolished due to relocation by the authorities, using funds for flood and polder-related damages as well, and with company loans; however, the proportions are not clear. The projects between 1965 and 1985 brought changes in the life of third or half of the Roma population: their housing conditions improved but they still fell behind in comparison to the dominant society as the housing conditions improved in the society at large as well and the spatial segregation of the Roma was still maintained.

In the latter half of the ‘80s great economic and social transition began which enforced the social differences and fastened the processes pushing towards segregation.

Enlisting the forms that had been established up to this point, their further history—into which the varying circumstances brought new changes—becomes visible.

In cases of relocation by the authorities, when an entire colony was moved to state-owned block of buildings, according to the location of the new place, rather different versions were shaped.

The Roma were also moved into servants’ quarters of manors located between villages. For a while their living was granted by agricultural farms, forestries in the neighbourhood or towns within reach. These blocks of flats were old, neglected, without roads or public transport. There was a shop, pub perhaps an extramural school for a while. The inhabitants there mostly moved away, those remaining there were the poor Hungarian families. Some of these colonies still exist, they live without supplies and opportunities of job; in most cases they have no potable water either. Some ambi-
tious Roma families managed to move but the majority stuck there without any prospects. Rarely, some poor Hungarian or Roma families move in the vacant flats.

Some local authorities demolished the manors either in need of territory or the troublesome outskirts caused too many problems. Estates on the edge of the village were marked out for construction with preferential loans or some cheaper houses on the edge of the settlement were to be purchased. The situation in these cases was similar to that of colony clearances but here an intermittent episode was inserted into the Roma families’ life.

The most irresponsible step of the colony clearance programme was to encourage the relocation of the colonies to the vacant housing estates for miners. Knowing that the production is limited and the mines would be closed soon the miners were provided new living places and the Roma were settled into a hopeless situation. (The families of some Roma people working for a mine might have lived in the colony before, moreover, around some prospering mines that needed unskilled Roma labour force their number became relatively high.) On these areas there was no agricultural production that could have provided their living. The mines with their decreasing production needed some unskilled labour force for some time but after a while this opportunity ceased to exist. Nowadays these housing estates usually are in backward, depressed regions where the industry of the towns within reach has also declined. And yet, the population of these colonies is still slightly growing; those who can afford move from here but there are more Roma and non-Roma poor families that lost their flats within the town and seek for living place here. The blocks of buildings in these housing estates were last time permanently repaired when the mines were prospering; no drainage or road development has been carried out. These are urban in rural environment without the advantages of either urban or rural life.

In the ‘60s and ‘70s most of the population of the housing estates for factory workers in the neighbourhood of factories in towns, small towns or larger villages moved to better flats or built houses in family house districts or received tenements at a block of flats. The vacant flats or blocks of buildings were used in the framework of the colony clearance programme when colonies close to or in the neighbourhood of the settlement were demolished. The original dwellers of the housing estates for factory workers were continuously moving away therefore the Roma families, who were
moved away from their colony and whose system of relations was disarranged, coexisted for a long time with Hungarian families that moved away from the housing estates for factory workers relatively late. Coexistence raised many conflicts; for Roma families took for a while to adapt to the changed circumstances, so these colonies soon became notorious parts of the settlements and were often exposed to violent raids by police. The condition of the old buildings, which were maintained by the council now instead of companies, was getting increasingly worse, their roads and their environment became more and more neglected. Roma families that had regular job or took the advantage of the urban opportunities—like trading—were able to move on from here; they got tenements at a block of flats or in declining districts of larger settlements or built houses with loan at smaller ones. Among the tenement flats of the councils (and of the later self-governments) the housing estates for factory workers served (and are still serving) for placing Roma claimants; therefore there are always people applying for them either young families from the settlement or families moving in the town in the hope of earning their living. Although these blocks of buildings should have already been demolished self governments are unwilling to do it because they could not offer other tenement flats instead of them. Where the ownership of these buildings is not clear the local self-government tries to dislodge families that have arrears and prevent other families from moving in. In schools and nursery schools next to the colonies the proportion of Roma children is increasing and among urban circumstances in consequence of this process they become “Roma institutions” as non-Roma parents will take their children to somewhere else.

As the number of enlisted soldiers (which was calibrated to the conditions of the ‘50s) was reduced to a certain extent, the staff was regrouped, and new flats were built for the officers, some barracks became vacant. The political decision about placing families from Roma colonies in recent barracks—which were inappropriate for coexistence of families and members of civil communities—was exclusively dictated by the standpoints of the dominant society’s leaders in power. The barracks handed over were situated either within the settlement or, more frequently, on the edge of it. Some municipalities took attempts to rebuild the barracks but in most cases the buildings remained almost completely untouched and as they were separate in their architecture it meant stigmatization in itself.
The settlement rearrangement of the Roma went through characteristic phases. The old colonies, which were established as a result of either spontaneous settlement or forced settlement initiated by authorities in different times and therefore Roma groups of different origin lived there, were situated on the edge of settlements and in areas of various sizes; some of them grew into ‘Roma towns’. Lots of colonies became surrounded by growing towns. The small houses in the colony were poorly built and close to each other and were arranged principally according to kinship rather than a street-like model. The clearance of these units that did not fit unto the townscape and were in the way of town extension plans was of high priority. The process depended on the mentality of the local power and the local conditions. In some cases inhabitants of a colony were moved to a the housing estates for factory workers, army barracks or huts built on sites out of way; but sometimes time was left for different solutions: poorer and downcast families were placed in state-owned blocks of buildings and the rest built their homes with preferential loan on designated sites (sometimes on the old sites or in the neighbourhood) or purchased affordable houses with loan, too. Constructions, designation of the estates, and house purchases all took place according to the conception of the council or self-government in office; the authorities always have had their conception about where the Roma should live at the settlement, who might be allowed to live within the settlement and where, even if this conception has never been declared. By the mid-80s traditional Roma colonies had already ceased to exist, the housing estates for factory workers and army barracks had become populated and characteristic densifications had been shaped where in the houses built or purchased by the Roma a great number of families lived in each other’s neighbourhood. These areas gradually lost their value and their non-Roma population was anxious to move to areas of higher respect; poor and Roma families could more easily purchase these vacant flats or obtain them via allocation.

**Post-transitional trials**

Social housing grant for new constructions, which was available from the mid-90s, was claimed to a considerable extent by Roma (and poor) families with several children. Constructions with this kind of support resulted anomalies partly similar and partly dissimilar to those produced by constructions with preferential loan (CS-hous-
es). Construction entrepreneurs are prone to build houses in scale of mass production and ready to move in.

Leaking eavesdrops, cracking foundations and stairs, walls getting drenched, unfixed wall-to-wall carpeting and floor tiles, doors and windows of the poorest quality, empty bathrooms and trashy, used tiles on the roof: for all these not only the greedy construction entrepreneurs should be blamed; all these are consequences of a bad and ill-considered and therefore spendthrift conception. Poor families with many children are not able to contribute with their share—which is calculated in the costs of the construction—the constructor credits them with it formally. So the house should be built underfinanced in accordance with a given design. Furthermore, the constructor often saves money for the family to be able to buy some furniture; therefore the family will not call the constructor in account for the shortages. Not surprisingly, these houses are in poor condition when the family moves in and they go to rack soon after.

Some cases of serious violence of law have also occurred. Entrepreneurs often buy the Roma families’ right for social housing grant for a few hundred thousand Forints; they take the support and build a house somewhere else and for someone else. In other cases the families claim for the support, the construction begins and then the constructor disappears with the money. Entire ghost streets are formed of partly built ‘szocpol’ houses (with social housing grant). Due to the plot prices, in towns the Roma could build houses where Roma (poor) had been living. According to the interests of the settlements, sometimes new building sites were marked with plots for favourable price. These areas were attached to the existing dwelling district inhabited by the Roma on the edge of the settlements. Such street-opening was carried out when the houses of the Roma became life-threatening and the self-government had to take some measures or local constructors were interested in starting the constructions (or both).

At the same time another kind of process has commenced in several cities which was not controlled by the municipalities at the beginning. Some specialities of the management of houses in the period of the socialism together with a change of values within society resulted that the gradually declining inner cities, downtowns, historical city centres and the surrounding areas were left by their more well-to-do inhabitants moved to residential quarters or to new blocks of flats and then to residential quarters. The vacant flats with low rent were allocated to poor or Roma families with several
children that were registered on waiting lists. By the time the municipality noticed the process, the administrative centre had already turned into slums.

New plans of building new colonies were born and of getting rid of the Roma population in the inner city via relocation by authority again; these plans however could not be realized either in short of funds or due to the opposition of the rising civil society. The methods left were raise in rent, suspending public supplies in case of arrears, terminating the tenancy contract in case families with arrears whose legal relationship is uncertain. They were relocated to colonies or temporary lodges at less busy and declining parts of the settlement usually in the already existing densifications.

Similar process, although in a modified form, took place in the capital as well. The traditional colonies on the edge of the capital had been demolished by the beginning of the ‘80s. Their inhabitants were moved to declining outskirts into flats without electricity, gas or running water or into temporary lodgings from where the original dwellers had moved to housing estates or old flats of higher grade. During the same period ambitious Roma families were moving from the country to Budapest; they lived either in tenements or with relatives in the outskirts or in the deteriorated lodgings of the inner districts. After demolishing some old districts, in consequence of systematic allocation of flats smaller zones or streets, sometimes large blocks of flats, panel buildings were segregated where Roma people constituted majority of the dwellers. At the same time more-well-to-do Roma families (mainly musicians) born in the capital were keen on leaving the ghettoizing parts of the inner districts to the garden areas of the city that were of better grade.

Purchasing houses in rural environment should have affected against segregation. In most cases it did not, however, as the purchases were controlled by the local council. Moreover, the amount of the loans was enough to buy cheaper properties usually on certain areas of the settlements. After immigrations some balance was established on most parts of the settlement. Several different conditions together released a special spiral: if a village has got to decline due to some historic preliminaries, has unfavourable geographic conditions (accessibility, agricultural land, flood, polders), is located on a depressed area, the Hungarian population will leave in growing number, property prices will decrease, Roma families—maybe relatives of the those already living there but not necessarily—will begin to move in from the immediate neigh-
bourhood and from farther territories that arrive there in hope of larger and better lodg-
ing, and perhaps the opportunity of farming and autarky. These hopes will hardly come
to true if the building is old and without a considerable amount invested in it is going
to deteriorate, and if there is no starting capital to begin farming, the village is hard to
approach and there is no job and the settlement is poorly supplied.

There are some estimates relating to the number of villages with Roma majority:
according to the 2001 national census in 10 settlements half of the population declared
themselves to be of Roma ethnic decent, in 30 settlements, including the 10 above
mentioned, the proportion of the Roma exceeded one third of the total population. The
ethnicity declared in he census means the lower limit as we know about settlements
where the proportion of the Roma is high and these settlements are not included on this
list of settlements.

The settlement conditions of the Roma in villages vary even within a single set-
tlement. Some waves of the several programmes for colony clearance affected to a cer-
tain extent almost all of the rural settlements where Roma families lived. ‘CS-houses’
were built either on the site of the old colony or in a street marked out on the edge of
the village. These low-grade houses got to deteriorate soon. They were originally small
so next to them young couples separating from the families built their own huts from
materials available. The value of the surrounding area decreased and non-Roma pop-
ulation was eager to move to better parts of the village or, from declining villages, to
another settlement. The vacant peasant houses were inhabited by families from the old
colony or relatives form other settlements where there were not enough opportunities
to build or purchase. When the social housing grant became available, families that
had children of suitable age and were determined enough to face the administrative
difficulties and excitements associated with a construction could build a new house on
the site of the old one or on cost free or cheap plots marked out by the self-gover-
ment. A Roma family with several children could rarely afford a housing estate on a
better area. So some parts were formed in the villages that cannot—or partly can—be
called colonies in the traditional (morphological) sense of the term, nevertheless, they
were scenes for territorial and ethical segregation.

Some smaller and special inclusion-like units also appeared within the settle-
ments. In an old peasant cottage on inner areas or in the centre of the village several
related families may co-exist and they may build some outbuildings on a plot large enough. There is another inclusion-like phenomenon, of different nature: sometimes, out of necessity, Roma families are moved into flats of old servants’ quarters. These phenomena are possible in urban environment as well. On the contrary, special rural versions are the cases when one or more Roma families live in a community building that lost its original function, e.g. in a shepherd’s house or in buildings originally not for living in like a milk-house or a depository for fire-fighters’ equipments, and the families usually build some ‘home-made’ huts next to the larger building.

One may ask why the territorial and ethnical separation is regarded as such a big trouble. Why would it be bad Slovakian or German families were built their houses next to each other. The trouble is if the neighbourhood is not chosen but a consequence of historical force. Further trouble is if the scene of the co-existence is an area decreased in value with poor infrastructure, poor public supplies, and poor transportation. While individuals of German or Slovakian ethnicity live in natural integration on all other fields of life, the territorial segregation of the Roma is coupled with professional and ethnical segregation to mention only the most determinant ways of segregation. Settlement segregation is in connection with both professional and educational segregation and partly explains them only. Professional segregation affects the whole Roma population, although just a part of the Roma, live in settlements with disadvantages that are responsible for bad employment situation (depressed area with limited job opportunities and poor transport). In some cases educational segregation is straight outcome of territorial segregation: in parts of a settlement where the proportion of the Roma is high the proportion of Roma children in educational institutions belonging to that area will be also high. Various forms of segregated education of Roma children, however, are general in areas of mixed population.

Each government of the post-transition period put into words its very own conception on integration but they were cautious about settlement and living conditions: the plans referred to taking surveys of the issue and elaboration of a related conception. For a long time the government could think of nothing but the good old colony clearance.

In 1997/98 with the mediation of the county settlement development councils, national data survey carried out which collected data from local self-governments about
the Roma colonies at their settlement. Due to the methodological problems of the survey and the informants’ unwillingness the results should be accepted with reservations. Nevertheless, according to the local self-governments 96 thousand individuals lived then in colonies or in colony-like living environment which seems to be an acceptable data.

To government order again, between 2001 and 2004 another representative data collection survey was carried out. Researches were conducted in fourteen counties, interviewers visiting the spots described 667 colonies; the number of the colony inhabitants “is over one hundred.”

This data collection did not have a clear-cut methodology either. The definition of colony is the same: a part of settlement consisting of at least four low-grade flats with access to basic amenities at best, with high density of dwellers and unhealthy location, secluded disadvantageously from the typical living environment of the settlement. This definition is acceptable if the aim of the data collection is not to survey the dwellings in colonies but to enlist colony-like low grade dwellings to prepare a later social political measure as both data collections were declared to be aimed at. The latter data collection made even an order of the colonies according to the negatives in their living conditions. The first data collection was carried out in order to learn the dwelling conditions of the Roma population. The letter sought for surveying all the colonies. However, the data collections might be regarded as successful in their kind. Besides some questionable technical details the result of both data collections are interesting mainly because the basic unit of the survey was not determined for the data supplying self-governments or the interviewers. But neither of the data collections recorded architectural characteristics that would, indirectly, make possible the historic understanding of the colonies.

As a result of the change in the Roma population’s settlement structure such registration of colonies will inevitably be inconsequent and hopelessly infinite. Densification of a settlement or an enclosure around an old peasant cottage within the settlement will be regarded by an observer searching for segregation as a colony, whilst another observer looking for traditional models will not. Contexts of the settlement also affect the evaluation. In a larger city more crowded and visible colonies will be noticed, many smaller seclusions will remain unregistered that would seem to be colonies at a smaller settlement.
The government propaganda first spoke about 440 then 667 colonies, as if all of them had been Roma colonies, and promised the clearance them in few years’ time. It turned out to be impossible rather soon. (The data of the 667 colonies is questionable in itself as the research the statement is based on included the data of 14 counties—as opposed to the their total number of 19.)

Otherwise, the exact number of the colonies, knowing that it is impossible to set, is not so much important from the point of view of planning for long run. Besides these surveys, from researches carried out by István Kemény and the reports of Delphoi, Tárki and the ÁNTSZ (National Public Health and Medical Officer Service) emerges that ten thousands of the Roma live in colonies, taken the term in its strict sense, and among segregated conditions several times more of them do. It is more important to decide about the conception: whether the traditional colony-clearance or the settlement integration as part of the social integration is aimed at. The 2002 government programme promised a long-run plan for “clearance of the Roma colonies, creating humane living conditions, and reinforcement of dwelling mobility”. Colony clearance is heard about several times between 2002 and 2004 and a loan of HUF 10 billion—provided by the European Development Bank—for the programme. The loan was not granted (presumably due to lack of the own share) therefore the government conception has changed. ‘Integration’ is the key concept of the 2004 government resolution on the situation of the Roma.

It prescribed the elaboration of complex model programmes for clearance and rehabilitation of the Roma colonies in order to improve the living conditions of the Roma—and the term ‘Roma’ instead of ‘Gypsy’ appears in a government resolution for first time just like the term ‘rehabilitation of colonies’: “In the course of preparation, implementation and follow-up, continuous participation of expert groups as well as enforcement of social solidarity should be granted with special attention to the viewpoints of community development and the provision of accessibility to educational, training, employment and health service systems.” Then this is envisaged as a goal: “As soon as the surveys and the model programmes are analyzed a government implementation plan for rehabilitation or clearance of colonies and colony-like living areas should be elaborated and conducted, including the system of financing and technical conditions.” The direction modified under compulsion is indicated by terms as
'Roma’, ‘integration’, ‘colony rehabilitation’ and ‘model programme’. So the govern-ment got closer (even if not intentionally) to the conception of social scientists that puts the stress on social integration. If the much limited resources of the society will be directed into spectacle colony clearance projects, providing the construction entre-preneurs’ groups with orders, we will miss the point again. The fact that a colony is bulldozered in itself does not grant dwellers of the colony will avoid a newer form of separation. Besides, it is questionable how the colony clearance programme may be related to seclusions that do not meet the definition of ‘colony’, e.g. villages, streets or parts of streets with Roma majority, or a city tower block with some Roma-only floors. It is true though that the definition might be reconsidered, besides the colony clearance programme may include plans for joining the segments in the life of the settlement and making them attractive to non-Roma people as well.

The model programme, however became known as ‘colony-programme’ and the politicians regard it as the beginning of colony-clearance: in its 2006 campaign pro-gramme MSZP declares: “We continue the colony clearance programme.” The proj-ect entitled ‘Dwelling and social integration programme of people living in Roma colonies’ started in the latter half of 2004 with a huge staff, many experts, a lot of negotiations and adjustments. The conception was to model the opportunities of dif-ferent types of colonies. Colony typology was elaborated by Gábor Havas and Péter Szuhay during the preparation phase with the categories as follows: wild colony, colony in ‘puszta’ on the grounds of a manor, the housing estates for factory work-ers, old colony remained, colony of ‘cs’- and ‘szocpol’ houses, city segregations and villages getting segregated. Settlement self-governments were invited to bid with their conceptions and the winners were selected in two rounds of a closed tender. Funds were not high, HUF 680 million. According conception the prevailing at the time the call for tender was published, the funds were to be distributed among 4–6 scenes so in case of a smaller settlement the infrastructural (dwelling) and social (employment, educational, health, community development) elements of the pro-gramme might have been realized from a considerable amount of money. Politics intervened; it is far from (newsworthy) enough, more settlements should receive less money each instead (according to the original plan the programme would have been finished right before the parliamentary elections and that is the reason for the impor-
tance of its news value; it is another question that with the shift in local work processes the entire programme was delayed). Nine settlements were declared winners, the plans were reshaped, construction items were reduced and social items were minimalized or dropped out. It is questionable whether the suitable settlements were included in the model programme. In the case of the two villages with Roma majority that were invited the issue of integration is more than dubious if the broader social and economic environment remains unchanged. Is it right to involve settlements where the local self-government intends to keep off the Roma from the village and plans a new colony as much segregated as the old was or insists on the practice of the segregating education? The cases are models for ‘how it cannot be realized’. The self-governments often think of the programme as a special barter-agreement; they contribute to or allow slight development in the living conditions of the Roma and in turn they want ‘the village to receive something’; so they try to realize certain elements of the programme so that they will obtain infrastructural goods they could provide from other sources later only if they could at all.

Actual colony clearance was not carried out in the framework of the programme. Where the old colony was demolished, which might have been just small one due to limited funds, either a new colony of low grade houses was established or houses were built on the edge of the settlement inhabited by Roma families. These are not cases of dwelling integration but maintenance of segregation in a changed form. If the self-government purchased second hand houses for purposes of social tenements, created communal spaces, renovated buildings, installed a bathroom into existing homes, these solutions proved to be more useful. It is questionable whether facilities that the self-government is responsible for (as pavement, potable water, bus stop) should be funded from integration budget.

The local work processes, unsurprisingly, provoked great tense between different Roma groups, the Roma and the rest of the villagers, the Roma and the self-government, the self-government and other villagers. Presumably, these tenses could not have been prevented even via careful preparation. It has to be considered what would have happened if the funds had been more, the social element had not dropped out, and whether there is any sense in such secluded integration attempts. Actually, what were these models for?
The government intends to keep on the model programme; from fewer funds more settlements are intended to be supported in the framework of closed tenders. After some hesitation though, the government is now following its predecessors’ footsteps. In line with the spirit of the age and the prevailing conditions, the dominant society keeps off and segregates its minority with violence, indirect pressure, or simply leaving it to its own, disguising its indifference with illusory measures.

*(Gabriella Lengyel)*
VAGUE CHANGES IN WELFARE 2002–2006

‘Welfare shift’ was an important issue in the programme of the social liberal government that took office in 2002 but it was rather uncertain for years what this included in fact. At the beginning the government took the risk of throwing the budget out of its balance in the long run rather than the direct political risk; it did not restructure the welfare distribution but increased welfare expenses instead. But essential changes were carried out towards the end of the political cycle.

Incomes and income differences

Differences in the incomes were not ceased only lessened by the economic growth after 1997. According to a panel survey conducted by TÁRKI in 2003 inequalities started to increase again between 2000 and 2003. The growth affected the situation of various income groups in different way and dissimilar pace. According to the 2003 panel survey by TÁRKI the number of the poor was the highest in 1995/96, it decreased during the following period and then it steadily stagnated. The researchers of KSH (Central Statistical Office) consider 1998/99 the worst period of poverty extension. The social political role of the tools for measuring the extent and depth of poverty is highly debated. In lack of a strict poverty threshold there is no sharp line between people living in deep poverty and middle strata sinking into poverty or discriminated groups. Therefore support of medium strata and withdrawals from resources for strata in deep poverty become justified. Other experts blame the strict poverty threshold for belittling the problem.

\[^{19}\text{Between 2000 and 2003 proportions of the incomes in the bottom and top population deciles grew from 7,5 to 8,4. TÁRKI Monitor Report (2003).}\]

\[^{20}\text{While in 1999, the third year of the economic growth only the situation of the top income decile improved. in 2001 the situation of all the income deciles become better with the exception of that at the bottom. See on this issue Péter Mózer (2002), A társadalompolitika hatásai; a jövedelmi egyenlőtlenségek és a szegénység alakulása. József Attila Kulturális és Szociális Alapítvány, Budapest.}\]


\[^{22}\text{According to János Ladányi the only way to implement welfare policy that assists the poorest families effectively is to apply the strictest threshold and regard as poor 6,2% of the families, as many as 700,000 individuals including 37,2% of the Roma families. See on it János Ladányi (2004), Milyen legyen az állam: gondoskodó, vagy esélyteremtő? Népszabadság 2004. február 7.}\]

\[^{23}\text{Referring to the data on subsistence level provided by KSH István Kemény regards as much as 25-30% of the society as poor. István Kemény (2003): Válság után, szegények, munkanélküliek, cigányok, versenyképtelenek. Esély, 2003/2. szám.}\]
Another topic of similar importance that is also much debated is the depth of poverty. A recurring statement in the analyses of TÁRKI for many decades now is that in post-transition period the situation of the poorest families has not worsened as “they had no more place to withdraw”; and the social service prevented total impoverishment that is accompanied by famine. According to the data of TÁRKI during the recent years the extent of poverty has slightly enlarged but its depth has a little bit lessened. On the contrary, other experts, especially Zsuzsa Ferge and her alumni, on the basis of indirect data, account about deterioration in the situation of the poor. A researcher of KSH also thinks that the number of poor remained unchanged between 2001 and 2003 but their income situation got more fallen behind. It is generally agreed that the income conditions of the Roma has continuously worsened in the post-transition era, while poverty in the society at large has recently slightly decreased. Relying on the data of TÁRKI again, regarding as poor whose income is the half of the median income, 31.9% of the Roma was poor in 1991, while 61.5% of them in 2001. Regarding as poverty threshold the half of the average income, 48.9% of the Roma was poor in 1991 and 68% of them in 2001. In 1991 61.6% of the Roma belonged to the bottom fifth income group, while in 2002 75.1% of them did.

Behind the debates concerning poverty usually hidden poverty-conceptions or distribution philosophies are laying therefore they sometimes reflect on Roma related government dilemmas especially on the issue whether the Roma integration might be promoted by means of social policy or, preferably, that of equal opportunities. Plans of the government programme for promoting equal opportunities of the Roma usually underestimated the proportion of the poor among the Roma and dealt with the employment situation of them rather superficially.

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25 According to analyses a decline in the situation of the poor is indicated by a decline in the number of recipients of subsidies and a decrease in the funds for subsidies after 1998. See Gyorsjelentés a szegénységről 2000-2003, Szociális Szakmai Szövetség
26 Éva Havasi (2005), A transzferjövedelmek szerepe a szegénység csökkentésében. Esély 2005.4. szám
27 According to the introduction of the draft “40% of the Roma live in poverty”. The proposal submitted to the government on the mid-term government programme for promoting the social integration of the Roma up till 2006. The proposal was signed by the minister without portfolio responsible for equal opportunities.
28 According to the forecast of the draft: “Raise in the proportion of permanent employment with the maintaining the necessary extent and gradual decrease of the projects for communal work and projects of public utility or public purpose will have considerable effect on living quality.” Ibid.
The income related deep poverty is in close connection with the exclusion from the labour market. There are poor among those who receive regular income from job but the reason for permanent and hopeless deep poverty is first of all loss of contact with employers in the long run. In the post-transition years in Hungary during the ‘transition crisis’ decrease in employment had more serious effects than economic recession or decline in real-income. The employment crisis in Hungary reached its nadir in 1997. There was a decrease by 26% in the rate of employment in comparison to that in the period before transition. During the next two years there was an increase by 200,000 in the number of the population in employment; then the growth ceased to continue. In 2002 the average number of individuals in employment was 3,884,000 which slightly increased in 2003. In spite of the considerable economic growth the number of individuals in employment steadily stayed at a relatively low level. *Low proportion of employment is the weakest point of the Hungarian society.*

The situation of the Roma in the labour market became catastrophic during the first years of the post-transition period in comparison to their previous employment situation as well as to that of the society at large. In 1993 almost half of the working age Roma were registered jobless in contrast with the corresponding ratio of 13% in the society at large. Less than one third (29%) of the Roma men between the ages of 15 and 59 years were in employment while 64% of the total population were employed. When it comes to the women’s employment, the gap is even wider: 15% of the Roma women were in regular employment while 66% of the women in the total population were employed in 1993. (During the years before the transition 85% of the Roma men of working age were employed.)

Ten years later, in 2003, a repeated survey found no essential change in the employment situation of the Roma. In 2003 the prior source of living for 28.1% of the Roma men was income from some kind of job; 28.6% of them had some regular job—in contrast with the 56.5% of the total male population. The prior source of living for 15.1% of the Roma women was income from some kind of job and 16.1% had some regular job—in contrast with the 43.7% of the total female population.

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Furthermore, Roma men who had income from some kind of job usually do odd jobs. The exclusion of the Roma from the labour market has now a history of many decades and affects several generations.

**Government goals and distribution priorities**

Budgetary planning always reflects the primary distribution priorities of the governments as which social groups they want to support via welfare redistribution and what kind of means they want to use in order to it as well as what kind of principles of righteousness they want to enforce and for the implementation of what kind of social political goals. Primary distribution priorities are that the government regards of more importance than other principles like measurable needs or fiscal considerations.

However, definition for priorities of welfare distribution is usually technical; the government conceptions refer to the amount of supplies and grants but the real effects of the transfers are rarely calculated.

Ideally, a government may declare as its goals
- reduction of the differences in the incomes
- reduction of the extension of poverty therefore the number of the poor
- reduction of depth of poverty therefore reduction of poverty gap

None of the governments has set such numerical social political goals since the transition. It is true though, that the effectiveness of system of means is rather uncertain. In addition, the debates on welfare incomes and the distribution of benefits there has been a parallel and hidden line for years now: are there any verifiable effects of the income transfers and benefits on the rate of birth? The importance of this question from the point of view of our subject is that the natalist conception is keen on to encourage a growth in the number of births not in itself but a growth in the number of births within the middle strata—and emphatically not among the Roma—however, this kind of goal is not the one that is proper to declare within the otherwise broad limits of public speech.

The welfare service system may be adjusted to certain needs and may promise to satisfy them to a certain extent. The welfare distribution in Hungary followed this model from the first half of the 1990s. The basic structure of the service system, established by Law IV/1991 on employment promotion and provision of the jobless, Law
XXXI/1997 on public guardianship administration, and tax laws, was basically unchanged until 2005; although these regulations were amended several times but the distribution of the incomes were also adjusted to the prevailing government’s priorities.

The trends and dilemmas of the social policy in the period since the transition will be overviewed below.

1990—1994: Crisis management, ‘profile clearing’ and subsidiarity

The service system reacted to the deep social crisis after the transition; in a period of crisis usually the crisis management function of welfare services is more dominant than otherwise. The MDF government followed three guidelines:

- It intended to maintain the rate of welfare expenses in proportion of the (declining) GDP
- At the beginning it intended to provide generous provision—unemployment allowance for the first year and then unemployment subsidy for further half a year—to the unemployed whose number was growing rapidly. Later on the unemployment subsidy was withdrawn and from 1993 as a provision for the long-term unemployed a partly subsidy-like income was granted instead for no more than two years.
- It intended to have the most of inactive population absorbed by the pension system, maternity and childcare provisions and extending higher education so that a dramatic decline in the number of the employed does not result in even more serious unemployment.

As soon as provisions were taken out of social insurance they might have been turned into subsidy-like supports, they might have been attached to income-tests, and their value might have been drastically reduced. Enforcement of the principle of equivalence was required ever more explicitly in connection with the social insurance. Devaluation in provisions was resulted not only by ‘profile clearing’ but the fact that some provisions were taken out of the social insurance reduced the guarantees elements of those provisions’ stability of value.

The principle of subsidiarity became the creed of the conservative social policy during the post-transition years: in their interpretation first of all the family, the church, civil organizations and neighbourhoods are responsible for welfare provisions;
the state—either the local self-government or the government—may take the role to meet the otherwise unsatisfied needs. This principle did not get the form of system but its philosophy may be traced in several relating regulations.

Decentralization means a system of partly normative and partly discretionary subsidization that fits into the decentralized self-government system. This opportunity was already included in the Law LXV/1990, which determined the framework of the municipality system and which is nevertheless a valuable element of the Hungarian constitutional order: all the approximately 3200 settlements were entitled to set up their own self-government. The Law II/1993 authorized all the self-governments to pass their own social regulation. Furthermore, it was the mayor’s competence to judge most of the subsidies—who may give over his authority to the representatives’ board, technical committee or his or her staff—but one appealing against his decision may request only legal but not administrative remedy.

**Polarization of debates on distribution – distribution priorities after 1995**

Distribution of the welfare became a critical issue of political debates in mid-1990s. The ‘sub-package’ of welfare restrictions within ‘Bokros Package’ announced in March 1995 was a watershed in the social policy of the post-transition period. The ‘Bokros Package’ made open political debate of the issue so far having discussed by experts exclusively; and it undertook a distribution policy based on residuality principle and principle of means. Fidesz elaborated its own (segmented) distribution principles—which supports the middle strata—explicitly against the ‘Bokros Package’. Two extremities of the debates on welfare distribution had taken shape.

The welfare reform package within the ‘Bokros Package’ is a blend of right-wing neo-liberal arguments against the welfare state and the main points of the liberal criticism of socialism, and it tried to draw its own conclusions from them. The terms ‘premature welfare state’ and the destruction of it became the most important catchwords of the welfare restrictions.

• *Theses of the ‘premature welfare state’*

• It is a basic axiom for the liberal critics of state socialism that welfare transfers, subsidies, and benefits are favourable for those who receive higher salary; therefore the greater the proportion of redistribution is, the greater inequality is generated.
The neo-liberal thesis: the extent of redistribution, therefore that of welfare redistribution should be decreased in order to improve competitiveness and to create a social policy based on self-provision.

Distribution regarded as ideal: besides the achievement-driven attitude and self-provision extended on all segments of the society, a system of subsidies that is residual and grants targeted supports. Vertical equity in all fields is the only measure for redistribution: the state may provide subsidy, provision, benefit, and exemption from college/university school fee, etc. to those who are not able to pay the costs.

Fidesz formulated its creed on welfare distribution against the ‘Bokros Package’. The main point of it was that family policy and social policy should be distinguished and different principles of distribution should be attributed to each.

- **Thesis of ‘family policy is not social policy’**
  - Family policy means first of all support and benefits granted to working families rearing children, whilst social policy means support granted to families in need.
  - Family policy has priority to social policy both fiscally and morally.
  - Segmented feature of distribution should be undertaken; it means different strata should be supported in different ways.
  - Family policy has a definite natalist goal: not simply an increase in the number of births is aimed at but an increase in the number of births in strata that are regarded as worthy and to be supported.

Distribution regarded as ideal: freezing real value of family allowance, regular child protection support, and childcare aid; re-introduction of childcare benefit, re-introduction of family tax relief and continuous increase of it, abolition of tax-free minimum wage, cuts in provisions for the unemployed and partly attaching them to doing community work.

**Lack of conception and overspending**

When in 2002 Medgyessy government took its office with the programme of ‘welfare shift’, it believed the basic dilemma of welfare distribution might be avoided and they would be able to extend provisions targeted at poorer strata and leave the privileges of middle strata untouched and without abolishing segmented character of the social provision system. The only way to realize this was to increase expenditures.
• A 20 per cent raise in family allowance, introduction of the extra month’s family allowance and extension of right for it moderately increased the amounts of support that reach the poorest strata. A 9.1 per cent increase in regular child protection support in 2003 helped definitely the poorest families.

• Income positions of lower middle strata were improved by the 50 per cent raise in the civil servants’ salary and the introduction of the minimum wage, and also the fact that after such a salary raise the government could not put on its agenda reduction of civil servants.

• Perhaps the third element is the most important and most hidden: partial rearrangement of availability of tax reliefs. That is to say, though the minimum wage became tax-free but this reduced the extent of family tax reliefs that may be used; besides the government is not forced to admit it. The appropriation for family tax reliefs in 2003 was reduced by HUF 20 billion, to 74 per cent of that in the previous year, and that for 2004 was raised by HUF 4 billion. Rearrangement of the tax reliefs was favourable for strata with lower but regular income from work. The government restricted the social policy of Orbán government to a certain extent but did not dare to restrict it to the necessary extent.

The year 2003 seemed to justify the fears concerning the dangers of economic growth based on large scale outflow of wages and domestic consumption. As only proper means, restrictions (like cuts support system for housing loan) were to be adopted in order to re-establish the balance; but Medgyessy government did not undertake income rearrangement that would have resulted in growth of real transfers reaching the poor.

2006: Half-turn in distribution
After Gyurcsány government took office, the social policy of the social-liberal government considerably changed and it had some consequences to the Roma, too. As a part of his programme ‘of 100 steps’ the Prime Minister declared (among his small but important measures) that he would abolish the regular child protection support, the tax relief of families with one child or two children, and that from 2006 he would increase family allowance considerably but not universally.
The structure of welfare expenses

The structure of welfare expenses were rearranged in the previous political period as well as in the latter reflecting the differences in the two government’s distribution priorities. In 2000, at mid-term of the previous governing period family allowance was the most expensive; two years later, at the end of Fidesz’s term it was confined to second place behind normative funding to municipalities for free use or fixed purposes; and this alone indicates its loss of value. Since the beginning of the 90s family allowance has lost two third of its value. The amount of family tax reliefs had ‘closed up’ to the third place by 2001. According to its statement of costs the government gave more money than the total amount of child care aid and child care benefit had been. While child care benefit that was favourable for people with high income was re-introduced, the amount spent on child care aid was considerably reduced.

The appropriation for family allowance did not essentially change between 2001 and 2002. The appropriation for maternity allowance and maternity grant increased in greater extent in comparison to the average growth in total welfare expenses and benefits. However, the increase the latter is just illusory since the appropriation for maternity grant in 2000 was dramatically reduced to 62 per cent of the previous year’s accomplishment and from 2001 it increased considerably again. The appropriation for 2002 is only 85.6 per cent of the accomplishment in 1999. The appropriation for family tax reliefs dramatically increased; the appropriation for 2002 was 170 per cent of that of 2000 and 229 per cent of the accomplishment in 1999. The total amount available was HUF 135 billion but the allocated in the budget was just HUF 82.2 billion; it means only 61% of the available amount was expected to be actually used. In 2001 an amount of HUF 91.7 billion as family tax relief was used which was 68 per cent of the available tax relief.

The centralized appropriations available by municipalities—i.e. a proportion of unemployment aid [a kind of unemployment benefit that was received by long term unemployed people after termination of regular unemployment benefit], which was gradually abolished, old-age pensions, and regular child protection support (additional family allowance) that might have been claimed in addition to the normative

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funds—allocated for 2000 was HUF 59.4 billion. Next year, in 2001 the appropriation was HUF 52.9 billion and the 2002 budget allocated only HUF 55.6 billion. 2001 and 2002 budgets included this item in a single-sum apparently because of a decrease in its nominal value and because the unemployment aid, which had been abolished, was not replaced by any regular social benefit although a regular social benefit—due to raise in proportion of direct co-financing to 77 per cent—would have not cost more for municipalities than the former unemployment aid. Alongside, the appropriation for community work dynamically increased; it was HUF 3.7 billion in 2000, HUF 10.5 billion in 2001, and HUF 14.5 billion in 2002.

Within welfare expenses family allowance was hit by the greatest loss (of 5%) between 2000 and 2002 whilst family tax relief enjoyed the greatest growth (of 5-6%). The poorest family receive child care aid and child raising support amount of which is about 10-11%; another important provision for the poor, the regular child protection support (additional family allowance) continue to amount to 8-9% of the total welfare budget although this share has reduced by several tenth. Normative funding to municipalities for free use or fixed purposes continues to keep its share of one third from the total welfare expenses.

After the social-liberal government had took its office the pendulum swang to the other direction. The appropriation for family allowance, which had basically been frozen for the previous for years, was increased by almost 45% between 2002 and 2005; and after rearranging welfare incomes it dramatically grew to 137 per cent of the 2002 level. In the course of the governing period the appropriation for child care benefit and child care aid were continuously increasing. The latter increased to a greater extent (by 60% between 2002 and 2006), yet, its appropriation in the budget is still lower than that of the child care benefit. In addition, the appropriation for maternity allowance increased by 145%, while the sum for maternity grant by 83%. Alongside, the sum of normative funding granted to municipalities for free use or fixed purposes in its social and children welfare tasks for 2003 was 10 per cent less and for 2004 5 per cent less than that of 2002. After an increase in 2005, the appropriation for normative funding for 2006 is 10 per cent less than the 2002 level. Decline in family tax reliefs is even greater: in comparison to the appropriation for 2002 that was 25 per cent less for 2003, 20 per cent less for 2004, and 22 per cent less for 2005. Family tax relief
in the case of families with one child or two children was abolished from 2006, so the appropriation for 2006 is only 18 per cent of that for 2002.

Family allowance is now the most expensive provision again. In 2005 within the total amount of welfare expenses—including family tax reliefs but without unemployment provisions financed from Labour Market Fund—the family allowance constituted one third of expenses, while in 2006 almost half of them.

The amount of normative funding received by municipalities continues to be the second most expensive item of social expenses but its proportion within the total expenses reduced by 10 per cent in the course of the previous governing period. Normative funding, however, is often granted for free use and most municipalities spend a considerable part of social normative funding on other than social purposes.

The proportion of the total amount of child care aid and child care benefit slightly increased, and in 2006 it was the second greatest item of expenses within welfare budget. The weight of family tax relief decreased from 17.5% in 2002 to 2.3%.
Change in appropriations for support from state budget to families, additional family allowance, and family tax relief. (HUF billion.)

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<td><strong>595.6</strong></td>
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*Source: Budget laws*
Appropriations for support to families with children, additional family allowance, and family tax reliefs, financed from state budget, in proportion of the appropriations for 2000 (2000=100%)

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<td>117</td>
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<td>112</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>106.7</td>
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*Source:* Budget laws
The proportion of the appropriation of each provision and benefit in comparison to the appropriation of the total appropriation for welfare provisions and benefits in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Provision</th>
<th>The proportion of the provision in comparison to the total welfare appropriations for 2000 (%)</th>
<th>The proportion of the provision in comparison to the total welfare appropriations for 2001 (%)</th>
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<th>The proportion of the provision in comparison to the total welfare appropriations for 2003 (%)</th>
<th>The proportion of the provision in comparison to the total welfare appropriations for 2004 (%)</th>
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<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
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*Source: Budget laws*
Restructuring of family support system

The family support system basically consists of four types of provisions or supports:

- family allowance
- child care benefit, child care aid, and child raising support
- family tax reliefs

*Family allowance* was received by families for 2,103 million children in 2004. The average amount of the provision per family was HUF 11,971.

Political controversies on *family allowance* concern two highly debated issues. One of the dilemmas was whether universal character of the provision should be kept or it should be bound to an income-test, while the other issue was the devaluation of the family allowance. Between 1995 and 1998 family allowance was received on the basis of income-test but the proportion of the children receiving family allowance reduced only by 6 per cent point. An important argument of those in support of maintaining the universal character is that of those who were deprived from this provision the most lived in the poorest counties while the least in the richest counties; this means that ability to enforce interests is more important than the actual need.

Fidesz government taking office in 1998 re-established the universal character of the provision but family allowance for school-age children was bound to school attendance certificate and the value of the provision was frozen. After the transition the real value of the family allowance was hit by the greatest devaluation; it was continuously losing its value; the devaluation reached its peak in 2001 when the real value of the provision was as little as 35.7% of the 1990 level. Medgyessy government taking office in 2002 raised the amount of the provision again and the real value of the family allowance reached the 42% of the 1990 level. Towards the end of the governing period the cabinet led by Ferenc Gyurcsány restructured the whole provision system; the basis of the new system was a much higher amount of family allowance.

*Regular child protection support* was received by 670,000 children in 2004 and the average monthly amount per capita of it was HUF 5,200.
The regular child protection support was built in the system by the 1997 act on child protection as and it was always alien to the system. Municipalities were outraged at the replacement of the former regular child raising aid by regular and normative funding of children; in addition the provision was defined by the legislators as a device of child protection—though it had importance only in theory. The regular child protection support was targeted at the poorest families but the basis of its calculation was the minimum of old-age pension, like all other municipality aid—except that the municipality’s right to consideration is limited to decide if the support is granted in cash or in kind; which makes quite a difference—but legislation did not take the risk to bind it to some recognized need.

The amount of the regular child protection support originally was 20% of the prevailing old-age pension. The provision was renamed as additional family allowance; its amount was raised by HUF 400 and then frozen. The measure on the one hand abolished the opportunity of indexing granted by the original regulation; and, on the other, it symbolically removed the provision from the means of child protection to that of social policy—as opposed to family policy—alongside restricting the income test as well. In 2000 more the provision was received for than 780 thousand children; in two years’ time this figure was managed to be reduced by 30 thousand and then, during the next two years, the number of the children receiving this provision was further reduced by 80 thousand. From 2002 the provision was given back its original name; but measures about indexing bound to needs were still not taken. The provision was abolished from January 2006 and partly was built in the family allowance of raised amount.

In 2004 the child care benefit (GYES) was claimed by 163 thousand persons on average, child care fee (GYED) by 83 thousand persons on average, while child raising support (GYET) by 47 thousand persons on average.

As an optional alternative of GYES, which is a fixed and rather low amount, GYED, which is proportionate to the income, is definitely natalist since encourages a growth in the number of births not in itself but a growth in the number of births within families with higher income. The ‘Bokros Package’ abolished the GYED under the aegis of the principle of means; then Fidesz re-introduced it from 2000. The duality of GYED and GYES is an example of segmented income-like provision connected to child raising.
The hypocrisy of the system is shown by the extent of devaluation in the case of the individual provisions. The peak of the devaluation of GYES was reached in 1996: the real value of it was 74 per cent of that in 1990. The real value of GYES in 2004 was still only 92 per cent of that in 1992. On the contrary, the real value of GYED, which is favourable for families with higher income, was 130 per cent of that in 1990.

The family tax relief, and tax-related welfare policy in general is an element of the whole welfare system that is the most debated. Tax related welfare policy is not simply a system of welfare reliefs: the government regards tax reliefs as means of welfare of primary importance and weight and, alongside, imposes tax on minimum wage. An opportunity of tax reduction is regarded as an alternative for tax reliefs but the size of tax reliefs in itself would not make it possible to reduce the taxes considerably.

Tax-related welfare policy, according to its critics, is non-transparent (or invisible) and unjust. In their opinion tax relief is essentially exemption of the general income withdrawal referring to the given income category; and there is only technical difference between this kind of provision and welfare income by some right received by the same group. However, in the case of welfare incomes the budget law settles the appropriation of expenses while in the case of the tax relief it defines the benefited income groups. The case of tax free minimum wage is obviously similar. Nevertheless, tax-related welfare policy is regarded as unjust since relief may be claimed by people with income exceeding a certain level.

Income-like provision of families (i.e. GYES, GYED, GYET) raising children was left untouched by the government. Distribution of family allowance, regular child protection support and family tax relief was rather varying in 2005 before restructuring of the system.

- Households in the lowest income decile received 15 per cent of family allowance, 35 per cent of regular child protection support whilst only 2 per cent of tax relief.
- Families in the bottom income third received 41 per cent of family allowance, 77 per cent of regular child protection support whilst only 17 per cent of tax relief.

That is to say, 23 per cent of the aid-like regular child protection support, which is targeted at the poor and is bound to income test, somehow ‘leaked’, it was received by families other than the poorest, while 87 per cent of the tax reliefs was shared among the well-to-do families.
Households belonging to the first seven income deciles received 78 per cent of family allowance, 98 per cent of regular child protection support, and 68 per cent of tax reliefs. Therefore 22 per cent of family allowance and 32 per cent of tax reliefs was received by families in the top three income deciles.32

From 1st January 2006 in the case of families with one child or two children family tax relief and regular child protection support were abolished. Both provisions were built in family allowance that is generally received by families with children. Restructuring of family support system might be regarded as a reform measure of great importance on behalf of the government, from several points of view. Via restructuring the government intended to reduce the segmented character of the family support system; that is to say the differences in provisions for different income groups. Consequently, both tax related welfare policy and provisions based on the principle of means and bound to income test have lost their importance. In other words, the faith in practicability of benefits on the basis of principle of means has shaken.

Péter Mózer tried to model the winners and losers of the new family support system. According to this model the restructuring of the system was favourable for families with children that had formerly received only family allowance and that could just partly claim family tax relief. Winners are households with one child or two children that could use tax relief properly but did not receive child protection support. Losers are households that received both provisions and could use tax relief.

All in all, the change affected positively more families than negatively; while distribution of welfare incomes and benefits has become just slightly fairer. Most of the winner families are poor, but the change in the support system did not affect a part of poor families or, if affected, it did negatively.33

(János Zolnay)

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33 Péter Mózer ibid.
IMPACTS OF THE NEW
ANTHDI-SCRIMINATION POLICY

The passing of the Act on promotion of equal treatment and equal opportunities (hereinafter referred to as 'Equal Opportunities Act or Ebktv.') can be considered a turning point in the fight for anti-discrimination in Hungary. The Act entered into force on 27 January 2004. Although it may have deficiencies, some of its sections may after a certain time require correction, its passing absolutely meant the start of a new era in the area of legal protection.

Legislators were under pressure from two directions to pass this Act. Both non-governmental organisations with experience in the area of legal protection and the minority ombudsman expressed the opinion that Hungarian anti-discrimination legislation does not offer sufficient protection for the victims of negative discrimination. At the same time our EU legal harmonisation obligation also required amendments in the national legislation.

The Hungarian anti-discrimination regime was based on the prohibition of negative discrimination laid down in the Constitution. This ensures human and citizenship rights for all persons staying in the territory of the Republic of Hungary without discrimination on the basis of race, colour, gender, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, financial situation, birth or any other status. The Act provides for strict punishment of any negative discrimination on the basis of the above. Norms prohibiting discrimination laid down in laws on various sectors (Labour Code, Public Education Act, Media Act) were created to implement and complement this provision.

To put it simply this means that provisions prohibiting negative discrimination could earlier be found in almost all areas of law. However in practice in many cases it was extremely difficult or even impossible for victims of discrimination to obtain appropriate legal remedy. One of the underlying reasons was that anti-discrimination provisions available in laws on various sectors did not constitute a coherent regime (such norms existed in some areas of law while did not exist in others), and the majority of them

34 Act CXXV of 2003 (Ebktv.).
35 Article 70/A (1), (2) of the Constitution.
were declarative rules without related sanctions for breach of the norm. Consequently the provision laid down in the Constitution for strict punishment of discrimination could not be implemented. Although in numerous areas laws declared that it is prohibited to apply negative discrimination, the acts implementing discrimination, i.e. the subject that is prohibited by law, were not defined. Guidance for the consequences of violation of the prohibition was neither available. Definition of the term of discrimination was missing, including the definition of indirect discrimination.\textsuperscript{36}

Another problem in the procedures launched for violation of the prohibition of negative discrimination was the requirement to provide evidence. In most cases the only remedy available to victims of negative discrimination was a civil law procedure for violation of personality rights.\textsuperscript{37} In a civil law procedure generally the party having a vested interest in making the court accept the facts is required to provide evidence in the case.\textsuperscript{38} This meant that in a given case the aggrieved party had to provide evidence that he was not admitted to a place of amusement, not allowed to move to the main street of a town, etc. because of his Roma origin. Since discrimination is generally not implemented openly but in some hidden form it was extremely difficult in a legal procedure to fulfil the obligation of providing evidence, i.e. to show that racist motivation was behind the act contemplated in the lawsuit. The restaurateur did not openly say that gypsies may not amuse themselves at his place, just referred to a private event. Similarly when a community did not want Romas to live in the neighbourhood they could say that there was no apartment or building site available in the neighbourhood. In many cases protectors of minority rights lost cases because the court required them to provide such evidence that was impossible to provide.

Before the entry into force of the Equal Opportunities Act a different requirement for provision of evidence was in place only in the area of labour law. The Labour Code\textsuperscript{39} provided that in the case of a dispute between the parties in respect of a case of negative discrimination the employer is required to provide evidence that its acts did not infringe the pro-

\textsuperscript{36} The only exception was the area of labour law where after its amendment in 2001 the Labour Code (Act XXII of 1992) defined indirect discrimination.

\textsuperscript{37} Article 75 of the Civil Code provided that personality rights shall be honoured and respected by everyone, these rights are protected by law. According to Article 76 violation of personality rights means in particular any negative discrimination of private persons on the basis of gender, race, nationality or religion, violation of the freedom of conscience, unlawful deprivation of personal freedom, injury to body or health, contempt for the honour or human dignity.

\textsuperscript{38} Act III of 1952 on the rules of civil law cases.

\textsuperscript{39} Act XXII of 1992 (Labour Code).
visions for prohibition of negative discrimination. Additionally the Labour Code was the law which was the least attacked due to its provisions for discrimination, and this was not only in connection with the reversed requirement for provision of evidence. The definition of indirect discrimination was introduced in the amendment passed in 2001, and from that time the law applied also to acts committed before the establishment of employment. This was important because the earlier regulation did not enable sanctioning the most frequent form of discrimination, i.e. the case when somebody is not employed due to his ethnical origin. Consequently when such case was brought to a labour court it was doomed to rejection on the grounds of lack of competence. Notwithstanding the modern anti-discrimination elements of the Labour Code the chaotic relations in anti-discrimination regulations were well reflected by the fact that the Code did not contain the definition of direct discrimination. The cases when the concerned parties attempted to obtain a job through other legal relationship aiming at work, e.g. work assignment, were similarly problematic. Since in such cases employment was not established the protective provisions of the Labour Code could not be applied. Notwithstanding we can say that even with the above-mentioned ‘deficits’ this was the law which was the most harmonised with European Union norms.

**Act on equal treatment**

The Equal Opportunities Act that entered into force on 1 January 2004 contains numerous elements that offer an efficient response to the problems outlined in the introduction section. First of all the Act defines discrimination through distinguishing **direct** and **indirect discrimination**, **harassment**, **unlawful segregation**

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40 Article 5 (2) of the Labour Code.
41 According to the amendment of rules of civil law cases entered into force on 1 January 1991 labour courts had already before 2001 competence in lawsuits connected with acts committed before the establishment of employment.
42 According to Article 8 of Ebktv. direct negative discrimination means any provision as a result of which a person or group is treated less favourably than another person or group in a comparable situation due to his/its actual or alleged gender, race, colour, nationality, national or ethnical origin, mother tongue, disability, health condition, religion or world view, political or other opinion, marital status, motherhood (pregnancy) or fatherhood, sexual affiliation, sexual identity, age, social origin, financial situation, part-time or definite term employment or other legal relationship aiming at working, membership in interest organisation, other status, feature or parameter.
43 According to Article 9 indirect discrimination means any provision that does not qualify as direct discrimination, and seemingly fulfils the requirement of equal treatment, but brings persons or groups with the features defined in Article 8 in a situation that is for a significant share of them worse than that of other persons or groups in comparable situation.
44 According to Article 10 (1) harassment means an act that harms human dignity in connection with a feature of the concerned person identified in Article 8 with the objective or impact of creating an environment that intimidates, is hostile, humiliating, dishonourable or attacking for the given person.
and retaliation. In respect of the requirement to provide evidence the Act provides that in a procedure initiated for violation of the requirement of equal treatment the aggrieved party has to provide evidence that the aggrieved person or group was discriminated and that the aggrieved person or group possessed – actually or according to the assumption of the infringing entity – at the time of violation any one of the features defined by the Act. If it cannot be proven the other party is required to provide evidence that it has fulfilled the requirement of equal treatment or was not required to fulfil it in respect of the given legal relationship.

The Act defines what enforcement of the requirement of equal treatment means in the given areas. The Act defines the potential acts prohibited in connection with violation of the requirement of equal treatment in the areas of employment, social security and health, housing, education and finally trading of goods and use of services.

The scope of application of the Act is rather wide. The Act applies to all state and municipality bodies and other bodies performing a public duty or exercising authority powers; public education and higher education institutions financed by the state; acts of persons and institutions providing child care and child welfare services; museums, libraries, public education institutions; voluntary mutual insurance funds, private pension funds, healthcare service providers; political parties and state-financed bodies.

One of the most crucial points of the Act is to define to what extent the prohibition of discrimination should apply to legal relationships between private persons. The legislator identifies on an itemised basis the cases when private persons are also required to fulfil the requirement of equal treatment. This means that in addition to the above Ebktv. applies also to the following legal relationships regardless of whether the players listed above participate in them:

- Entities which make an offer or invite bids for the conclusion of contract for a scope of persons not predefined.

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45 According to Article 10 (2) unlawful segregation means an act that segregates a person or a group of persons with the features identified in Article 8 from others without objectively considered reasonable grounds.

46 According to Article 10 (3) retaliation means an act causing, aiming at causing or threatening with legal harm to a person filing a complaint, initiating a procedure or participating in a procedure for violation of the requirement of equal treatment.

47 Article 19 (1), (2) and (3) of the Ebktv.

48 Articles 21 to 20 of Ebktv.

49 Article 4 (a) to (m) of Ebktv.
• Entities which provide services or sell goods in rooms accessible to customers (this includes shops, restaurants, places of amusement, hotels, etc.).

• Private entrepreneurs, legal persons (limited liability companies, shareholder companies, joint ventures) and organisations without legal personality (public partnerships, limited partnerships) receiving state subsidy when they are using such state subsidy.

• Each employer and person authorised to give instructions in respect of the employment relationship or other legal relationship aiming at working.\(^{50}\)

The Act does not apply to legal relationships between family members and relatives, legal relationships of church officials directly connected with the religious activities of churches, legal relationships between members of social organisations and legal persons and organisations without legal personality connected with such membership.

In the following section we address in detail some elements of Ebktv, such as shared requirement to provide evidence, enforcement of claims in the interest of the public and the institutions of procedures which can be initiated on the basis of the Act.

**Enforcement of claims in the interest of the public**

One of the major innovations in Ebktv. is the introduction of the institution of enforcement of claims in the interest of the public. The Act provides that lawsuit for the protection of personality rights can be filed with a court for violation of the requirement of equal treatment and labour law procedure can be initiated by a prosecutor, the Equal Treatment Authority\(^{51}\) and social and interest organisations if the violation of the requirement of equal treatment was based on a feature that is an inherent feature of the personality of the given individual and the infringement of law impacts a larger group of persons that cannot be clearly identified.\(^{52}\) Enforcement of claim in the interest of the public means that it is not the aggrieved person who directly turns to a court or other authority for the enforcement of his rights, but an organisation acts or initiates a procedure on its own right. The reason for introduction of lawsuits in the interest of the public was

\(^{50}\) Article 5 (a) to (d) of Ebktv.

\(^{51}\) The Authority will be addressed later in detail.

\(^{52}\) Article 20 (1) of Ebktv.
among others that in certain cases it is in the interest of the society to investigate and sanction an infringement of law. We can often encounter phenomena and acts which can deeply hurt a given minority group although not identifying a given person.

The Background Society for the Gay was the first social organisation which initiated a lawsuit on its own name for violation of the requirement of equal treatment. They made a complaint in the procedure initiated against the Károli Gáspár Calvinistic University because the defendant excluded in a general statement persons living or expressing their homosexuality from the education of religious teachers and theology. The Supreme Court acting as an appeal court that finally rejected the complaint interpreted numerous sections of the Equal Opportunities Act including the rules of applicability of enforcement of claim in the interest of the public. A party entitled to initiate request of enforcement of claim in the interest of the public needs to certify for its legitimisation in the lawsuit that its goals laid down in its deed of foundation (articles of association) include promotion of equal opportunities of the given underprivileged group or protection of the human or citizenship rights of the group in whose name they initiate the request. They also need to prove that the group ‘represented’ by them possesses a feature that is an inherent feature of human personality. When these are fulfilled it is sufficient—in respect of the right to initiate enforcement of claim in the interest of the public—to declare that the right to equal treatment of the group on whose behalf it acts was harmed. The Supreme Court explained in this ruling that sexual affiliation is an inherent feature of human personality.

In the other Hungarian lawsuit for enforcement of claim in the interest of the public initiated by the Chance for Underprivileged Children Foundation against the Municipality of Miskolc the court recognised ethnical origin as an inherent feature of human personality. However the court declared that the ‘underprivileged’ status is beyond this scope even when “family circumstances and social background can in the long term have in some form an impact on the human personality”, therefore enforcement of claim in the interest of the public cannot be based on it. The court found also

53 See Ruling No. Pfv. IV. 20678/2005/5. adopted by the Supreme Court acting as appeal court; Fundamentum, 2005/3, Pages 100 – 104.
54 Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County Court Decision No. 13. P. 21660/2005/16. The decision is not final yet, the Foundation filed an appeal.
55 Quotation from the reasons of the decision on Page 8.
in this procedure sufficient to prove the above mentioned circumstances for legiti-
misation in the lawsuit.\textsuperscript{56} The Foundation turned to court because its view was that the
Municipality of Miskolc violated the requirement of equal treatment when it changed
the geographical boundaries applicable to registration for school in such a way that
maintained or promoted unlawful segregation of Roma children. In the first instance
the first school segregation lawsuit in Hungary resulted in rejection of the claim, the
court did not find violation of the requirement of equal treatment.\textsuperscript{57} The Foundation
filed an appeal, now the Debrecen Regional Court has to decide the case and at the
same time interpret the new terms of anti-discrimination laid down in Ebktv.

Although the legislator failed to define \textit{``inherent feature of human personality''},
it is evident that in addition to ethnic origin and sexual affiliation also gender, race,
colour, nationality, motherhood or fatherhood, age, sexual identity, disability, religion
or world view must be within this scope and in some cases health condition may be
also such circumstance. This can include any feature, condition or status whose fea-
tures and impact basically and significantly influence the view of the individual about
the world and himself.

Although Ebktv. authorises the Equal Treatment Authority and the prosecutors to
initiate such lawsuits this has not occurred yet. When this legislation was interpreted
it was raised that such claims could be filed also with the Equal Treatment Authority
but for the moment this is not allowed by the Act. Fortunately the courts’ practice in
Hungary did not put major obstacles to enforcement of claims in the interest of the
public, i.e. made efforts to keep this legal institution alive. When this Act is interpret-
ed a question can arise: how could an infringement of law impact \textit{``a larger group of
persons that cannot be clearly identified''}. What is a larger group and how is it possi-
bile that infringement of law cannot be translated to the level of individual harm? On
paper enforcement of claim in the interest of the public is possible also when a given
aggrieved person is available and this person agrees to individually initiate a proce-
dure, while it is certain that the infringing provision impacts other persons too whose

\textsuperscript{56} Out of the two social organisations the Background Society for the Gay lost the lawsuit finally, the Chance for the
Underprivileged Children Foundation lost the lawsuit in the first instance, but this fact is not connected with the circum-
stance that they initiated the procedure through enforcement of claim in the interest of the public.

\textsuperscript{57} See further information at: http://www.cfcf.hu/lista2.php?site=ugyek .
group is open and all members cannot be individually identified. The size of the “larger group” cannot be quantified because if the headcount of the group would be known probably the identities of the individuals constituting the group would also be known, so this circumstance would hinder the enforcement of such claim.

The crucial point of legal regulation is enforcement of claims for damages. The Act clearly declares that in the case of enforcement of claim in the interest of the public claim for damages may also be filed. However to award damages—be it financial or non-financial damage—in each case the individual enforcing the claim needs to prove the amount of damage suffered. It is hard to imagine how the amount of damage suffered by several individuals who cannot be clearly identified could be quantified. Probably the courts’ practice will not be able to cope with this sanction, but it cannot be excluded that just as a result of such lawsuits the institution of fine imposed in the interest of the public so far rarely applied will gain life. According to the relevant provisions of the Civil Code if the amount that can be awarded as damages is not proportionate to the gravity of the committed acts the court may impose a fine on the infringing entity to be paid to a public interest fund.

Another provision connected with the above is that the amount of damages or fine imposed in the interest of the public is payable to the state budget. The legislator reckons with the application of fine to be paid to a public interest fund but the not sufficiently clear wording of the legislation can make enforcement of claims difficult: considering the courts’ practice so far it is questionable whether they will actually address a sanction payable to such uncertain (or for the moment less regulated in a normative way) fund. It will be up to the courts’ practice and the organisations authorised to enforce claims to further elaborate the legal particularities of enforcement of claims in the interest of the public connected with equal treatment.

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58 According to 20 (2) of Ebktv. the amount of damages or fine in the interest of the public awarded in a procedure initiated through enforcement of claim in the interest of the public is payable to the state budget.

59 Article 84 (2) of the Civil Code.

Requirement to provide evidence

It was already addressed that before the entry into force of Ebktv. the greatest problem in procedures initiated for negative discrimination was the requirement to provide evidence.

Ebktv. introduced—on the basis of the EU laws and the case law of the European Court of Justice—in the procedures within its scope rules for provision of evidence differing from the earlier practice to give preference to the claiming party. The way of providing evidence known by the public as reversed requirement of provision of evidence actually means requirement of shared provision of evidence. The Act provides that in procedures initiated for violation of the requirement of equal treatment the party whose rights were violated or the party authorised to enforce the claim in the interest of the public shall provide evidence that the person or group whose rights were violated suffered a disadvantage and the person or group whose rights were violated possesses any one of the protected features defined in Article 8 of the Act.\(^61\) When the latter condition was proven so far the courts’ practice respected the right of the person or group whose rights were violated to freely select and express their identity. If the person whose rights were violated can successfully provide evidence on these two criteria the other party in the procedure shall provide evidence that it fulfilled or in respect of the given legal relationship was not required to fulfil the obligation of equal treatment.\(^62\)

As part of the so-called exemption evidencing the Act identifies grounds of exemption to which the person subject to the provisions of the Act may refer as grounds for application of discrimination without being unlawful. Ebktv. basically distinguishes three grounds of exemption, such as general ground of exemption, special ground of exemption and positive discrimination. The definition of general ground of exemption is necessary to eliminate the possibility of abuse of the opportunities granted by the Act. According to the relevant section a provision based on a protected feature that “has an objectively considered reasonable ground directly connected with the given legal relationship” does not violate the requirement of equal treatment.\(^63\) The Supreme Court deciding the above-mentioned appeal of the Background Society

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\(^61\) Article 19 (1) a) and b) of Ebktv.

\(^62\) Article 19 (2) a) and b) of Ebktv.

\(^63\) Article 7 (2) of Ebktv.
argued among the reasons for its decision that the Károli University had provided evidence with a ground of exemption that it was not required to fulfil the requirement of equal treatment in respect of the given legal relationship—education of religious teachers and clergymen—because the discrimination had an objectively considered reasonable ground connected with the given legal relationship, namely maintenance of the religious doctrines in the given area.64

The Act recognises also special grounds of exemption in certain areas of life. The underlying reason is that large number of legal relationships exist in the given areas where it should be reviewed again and again whether a case of discrimination is within the scope of a general ground of exemption, i.e. if an objectively considered reasonable ground of exemption exists. To avoid this the definition of special grounds of exemption is necessary in addition to the general grounds of exemption connected with the given legal relationship. For example the Act provides in connection with employment that “discrimination based on a requirement for employment that is based on religion or other world view, national or ethnical origin, spirit that basically determines the nature of the organisation that is reasonable due to the nature of the given job or the circumstances of performing the job, is proportionate and feasible” does not constitute violation of the requirement of equal treatment.65 This provision was created to ensure for example that religious schools may require from the employees to respect and practice the given religion. The law practice needs to elaborate the scope of employees to which this ground of exemption can apply since while a catholic school may evidently require from a theology teacher to be of catholic religion it is not certain that the same may be lawfully required from a gymnastics teacher, and when somebody is not hired in this school as cleaner because of his/her Calvinistic religion he/she can make complaint to the relevant authorities, probably with success, for violation of the right of equal treatment.

A special ground of exemption in the area of education enables among others the operation of non-co-education institutions (provided that “if participation in the education is voluntary for this reason the participants in the education are not discrimi-
nated”66 and organisation of education on the basis of religion or other world view or minority or nationality origin when the purpose or curriculum of the education justifies the creation of separated classes or groups.67

The third ground of exemption is giving preference whereby a measure based on law, government decree issues by virtue of an authorisation granted by law or collective agreement applicable for a definite period or until the fulfilment of a given condition aiming at elimination of the objectively considered inequality of opportunities available for a specifically identified social group does not constitute violation of the requirement of treatment.68

This sharing of the requirement to provide evidence basically changed the course of anti-discrimination court procedures. Now the court has to examine in the first round in a procedure initiated on the basis of Ebktr. for violation of the requirement of equal treatment whether the defendant had the obligation to fulfil the requirement of equal treatment.69 Then the court has to consider whether the defendant could provide evidence on the ground of exemption. Although according to law the claimant has to provide evidence only on belonging to the protected group and the discrimination, the law appliers are still uncertain whether it is necessary to provide evidence that there is a causal interrelation between the protected feature and the discrimination. It seems that it is still not fully clear for and accepted by courts that the point of the institution of shared requirement to provide evidence is that the party suffering discrimination is not required to provide evidence on the motivation of the discriminating party. The person under the procedure may be released from the responsibility only if he can provide evidence that he did not have to fulfil the requirement of equal treatment. He can fulfil this obligation either by pointing out the explicit provision of law that enables discrimination or provides evidence that he had an objectively considered reasonable ground for discrimination that is directly interrelated with the given legal relationship.

66 Article 28 (1) of Ebktr.
67 Article 28 (2) of Ebktr.
68 Article 11 (1) of Ebktr. Article 11 (1) of the Act enables political parties to give special preference to promote the participation of the representatives of certain underprivileged groups in politics.
69 Article 19 (2) of Ebktr.
Equal Treatment Authority

It is crucial for the efficiency of anti-discrimination regulation to ensure procedures and ways of implementing it. Article 13 of Directive 2000/43/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin requires the member states to designate a body or bodies “for the promotion of equal treatment of all persons without discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin.” These bodies may form part of agencies charged at national level with the defence of human rights or the safeguard of the individuals’ rights. The competences of this body (these bodies) shall include the following: providing assistance to victims of discrimination in pursuing their complaints about discrimination, conducting independent surveys concerning discrimination, and publishing independent reports and making recommendations on any issue relating to such discrimination.

According to the provisions of Ebktv. the public administration body with national competence responsible for controlling the implementation of the requirement of equal treatment was established in February 2005. Its major importance is that the Equal Treatment Authority (hereinafter referred to as ’Authority or EBH’) is required to judge requests and adopt decisions under public administration procedures much faster than in court procedures.\(^{70}\) This means that the party suffering discrimination can obtain legal remedy through a much faster and simpler procedure and does not have to wait years until the case is resolved. However in such procedure the Authority may only impose a fine\(^{71}\) if establishes violation of the requirement of equal treatment. If the complainant wants to claim damages for the humiliation suffered he needs to bring the case to court or wait for the decision of the Authority and in the case of positive decision initiate a lawsuit.\(^{72}\) Establishment of the Authority is significant also because while earlier legal remedy through public administration procedure was available exclusively in the case of discrimination in labour cases and in the

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\(^{70}\) The Authority acts according to the provisions of Act CXL of 2004 on the general rules of public administration procedure and service and Government Decree No. 362/2004. (XI.26.) on the Equal Treatment Authority and the detailed rules of its procedures. The Authority shall adopt a resolution within seventy-five days of submission of the request or initiating ex officio the procedure.

\(^{71}\) The amount of fine can range from HUF 50,000 to 6,000,000.

\(^{72}\) EBH’s decision is not binding for the court, the evidencing procedure needs to be carried out independently. Naturally when somebody makes a request with a positive decision of the Authority in hand he has better chances in the court procedure too.
catering trade. EBH’s competence covers all areas listed in the Act, such as education, housing, health, etc. The Authority is expected to handle discrimination cases more professionally since its work is supported by a body of experts.

In terms of providing assistance to victims the Authority is responsible for conducting upon request an investigation to determine whether the requirement of equal treatment was violated and to continuously supply information and provide assistance to the concerned parties in their actions against violation of the requirement of equal treatment. Additionally – when there are no specific victims but the statutory conditions are fulfilled – it can institute a lawsuit in a labour law case or to protect personality rights with the right of enforcement of claims in the interest of the public. In addition to the above the Authority has consulting, participation, reporting and promotion tasks which include giving opinion on draft laws concerning equal treatment, make proposals for regulations and government decisions concerning its scope of powers, contributing to the elaboration of government reports concerning equal treatment, preparing annual reports to the government and regularly supplying information to the public and the government about the situation of implementation of equal treatment.

According to the general rule the Authority can be requested to conduct a procedure by the natural or legal person or organisation without legal personality aggrieved, but the ombudsman and the prosecutor may also request it. With the authorisation of the aggrieved party social and interest organisations may act as representatives in the procedure initiated for violation of the requirement of equal treatment. In these public administration procedures these organisations have the rights of the customer and they may also institute a lawsuit in a labour law case or to protect personality rights with the right of enforcement of claims in the interest of the public.

If violation of the requirement of equal treatment is proven the Authority applies the sanctions defined by law. Appeal against the resolutions of the Authority may not

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73 Two public administration forums, the Labour Inspectorate and the Consumer Protection Inspectorate had and still have competence for controlling the prohibition of negative discrimination in their respective areas. Both bodies may impose fine in the case of infringement of law.

74 See further information about the operation of the Authority in Articles 12 to 17 of Ebktv. and Government Decree No. 362/2004. (XII.26.).

75 According to Ebktv. in the case of violation of the requirement of equal treatment the Authority may require termination of the unlawful situation, prohibit its continuation, publish the fact of infringement of law and finally require the party under the procedure to pay a fine amounting from HUF 50,000 to 6,000,000 (Article 16 (1) (a) to (e)).
be filed through a public administration procedure, but revision of the resolution may be requested from the Metropolitan Court of Budapest.

However a procedure for violation of the requirement of equal treatment can be initiated not only in front of the Equal Treatment Authority but also in front of other bodies. For example lawsuits in labour law case or to protect personality rights can be initiated in front of courts and procedures can be initiated in front of consumer protection, labour and other authorities responsible for offences. Additionally naturally the aggrieved party may decide to turn to the ombudsman.

The legislator enables the aggrieved party to decide which of the potential public administration bodies to turn to. However the law requires the Authority and the other public administration bodies having competence to judge the given offence to mutually notify each other of the initiation of the procedure. When a procedure is initiated in front of a public administration body another public administration body may not act in the case of the same infringement of law committed against the same person and must suspend its procedure initiated for infringement of law committed against another person until a final decision is adopted in the given case.

The authority started its operation on 1 February 2005. According to figures published on its website the most requests were submitted in connection with employment: generally Roma people, women aged over 50 and child-bearing women made complaints in connection with employment, dismissal and irregularly concluded employment agreements. During its just longer than one-year period of operation the Authority imposed in several cases high amount fines among others due to ethnical discrimination. In 2005 a trading company was required to pay HUF 500,000 fine because its employee (and also co-owner) rejected to serve a Roma family in the night-and-day shop operated by it. In another case the Authority imposed a fine of HUF 700,000 on an individual entrepreneur who said to a Roma man applying for a house-painter job offered by him that he would not hire people of Gypsy origin. It seems that there is a positive trend of rising amount of fine imposed for negative discrimination established

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76 www.egyenlobanasmod.hu
77 In both cases the claimants were represented by the National and Ethnical Minority Office (NEKI). See further information about these cases in White Book 2005, Report of the National and Ethnical Minority Office, Labour discrimination cases, Case Csaba T. and White Book 2005, Access to public services, Case József P. (www.neki.hu).
in a public administration procedure since the establishment of EBH. In a labour discrimina-
tion case represented by the Legal Aid Office for National and Ethnic Minorities (NEKI) in 2004 the Labour Inspectorate imposed a fine of HUF 100,000 when a represen-
tative of the company under the procedure acknowledged that he did not employ the
complainant because of his gypsy origin.\textsuperscript{78} The above-mentioned fines of HUF 500,000
and 700,000 show that the weight of discrimination is growing since the entry into force
of the Act on Equal Opportunities and establishment of the Authority.

**Ministry of Justice, Roma Anti-Discrimination Client Service Network**

In October 2001 the Ministry of Justice established – in co-operation with the National
Gypsy Minority Self-Government and the National and Ethnical Minority Office – the
Roma Anti-Discrimination Client Service Network (hereinafter referred to as
‘Network’). When the Network was established the legislator was led by the state
objective to implement the constitutional principle of equal opportunities and the
recognition that one of the drivers of negative discrimination against Roma people is
that the law enforcement capability of Roma people is very poor due to their social and
economic disadvantages. This makes it difficult – even impossible in the majority of
the cases – to act against the discrimination suffered while ‘encourages’ potential dis-
criminators. In many cases appropriate knowledge of rights and obligations can in
itself prevent conflicts.

The operation of the Network is based on the work of lawyers employed through
permanent work assignment contract. Generally one or two lawyers participate in the
work of the Network in each county. The charge of the lawyer’s work is paid by the
Ministry, use of the service is free of charge for the client, the lawyer may not accept
any payment from the client. The costs of initiating and conducting the lawsuit are also
paid by the Ministry. The activity of the Network lawyers is explicitly and definitely
restricted to cases connected with negative discrimination of persons declaring to be
of Roma origin, the Network employees may not act in other cases of Roma persons
and negative discrimination against non-Roma persons.

\textsuperscript{78} See further information about the case in White Book 2002, Report of the Legal Aid Office for National and Ethnic
Minorities, Labour discrimination cases, Case Gyula Cs. (www.neki.hu).
Between 15 October 2001 and 31 July 2005 the Network lawyers received 4,908 cases of which 328 included discrimination (primarily connected with housing, education, violation of personality rights and execution).79

Lawyer of the People service
The Lawyer of the People service of the Ministry of Justice was established according to the Act on legal assistance (Jst.)80. For the moment Jst. enables legal assistance only in out-of-court cases which includes legal consulting, writing of requests and other documents (when necessary preparation of the statement of claim too) and supply of legal information about issues connected with the everyday life (housing, inheritance cases, public utility service debts). Assistance is excluded in certain cases, such as customs, undertaking and loan cases and real estate sales agreements (except consulting on alienation and encumbrance of the home). Legal assistance can be requested on the basis of necessity whereby the legal service charge can be paid or advanced by the state depending on the degree of necessity. The state advances for a period of one year the legal service charge if the net monthly income of the client does not exceed 43% of the gross monthly average income in the national economy in the second year before the target year published by the Central Statistics Office and does not have any property.

Jst. created legal institutions of high importance to facilitate provision of legal assistance for the underprivileged needy members and groups of the society thereby satisfying both Hungarian needs and numerous international and European Union requirements. The general merit of the Act is that it offers help for enforcement of the rights of the needy which is considered significant regardless of the application of thresholds of necessity which can be partly disputed. For the poorest, most helpless strata of the society not only the financial aspect of enforcement of rights causes a problem but often also to find out to which body or person on what conditions they can turn to with their problems. The significance of the institutions created by the Act is that they offer appropriate accessible personal and institutional background for ensur-

79 www.im.hu /
80 Act LXXX of 2003.
ing enforcement of rights of the most needy. From 1 April 2004 to 30 September 2005 the Legal Assistance Service acted in 36,295 cases and provided actual legal help to 27,484 clients.\textsuperscript{81}

**Impact of the Equal Opportunities Act on the minority ombudsman’s work**

One of the pillars of the institution regime created for the protection of the rights of Hungarian national and ethnical minorities continues to be the National and Ethnical Minority Ombudsman’s Office. Entry into force of Ebktv. had an impact also on the procedures conducted by the minority ombudsman. In the legal environment before the passing of the Act the ombudsman established in numerous cases that the basic citizenship rights of the claimants of Roma origin turning to him were violated – in particular the most frequently their rights to social security –, but he could clearly declare the fact of ethnical discrimination less frequently. It was a permanent dilemma whether the minority ombudsman may act also in cases where negative discrimination on ethnical basis cannot be clearly established. According to the Constitution the minority ombudsman has the powers to reveal irregularities connected with minority rights. In addition to the Constitution the Minorities Act\textsuperscript{82} provided that the minority ombudsman may act in cases subject to the provisions of the Minorities Act. However the Minorities Act fails to define the term of discrimination. Consequently the Minority Ombudsman’s Office had to rely on its own experience with procedures when acting against discrimination.

Since the entry into force of Ebktv. the Office consistently expresses the view that the terms and rules of procedure laid down in the Equal Opportunities Act may be applied in the procedures of the ombudsman without any restriction. Since the Act removed from the scope only the offence and penal procedures the minority ombudsman reached the conclusion that the term of discrimination and the special evidencing procedure included therein may be applied in his procedures without any restriction. Consequently today the ombudsman can more clearly establish in a given case the fact of negative discrimination on ethnical basis. In connection with this issue the Office

\textsuperscript{81} /www.im.hu /
\textsuperscript{82} Act LXXVII of 1993.
developed its practice that after the completion of its procedure they contact the lawyer of the Roma Anti-Discrimination Network of the Ministry of Justice with a proposal or recommendation to provide direct legal assistance to the victim of ethnical discrimination to initiate a legal procedure for discrimination.83

Opportunities offered by Ebktv. in the area of protection of minorities’ rights

Entry into force of the Act granted more freedom also to non-governmental minority rights protectors. A review of the cases of the Legal Aid Office for National and Ethnic Minorities (NEKI) shows several cases closed with final decision whereby the request was already based on Ebktv. and the court conducted its procedure with the evidencing procedure defined by the Act with the terms of discrimination defined in the Act.

On 11 May 2005 the Pest County Court approved the first instance decision of the Pest County Labour Court that condemned an asset protection company for violation of the requirement of equal treatment. The procedure against the company was initiated still in 2004 by NEKI because a representative of the company rejected three times the employment of a young man of Roma origin.84 The man presented all documents certifying the qualifications and capability needed for occupation of the asset protection job offered, but the representative of the company did not allow him to fill in the admission test due to his Roma origin. Later he said in the investigation conducted by the Labour Inspectorate that customers do not accept security guards of Gypsy origin. The Labour Court acting in the first instance declared in its judgement that the company violated the requirement of equal treatment when they did not give the compliantant the opportunity to participate in the admission procedure due to his Roma origin. The court required the defendant to pay HUF 500,000 non-financial damages. The reasons for the judgement explained: “The fact in itself that the defendant did not employ the complainant due to his origin constituted an infringement of law. The defendant humiliated the complainant with its act of rejection—exclusively with

83 See further information about the impact of Ebktv. on the procedures of the minority ombudsman in Equal Opportunities in Access to Law and Law Enforcement; Professional Forum, Budapest, 2005; Presentation by Dr. András Magicz, Head of Division (National and Ethnic Minority Rights Ombudsman’s Office); joint publication of the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Youth, Family and Social Matters and Equal Opportunities/

regard to his origin—without examination of his professional qualification and human capacity and exclusion from the opportunity of employment on the same conditions which are applied to the other applicants. The court declared that it can be established without any further evidencing that this way the defendant caused damage to the complainant.” The court made an important declaration also in respect of the non-financial damages when saying that “payment of non-financial damages is suitable—as a general means of protection of personality—for compensation of the negative discrimination suffered by the complainant.”

This judgement was significant since such high amount of damages had not been earlier awarded in a labour procedure for negative discrimination. It is also a positive sign that the reasons given by the court included that in the case of violation of the requirement of equal treatment the fact that damage was suffered must be established without any further evidence.

(Klára Iványi)
INTEGRATION AND ANTI-SEGREGATION EDUCATION POLICY

The achievements of the liberal Ministry of Education, led by Bálint Magyar who was in office between 2002–2006, are widely regarded as outstanding within the Medgyessy government and the first Gyurcsány government. Undoubtedly, this was the first ministry that faced the fact that in consequence of the changes in education policy and education organization during the post-transition period Hungarian public education provided extremely unequal availability for the different social strata. The Ministry of Education had built its policy on two premises that were partly revised at the end of the governing period.

- they assumed that equal opportunity within public education in Hungary might be improved leaving the diversified structure of education, free school choice, and mechanisms of selection in schools untouched; and

- they assumed that ethnic segregation might be handled separately.

Or, to be more accurate, the Ministry of Education had hardly any other choice as to found its policy of equal opportunity on these assumptions as the change of public education system in Hungary was out of question. And yet, the government did not inclined to regard selectivity and segregation within the school system as unchangeable conditions and was aware that time available should be used without any delay. Partly, because of the exclusion of the Roma in Hungary from labour market, the improvement of the current school-age generations’ position in school may not be delayed. Partly, because the period of an education reform is longer than a governing period and the liberal management of the ministry might not plan for a longer time.

The ministry set to work under the pressure for immediate legislation. In 2003 they submitted the most important amendments, began to establish the integration network and the integration programme launched; in 2004 the new National Curriculum was elaborated and the ‘Out of the Back Desk’ programme, targeted at re-integration of Roma children with pseudo-special-needs, was started. 2005 was the year when two level maturity exam was introduced and the ‘Útravaló’ (‘Send-off’) scholarship programme was started. For the sake of the reforms the ministry was ready to confront with trade unions, professional organizations and municipalities.
In the first three years the ministry with its resolution tested the limits of its opportunities as wanted to know whether equal opportunities in education might be improved in the framework of the prevailing public education system. As the answer turned out to be ‘no’, the ministry began to draw the conclusions. The act on public education was amended; the opportunities of the schools for selection were restricted, regulations for drawing borders of catchment areas were made stricter; and in the weeks of the change of government the opportunity of abolishing eight grade secondary schools also emerged. A new era of education policy reforms has begun that is about to change basic elements of the Hungarian public education which were fixed in early 1990s.

Selection, segregation

Decomposition of the system, which based on process-regulation and was controlled with regard to ideology and labour force economy, had already begun in the last years before the transition. This process was accomplished by Law LXXIX/1993 on Public Education. The new system was based on free syllabus and output-regulation, normative funding, and diversified school structure. The state gave up defining the content and controlling the process of public education directly and exclusively. Funding of maintenance from state budget is normative and independent of school sector. Normative funding is coupled with free school choice. Freedom of school choice means mutual freedom of choice. All parents can choose the school they want to have their children enrolled, but the children’s enrolment is granted only by the school in schooling area of their residence. Every school is bound to admit children of school-age from their catchment area, but it is up to their liking to whom they are open to the extent of their free capacity from outside their catchment area. The mutual choice of schools and parents led to an extremely unequal distribution of education goods and services. An exceptionally telling index of school selection and equal opportunities in public education is that while in the case of pupils learning in OECD countries the differences in performance of reading and comprehension are due to differences between schools in 36%, in the case of Hungarian pupils this proportion is 71%. The per-

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formance of children at school and chances for further education is determined by early school choice to a much greater extent than in most of OECD countries.

Early school selection is enhanced by diversification of the school system. The preconditions needed for liberalizing the then existing system of eight-year primary and four-year secondary school, building on each other, were created by the law on public education as early as in 1985, but for modification of the system the allowance of the specialized authority was needed right until the first act on public education passed in 1993. After 1993 the maintainer, mostly the local authority decided if six- or eight-grade secondary schools would be founded. (In consequence of which the differences in quality of secondary schools would be shared by primary schools and the selection would begin at an earlier point.) So new alternatives appeared in addition to the eight-year primary schools, which were much more attractive for the parents of fifth- to eighth-grade children. In the six- and eight-year secondary schools select among the applying ten- to twelve-year-old children by imposing on them early and difficult although legitimate entrance examinations, and all this is done within the system of public education normatively funded by the state/local authority.

The ratio of enrolment at special needs schools in Hungary is disproportionate as it is. Whereas the average proportion of children of special needs amongst general school age children is about 2.5–3% in the EU, this ratio is roughly the double in Hungary, it was about 5.3%. 86 20–22% or more of Roma children attending general schools are placed in special needs or special remedial classes or schools. It is reasonable to regard this phenomenon as intended separation, unless one assumes that such a big proportion of the Roma general school-age children are mild or moderate needs.

Mass enrolment of Roma children at special needs school goes back a few decades. The MSZMP’s (the official name of the state party during the socialist period) decision of 1961 on the Roma population’s ‘catching up’ emphasised the Roma children’s schooling. Then a ministerial order of 1962 encouraged organization of Roma classes, although Roma classes even Roma schools had already existed in Hungary. By the 1970’s these Roma classes and schools had proved to be indefensible; the Ministry of Education officially admitted the fiasco of this system and ordered

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the liquidation of Roma classes. Undoubtedly, Roma children’s enrolment at special needs schools became the alternative of Roma classes and schools, or local managers of education ‘ensured’ this way against the Roma children’s influx. The fact that the large scale enrolment Roma children at special needs school was indefensible was shown by surveys conducted in late 1970’s, but in order to justify the situation arguments had already been formed the idea of ‘family and social handicap’.

The tendency could not been stopped as schools did their best to identify Roma children as of mild or moderate needs in as large proportion as they could and to segregate them at special needs schools. After the transition normative funding contributed to making this situation even worse as the difference between basic normative funding and normative funding for special needs schools became ever greater.

The overrepresentation of Roma children in ‘catch-up’ groups and in small classes for children with learning disabilities and behavioural disorder might be regarded as a form of intended separation. The pattern is rather clear: in most cases the decision makers regard small classes as ‘alternatives’ for special needs schools and remedial classes.

Alonside the practice of ethnic separation, the ‘exodus’ of non-Roma children from schools plays a crucial role in ethnic segregation: non-Roma parents who have the choice will take their children into schools where the proportion of Roma children is lower, whereas Roma parents do not have such a choice.

According to a study carried out by the Hungarian Institute for Education Research in 2000 as many as 770 homogenous Roma classes existed in Hungary; 9000 Roma pupils, 9.6% of all, attended these classes. In 740 classes the proportion of Roma pupils exceeded 75%; these classes were attended by 10,000 Roma pupils, 11% of all. And in 1230 classes the proportion of Roma pupils was between 50% and 74%, these classes were attended by 13,000 Roma pupils, 14.3% of all. Of Roma pupils, who constitute 11% of all general school pupils, a good third, that is to say 32,000 persons, is attending classes where Roma pupils are in majority.87

A comprehensive Roma study of 2003 carried out under the direction of István Kemény and Béla Janky estimated the number of Roma youngsters to 138,000. Other

researchers think the figure lower than that. This study tried to estimate the segregation of Roma youth on the basis of indirect data – that of the parents’ accounts whom they asked. In this way, of all the general school-age Roma pupils 66% attended classes of Roma majority. This figure seems exaggerating, too, but the segregation of the Roma pupils is undoubtedly increasing. This opinion is supported by data referring to segregation between schools. In the academic year of 1999/2000 18% of Roma pupils attended schools of Roma majority, whereas this proportion was 30% in 2004.

The issues of equal opportunity and segregation were not on the agenda of political debates, for several reasons. Political debates on public education system concerned questions of academic freedom, curriculum regulation, school structure and education funding; the viewpoint of equal opportunity inevitably fell behind. Even more important factor is that the extent of selectivity was partially disguised by demographic decline and an expansion of enrolment in secondary and higher education, that is to say, the increase in the proportion of students in higher education.

The post-transition Hungarian public education is characterized by dramatic growth in the number of the youth who continue their studies after completing eight-grade primary school. Two elements of this growth can be verified: steady decrease in the number of the age-groups concerned on the one hand, and increase in places of secondary education on the other. 181,262 children was born in 1975; in 1990 only 125,181; and ten years later, in 2000 just 97,123. The demographic wave peaked amongst the eight-year pupils in the academic year of 1989-1990: then 170,891 pupils finished the eighth year. In 2001-2002 the number of the eighth-year pupils was only 118,200. Of the underlying causes the most important ones are the prevalence of the academic freedom and the effect of the normative funding: the secondary school places depend on decision of the local authorities, and the central labour force administration, which had conserved a situation where secondary and higher education had been of smaller scale than needed and crowds of youth had been trained for unmarketable crafts, has eventually ceased. Normative funding, however, incites the maintainers to maximize the number of pupils.

This trend encouraged Roma pupils completing primary school to continue their studies. During the course of a few years, amongst Roma age-groups completing primary school the ratio of those entering secondary education increased from 10 per cent to approximately 20 per cent, and the ratio of those entering institutions providing no maturity qualification increased from 40 per cent to 66. These figures are certainly more vague than the total figures referring to the ratio of age-groups’ continuing studies. Proportions of continuing studies are still impressive in spite of the fact that the differences between Roma and non-Roma youth has not diminished and that Roma youth entering secondary education would not gain maturity qualification.

**Numbers of pupils completing primary school and entering secondary school**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic year</th>
<th>Completing eight grades (person)</th>
<th>Grammar schools (%)</th>
<th>Vocational school (%)</th>
<th>Trade schools (%)</th>
<th>Health schools (%)</th>
<th>Total number of pupils continuing their studies (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990/1991</td>
<td>164 616</td>
<td>21,1</td>
<td>27,5</td>
<td>42,0</td>
<td>1,3</td>
<td>93,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995/1996</td>
<td>122 359</td>
<td>27,1</td>
<td>33,7</td>
<td>34,2</td>
<td>4,3</td>
<td>99,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/2002</td>
<td>118 200</td>
<td>32,4</td>
<td>37,9</td>
<td>24,4</td>
<td>1,3</td>
<td>96,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Ministry of Education, statistics on education – National Institution for Public Education*

**Ratios of pupils entering secondary education in proportion of pupils completing primary school**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Roma</td>
<td>Roma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not continuing</td>
<td>2,3</td>
<td>16,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational school</td>
<td>4,4</td>
<td>8,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade school</td>
<td>36,5</td>
<td>61,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical middle school</td>
<td>38,3</td>
<td>9,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar school</td>
<td>18,3</td>
<td>3,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100,0</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Hungarian Institute for Education Research*
**Government efforts**

The liberal Education Ministry adapted a new way of speaking and on the contrary of the former practice it was declared that equal opportunity in school should be improved, and ethnic segregation was intolerable and should be abolished. The ministry also gave up the former pedagogical attitude; and instead of ‘Roma pedagogy’, development of gifted and talented, and institution development based on vague conceptions, integration and measures for decreasing segregation were emphasized. However, the ministry left untouched the foundations of the public education system for three years; neither free choice of school nor school selection nor diversified institution system nor education funding bound to municipal funding were to be modified. Instead, it wanted to achieve its goals via

- *anti-discrimination legislation*
- *programmes of pedagogic integration* and
- *funding construction* attached to the pedagogic programmes but fitting to municipality funding.

**Anti-discrimination legislation**

- With the 2003 amendment the of act on public education anti-discrimination passages were incorporated in it; later on, these regulations were transferred to the Act CXXV of 2003\(^90\) on equal treatment and the promotion of equal opportunities.

  The act on equal opportunities has a special section on school segregation emphasizing that it is qualified as violation of the requirement of equal treatment if

  - children are *unlawfully segregated* in an educational institution, or in a division within a class or a group
  - establish an education or training system or institution standards of which do not reach accepted technical requirements or do not meet professional rules, and thus do not ensure a reasonably expectable opportunity to prepare for state exams.

  However, the parts of the act prohibiting negative discrimination contradict the public education system settled in the valid act on public education as municipalities main-

\(^90\) Act CXXV of 2003\(^90\) on equal treatment and the promotion of equal opportunities
taining schools are evidently active subjects of illegal separation. Free choice of school conceptually excludes that Roma children’s growing separation could be qualified as segregation. Distribution among schools and distribution of goods and services among pupils are determined first of all by mutual choice of schools and parents. Municipalities maintaining schools with an abundant supply of education with their education policy they greatly contribute to the creation and preservation of inequalities as well as ethnic segregation. But ethnic segregation is not created by the municipalities. Parents choosing school for their children one of the most important viewpoints is the proportion of Roma children. Tolerated proportion varies by settlements but if the maintainer of a school tried to change—either voluntarily or under force—the proportions in distribution of public education goods or that of Roma and non-Roma children regarded by local elite groups as desired, migration between schools or settlements would immediately start right until the proportion accepted by the parents were re-established.

When a judge passes judgement interpreting contradicting regulations, it is a test case. A test case interpreting the two regulations in connection with an actual case first took place in autumn of 2005. A foundation referring to act CXXV/2003 took a legal proceeding against the municipality of Miskolc. The foundation claimed that the city violated the requirement of equal treatment as the municipality united general schools in 2004 leaving the borders of each school’s catchment area untouched. The plaintiff was a foundation, named ‘Chance to Disadvantaged Children’, that was established explicitly with an aim to launch test cases on discrimination in education against municipalities maintaining schools.

The city of Miskolc in Borsod County seemed to be appropriate to be the first among municipalities that are to be taken to court since the municipality made 15 education unit out of 32 but the borders of catchment areas were left untouched. Restructuring the organization generated tensions especially in cases where a school with a majority of Roma children was united with neighbouring institution of much higher reputation. The leaders of the city’s education policy were eager to calm the anxious parents that unification of the institutions would not affect the practice of enrolment. This way, however, the municipality exposed itself to be sued in a case where identification of an ‘offender’ that violated—either via active steps or some kind of negligence—the requirement of equal treatment is at stake.
The test case in Miskolc has great importance regarding education policy. The issue beyond the actual case is whether it is possible to describe the phenomena of inequality of opportunities in public education and ethnic segregation with the concepts of equal treatment, negative discrimination and illegal separation; and what is more important, whether it is possible to identify the municipalities as responsible for the processes. If it is possible, then it is also possible, in theory, that the court enforces changes in local education policy. If it is not possible, then law on equal opportunities includes abstract ideas at best but it may not enforce directly the improvement of equal opportunities in public education.

Integration pedagogic programmes and normative funding

Besides anti-discrimination legislation the ministry set aside considerable amounts for programmes reversing segregation. The ministry, as far as it was possible, tried to avoid addressing its new programmes explicitly to Roma pupils. Two target groups were named instead: severely disadvantaged children and children with special education needs. There are objective criteria for the category of ‘severely disadvantaged’: it involves families where the education level of the parents is not higher than eight grades of general school and that, due to their low income per capita, are entitled for regular child protection support (which was abolished from January 2006). As much as 60 per cent of the 160,000 severely disadvantaged children may be Roma, and 80 per cent of the Roma children attending general school are severely disadvantaged. The category of ‘pupils with special needs’ involves children with mild to moderate needs justifying their enrolment at special needs school, children with learning disabilities like dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, and children with behaviour disorders like hyperactivity.

Ministry of Education tried to improve situation of children from poor families in nursery schooling. The amendment of the act on public education ordered that severely disadvantaged three-year-old children must be enrolled by the nursery schools of these children’s enrolment zone. According to the 2003 report of Hungarian Institute for Education Research as many as 5000 children’ application to nursery school was turned down per year; according to nursery school statistics the second most frequent reason of refusal was that the parents did not work. That is to say, children who needed nursery schooling from pedagogical point of view the most were the most often refused.
Integration intended to stop and reverse segregation between schools, branch schools and classes. As technical-pedagogic background, National Education and Integration Network was established. Normative funding provided by the ministry intended to stop and reverse separation of Roma children. The maintaining local authorities may require treble of the earlier catch-up subsidy as normative funding for integration if they undertake to diminish the segregation of disadvantaged children in their schools or in all of the schools at the settlement. Normative funding for ability development may be claimed by schools where the proportion of Roma children is so high that they are not entitled for integration funding. Integration funding was claimed by schools for 18,727 children while funding for ability development was claimed for 27,834.

Therefore the integration programme of the ministry has categories that might be clearly determined assuming a benevolent interpretation. However, cases of misuse might never be excluded; and those that are concerned are highly motivated to evade the rules. One of the criteria for ‘severely disadvantaged’ is the parents’ education not higher than eight grades of general school which is a partly sensitive data. Referring to this fact school might be able to modify their related data when entering a competition or closing a programme. As experiences show, it is done by many schools. Not to mention, both normative funding for integration and normative funding for ability development are for free use so municipalities maintaining the schools concerned are not forced to use the funding expediently.

Results of the integration programme might not be surveyed reliably a few years after it was started; nevertheless it has obviously not been able to stop trends of the majority’s migration or urban segregation. According to a 2004 survey\textsuperscript{91} of 568 schools that, among others, accounts of the effects during the first academic year while segregation within schools has slightly reduced, segregation between schools has increased.

Programmes aimed at integration and reducing segregation of disadvantaged, mostly Roma children often do not achieve their goal due to disregarding local education market within which an actual ‘distribution bargain’ is conducted concerning the pupils.

\textsuperscript{91} Ilona Liskó: Gyorsjelentés a Szegregáció a roma tanulók általános iskolai oktatásában c. kutatásról 2004, manuscript.
Schools located far from each other will start anti-segregation programmes between which there is no migration of pupils therefore inter-institutional integration has no meaning at all. In cases like this there is no point in an integration programme. If at settlements in question uneven distribution of children between schools that are ‘bargaining’ about distribution of Roma and non-Roma children is continued to be maintained, an integration programme will prove explicitly harmful. Unification of institutions may result in segregation within institution; and inner segregation mechanisms may reinforce segregation between schools. The situation might worsen due to unification of already segregated institutions, e.g. a remedial school and a school with Roma majority.

The programme of ‘Out of the Back Desk’ served integration of pupils whose enrolment in remedial schools or classes is unjustifiable. It is targeted at replacing pseudo special needs pupils, whose identification proved to be unfounded, to general school section. Among others, the aim of the programme is to develop expert and rehabilitation committees, maintained by counties, that decide about identification of children with special needs; to supervise the children from time to time; and to integrate pseudo special needs children. The results of the programme are rather contradictory. In the course of revisions conducted in 2004 almost 11% of 2233 second-grade pupils were proved to be not disabled in contrast with the 1 per cent result of routine supervisions. Decrease in the number of children identified as disabled was of similar extent, but alongside, the ratio of first grade children identified to have learning disabilities, dyslexia, dyscalculia or dysgraphy, has dramatically increased.

Dynamics of the integration of disadvantaged, mostly Roma children and special needs children differ from each other. Schools that intend to preserve their positions at a settlement or on the local ‘education market’ will apply selection mechanisms that restrain integrated education of special needs children within school. Paradoxically, a pre-condition of the programmes started for integrated education of special needs children is that the school has a majority of Roma children; if the school thinks that its position might not be improved due to the great proportion of disadvantaged, mostly Roma children, it will be inclined to start projects aimed at integrated education of special needs schools. As a result, such projects will further spoil the school’s reputation in the local market. Implementation of pedagogical programmes aimed at disadvantaged Roma children (too) are in similar conditions.
The system of scholarships targeted at the Roma radically changed in 2005. Due to conceptual reasons and large-scale corrupt practices, the scholarship programme was taken away from the Public Foundation for the Roma in Hungary. The criterion for availability of the new scholarship entitled ‘Útravaló’ (Send-off) was not Roma origin but severely disadvantaged situation. The circle of those supported was extended. From 2006 the monthly support of HUF 3,500-4,500 may be claimed by—besides seventh and eighth grade children—pupils attending secondary schools or trade schools that provide regionally determined rare skills. The estimated number of pupils receiving scholarship is 15,000; the support in cash is coupled with a network of mentors.

**Correction of the system**

Two elements of the public education act’s amendment in 2005\(^\text{92}\) affect the basic structure of Hungarian public education.

- **Rules referring to establishing catchment areas** are amended by the regulation as it is set below.\(^\text{93}\) If more than one general schools are operated at a settlement, neighbouring catchment areas should be established so that the proportion of severely disadvantaged pupils within all school age children to be enrolled in the catchment area would not differ between catchment areas more than by 25 per cent. The amendment should be taken into consideration first at establishing catchment areas for the academic year of 2007/2008.

- **Rules referring to admittance of children from outside the catchment area** was amended by the regulation in the following way.\(^\text{94}\) If a general school—when it accepted applications from its own catchment area—may accept further applications for admittance or taking over, it should give preference to children whose domicile or, in lack of that, place of residence is at the settlement where the school or branch school is. At this stage admittance of a severely disadvantaged child may be refused only on account of want of space. If a school, after accepting applications from its own area, still may be able to accept applications for admittance or taking over, and may not be

\(^{92}\) Law CXLVII/2005 on amendment of some issues concerning education.

\(^{93}\) The article 25 of CXLVII/2005 amended the article 66 of LXXIX/1993 act on public education.

\(^{94}\) Ibid.
able to accept all the applications, the school will decide by drawing lots. To the event of drawing lots those who submitted application for admittance should be invited. Severely disadvantaged or special needs children or children whose special conditions justify it may be admitted without a draw. Special conditions are determined by the local self-government. This amendment should be applied also at preparations for the academic year of 2007/2008.

Both amendments restrict the Schools’ opportunities for selection and limit the municipalities maintaining schools in their practice of education policy reinforcing segregation. At the time of government change in 2006 a plan for further important correction was announced by the new minister of education. The next amendment of the act on public education will eradicate (prohibiting launching new years of)

- eight grade grammar schools and with that the practice of entrance examination for ten year old children.

The ministry of education with its integration policy is intended to start irreversible processes. At the beginning it believed that via pedagogical programmes and targeted funding equality of opportunities may be improved and segregation may be stopped. It soon became clear that these goals may not be achieved without radical modifications of public education system. Towards the end of the governing period the government decided to modify the system of education radically. Irreversibility is an important point of view here as well. Public education is not a mobile system; reforms may be implemented in longer run only.

**Funding of education integration programmes**

It is education funding where the least changes took place including funding supports granted by European Social Fund. Normative funding gives the basis for education funding. The point of the system is its equal treatment of sectors, settlements, and institutions. State budget finances basic and special services of public education according to determined legal titles, on the basis of pupil headcount. Normative funding granted according to certain criteria may be claimed by school maintainers in line with determined legal titles. A backward of normative funding is the fact that the state is not able to control source requirements of local self-governments, not to speak about the actual use of normative funding. Normative supports are mostly for free use, municipali-
ties may spend the amounts received in line with different legal titles up to their liking; they may re-arrange the amounts between branches, institutions and tasks. Normative legal titles build in the system and the amount of each becomes a base amount for the next year. Funding will inevitably become demanding. The government will try to achieve the goals of its education policy by ever new additional supports and regulation of details, so creates new legal titles and budget base amounts.

Changes in the structure of normative funding in the course of the governing period partly reflect the new attitude of the ministry. Development and catch-up education was eradicated as well as the normative funding for catching up disadvantaged children but normative funding for integration, with treble amount of that for catch-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the tender</th>
<th>Possible mount tendered by bidder (thousand HUF)</th>
<th>Total amount for tender (thousand HUF)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HFR OP 2.1.2 Support for education of children with special education needs in the framework of institutional cooperation</td>
<td>12,000-40,000</td>
<td>600,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>HFR OP 2.1.3 Support for integrated preparatory education of disadvantaged Roma pupils in the framework of institutional cooperation</td>
<td>12,000-15,000</td>
<td>1,800,000</td>
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<td>HFR OP 2.1.4. Support for extra curricular education of model value to promote disadvantaged pupils success at school</td>
<td>12,000-15,000</td>
<td>300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HFR OP 2.1.5 Integrated education of severely disadvantaged children</td>
<td>13,000-23,000</td>
<td>890,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>HFR OP 2.1.6. Integrated education of severely special needs children</td>
<td>25,000-35,000</td>
<td>699,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HFR OP 2.1.7. Reduction of school segregation</td>
<td>25,000 – 50,000</td>
<td>500,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>HFR OP 2.1.8. Development of settlements with a single school with a majority of severely disadvantaged pupils</td>
<td>12,000-16,000</td>
<td>541,000</td>
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The appropriations of Roma-related chapters of Ministry of Education (thousand HUF) 2003-2006

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<tr>
<td>Support for national and ethnic tasks</td>
<td>900,000 of it 750,000 Roma</td>
<td>155,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support for ethnic and minority tasks</td>
<td>330,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support for nationality tasks</td>
<td>560,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support for Chance for Education Public Foundation a</td>
<td>250,000</td>
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<td>Support for SuliNova non-profit company</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistance to development of special needs children</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>68,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Programmes for promoting desegregation</td>
<td>152,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supply with text books for teaching nationality mother tongue</td>
<td>170,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development of nationality education</td>
<td>70,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Programmes supporting desegregation</td>
<td></td>
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<td>97,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Útravaló’ scholarship programme</td>
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<td>1,940,000</td>
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Source: Budget laws

ing up, was introduced. Nevertheless, normative funding of education is unable to solve the dilemma that it intends to cover the costs of the extended demands on special education and, alongside, to avoid that the normative founding encourages school maintainers to enrol masses of children to special education. Uncertainty of the government is reflected by funding (among others) of schools at small settlements, day-pupils, minority education programmes targeted at the Roma, or art education. The key issue is how it is possible to finance priorities of equal opportunity and integration education policy effectively without radical changes in the current system of self-government funding.
Annual items of targeted parts in the chapters of ministry appropriations are not comparable since they usually are not for running expenses but appropriate resources for financing single tasks with broader effect.

HRF tenders having become available with the accession to the EU theoretically offer opportunity to the government to achieve its goals besides normative funding directly, too, by tenders using considerable resources for support. Targeted HRF OP tenders in 2004 and 2005, with programmes for several years of course, supported integration goals by more than HUF 5.3 billion. However, most of HRF OP tenders called for supports of small amounts that did not cover goals of the projects. At least 25 per cent of the awarded amounts was paid in a system of subsequent funding to the winners; and this kind of system made it possible for government or self-government institutions and groupings to manage projects, or for such quasi-civil organizations were able to pre-fund the proportion of costs in question that were backed by self-governments or public bodies. One of the hidden goals of the system might have been to filter civil organizations that have income from state sources exclusively. Eventually pace of payment was even worse; first payments were made six to nine months late.

HRF OP calls for tender followed logic of branch practices and aimed at compensation of withdrawal of sources. These calls for tender had a hidden goal, known by those well-informed only, to grant indirectly additional sources to base institutions; so bidders in hope of success had to involve a base institution in the syndicate, although at that time there was no base except regions where many Roma lived. This had rather absurd results; a winning bidder had had a base institution involved in the syndicate that located 300 km from it. Most serious dysfunction of HRF OP tenders was the same as that of the integration programme: the actual intent was distorted in most cases and in some cases they resulted in a worse situation. Under the title of inter-institution integration many syndicate bid that were constituted of schools far from each other and a base institution even farther from them. The only programme that aimed at inter-institution integration at settlement level, i.e. real integration, was tendered by hardly any bidders.\(^\text{95}\)

\(\text{(János Zolnay)}\)

\(^{95}\) Reduction of school segregation (HRF OP 2.1.7)
The government’s Roma policy in the past four years

History
The operation of the government led by Viktor Orbán between 1998 and 2002 gave ground to a great deal of dispute also from the aspect of the integration of the Roma. Many felt that this issue was completely pushed to the background, while others held that those four years brought significant results and progress. I do not think that I am very wrong if I wager that similar ambivalence characterises the workings of the Medgyessy and the first Gyurcsány governments.

Undoubtedly, the establishment of the Gandhi Secondary Grammar School, this national institution of the Hungarian Roma, was associated with the last years of the 1998-2002 government cycle. The Gandhi Secondary Grammar School was built from central budget funds under a frame agreement concluded with the Gandhi Public Foundation in December 2000, and it was also completed as schedule by April 2002.

As far as the Roma issue is concerned, two other key areas of the Orbán government were the scholarship programme targeted at young Roma and the support of the initiatives against discrimination. Both programmes were said to be supported with substantial amounts. If we briefly review the data of the NEKH (National and Ethnical Minority Office) we find the following:

In the 2001/2002 school year a total of 12,777 young Roma (7,027 students in senior grade primary school, 4,505 students in secondary school, 1,217 students in college and university and 28 students studying abroad) received study scholarships.

In the first semester of the 2002/2003 school year a total of HUF 499,190,000 was disbursed in scholarships for 18,911 people (9,996 in primary school, 7,103 in secondary school, 1,748 in higher education and 64 students studying abroad).

Already at that time many people thought these figures controversial. According to the 2001 census, there were 81,099 Gypsy students in primary education, 13,035 in secondary education and 188 in higher education. It is estimated that about 0.3% of the Roma population have ongoing or already obtained collage or university degree. It seemed that this scholarship system was not achieving the desired effect because the
support was either received by non-Roma students or the studies led to the loss of the Roma identity or there could be some other underlying causes for the contradictory figures. (We received certain answers to this question in the past years.)

It was also a 2001 development that the Ministry of Justice—with the involvement of the National Gypsy Minority Self Government and the National and Ethnical Minority Office—established the Anti-Discrimination Roma Customer Service Network with effect October 15, 2001. The Ministry of Justice allocated funds from its own budget for the operation of the Network and for the further training of the lawyers working in the Network. The rights protection office started operation in 24 locations with the involvement of 22 lawyers. The aim of the Network was to set up a legal aid service which focuses expressly on matters where the clients suffered legal injury because of their Roma origin. The mandate of the lawyers involved in the Network covered legal advice, filing lawsuits in discrimination cases, representation of their clients in court and these services were free of charge for the client.

In addition to the direct government involvement the Minority Office, in cooperation with the Public Foundation for the Roma in Hungary, also supported the activities of the civil rights protection offices and the conflict management and prevention organisations and institutions. In each of 2001 and 2002 it allocated HUF 20 million for the support of the civil organisations involved in such activities. On the basis of the applications in 2001, 21 offices, and in 2002, 29 offices received support, including HUF 1 million support for the inter-active legal aid service of Radio C. This radio station advised inquirers in legal matters in weekly live broadcasts with the involvement of lawyers hired by the station.

As part of a medium-term action package the Public Foundation for Hungarian Roma invited applications for a HUF 25 million budget to support the operation of the Gypsy Rights Protection Offices, which budget it annually increased from its reserves because of the large number of applications. In 2002 it supported 30 organisations on 74 applications in a total amount of HUF 37.4 million These sources were further increased by the second sub-project of the Phare Roma Integration Programme, which consisted of two parts. The first sub-project focussed on the development of the Roma rights protection office network and the second on the support of anti-discrimination training planned in seven regions of the country. The applications were invited for the
development of the rights protection offices in July 2001, and grants were allocated to 11 already operating and 4 new offices. Under this programme HUF 53 million was allocated for office development projects. In 2002 the already operating offices received HUF 3 million, and the new offices HUF 5 million support to purchase office equipment.

Before the elections Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Flórián Farkas, president of the Lungo Drom and the National Gypsy Minority Self Government concluded a cooperation pact. They planned to set up the Roma Integration Office, whose operation the government was to evaluate every half year. But this plan fell through because of the government change.

Four years – two governments
The period 2002-2006 has to be divided into two parts because of the change of government. But in the respect of Roma affairs this period did not see any sharp change: what we can witness is rather something analysts compare to a slowing car. 2002 saw high ambitions of ‘changing the world’, by 2003 the processes slowed down as a consequence of the permanent reshuffles, and from 2004 onwards the whole thing seemed to be moving in the same place. In our view this process was essentially influenced by two factors: firstly, by the disintegrating effect of the reshuffles that became almost permanent after a while, with each new leader coming up with new intentions and new ideas. The apparatus always had to wait long months to pick up momentum, to master the new directions which, after a short while, usually turned out not to be so new either. Secondly, and this is even more important than the first one as it had perhaps the most influence on the government’s role in Roma matters, was the gradual ‘philosophy’ change, the crystallisation of the principles of the Roma policy. The most characteristic feature of this was that Roma matters gradually ‘slipped over’ to the area of social policy.

The first two years – high ambitions
The year 2002 brought undoubtedly significant changes in the Roma policy sphere and in ‘high politics’ alike. Not only the Roma issue appeared in the parliamentary election campaign in the spring of that year (in contrast to the previous elections), but also
politicians of Roma origin surfaced both on the left and the right side. And these politicians campaigned on such national lists, which eventually produced four certain finalists in the elections. Eventually, once again there were Roma members of parliament representing the major national parties. Flórián Farkas, József Varga, Mihály Lukács started work in the Fidesz faction, and László Teleki did in the MSZP faction. By way of another sign of the continuing rise of Roma political life, in the autumn of 2002, 998 settlements elected a Gypsy minority local government, 4 settlements elected a Roma person for their mayor and 545 Roma members were elected into the local governments, in contrast to 1998 when there were about 3,000 Roma representatives in 740 Gypsy minority local governments.

It could be expected after such preliminaries that the Roma policy would be revisited at government level, too. It could also play a role in this that in the person of Aladár Roma the prime minister appointed a Roma advisor to assist his work. So the new government that took office in the summer of 2002 set as a key objective to promote the social equality of the Roma. A special sub-chapter of the new government programme (although many people found it strange already at that time that the ‘Social Policy’ part) was dedicated to the measures that need to be taken in the interest of the Roma, after a brief evaluation:96

„C. Tasks connected with the social and political integration of the Roma in Hungary

1. We consider the social sinking of our Roma compatriots the consequence of an extensive and dramatic social process, and not an ethnic problem. The rise and the fullest possible social integration of the Roma is our shared interest. So in order to prevent further social depression and ensure equal opportunities, we are launching an extensive anti-poverty programme.

2. The government hereby restores the rank of government coordination in Roma policy matters. It assigns appropriate budget instruments to the tasks of the programme developed with the involvement of the affected people and appoints such cooperation forms that ensure the broadest possible social unity.

96 „To act now, and for everyone! Programme of the government of the national democratic coalition Hungary 2002-2006” (Parliamentary motion no. H19.05.25.2002)
3. We will submit and approve an anti-discrimination law. We will punish with special sanctions any discriminating action which results in the social exclusion or in the precipitation of such exclusion, of the Roma. We will examine what effective tools can be used against hate speech.

4. We will restore needs, establish communication based on equality between the dominant society and the Roma. We lay emphasis on good quality mediator training, and promote the increase of the number of Roma professionals with scholarships and other methods.

6. We will prepare a long-term programme for the abolition of the Roma slum colonies, for creating living conditions worthy of human beings and for promoting mobility.

7. We support from budget sources the human rights organisations that take action against discrimination, and assist the formation and work of the Roma civil rights protection organisations. We intend to increase the role of the civil associations in the prevention and management of local conflicts, and in the development and implementation of programmes promoting integration.

8. The preservation of the ethnic-cultural identity of the Roma is to be implemented together with the process of social integration. We shall grant the same statutory guarantees to protection of the Gypsy language and culture which are enjoyed by the other minorities.

9. The basis of the comprehensive anti-poverty programme of the government is the development of education and training, and the assurance of the equal opportunities of the children. We intend to reduce the disadvantages rooted in poverty already at the stage of kindergarten education. We will create opportunities for the employment of Roma kindergarten teachers and assistants and for the establishment of relations based on trust between families and the kindergarten. We will take appropriate measures to ensure that more disadvantaged children receive kindergarten care for a longer time and under special programmes, if necessary.

10. The government pays special attention to the situation of the Roma in the schools, to their integration and the eradication of segregation. We will review the system of transfers and prevent that Roma children who are declared private pupils or students are excluded from regular school education.
11. We consider the right of the Roma to strengthen their own culture and educa-
tion a constitutional right. We encourage and support the operation of classes and
schools that consider such education a priority, but this may not become a basis for
segregation in education.

12. With the help of teachers and family counsellors we shall enhance the aware-
ness of Roma families to the importance of education. We shall make a special point of
promoting the vocational training of the children of poor families, and improving their
participation rate in higher education. Together with the civil associations and those
businesses that are willing to sponsor students, we will launch preparatory, scholar-
ship and trainee programmes to support young talented Roma people.

13. In higher education and adult education we will launch differentiated Roma
programmes. Our aim is to raise the level of education and improve the job opportu-
nities of the Roma population. We will launch development projects that also take into
consideration the regional differences. We will also use the existing education and
public education infrastructure to achieve this aim.

14. We will invest special care in leading back to the world of labour the unem-
ployed Roma. We will instruct the labour centres to employ special Roma employment
advisors.

15. From among the traditional Roma occupations, we will support the ones
which are efficient from economic and environmental aspects, too. We will assist
the local governments’ land lease and agricultural production promotion initia-
tives. We will make special point of offering employment opportunities for Roma
people in the service sector, tourism and social services as well, not only in low-
prestige occupations.”

It is important to emphasise also the part of the chapter on education:

„4.8. One of the keys to the rise of the Roma population and to changing the prej-
udiced attitude towards the Roma is education. Therefore:

– we will ensure the condition for every Roma child to attend kindergarten;
– we intend to grant targeted support, professional assistance and teaching sup-
plement to those schools and teachers, who efficiently implement the integrated edu-
cation of Roma students, at the same time we will also support those schools which
have been established on civil initiative and which accept Roma children;
– we will set up a scholarship fund so that the teacher’s training institutions will train more teachers with Roma identity or commitment, and to ensure that every level of teacher’s training is properly prepared also for the special tasks of the education and training of young Roma people.”

As first step towards the implementation of the objectives also specified in the government programme, significant organisation changes were implemented in order to break with the old frameworks – appearances at least suggested that something new was in the pipeline. Roma affairs again came under the direct control of the Prime Minister’s Office, a state secretariat and an affiliated Roma Affairs Office were set up for the purpose. For the first time in Hungarian political life, a Roma political state secretary and an office director were appointed. Roma policy issues of strategic importance were transferred under their supervision and direction from the National and Ethnic Minority Office. Similarly, in conjunction with the declared programme of the government, there started the realisation of the concept under which Roma civil servants were to be appointed to the different ministries to manage Roma policy matters in the given area and represent Roma interests.

It seemed that the most important questions would be decided at the peak of public administration (and political control), in the Prime Minister’s Office. The newly formed State Secretariat for Roma Policy and the Roma Affairs Office set to work with tremendous momentum in the following strategic areas:

• With its resolution no. 1186/2002 (XI:5) the government regulated the new institutional order of the social integration of the Roma, and set out those principles which help enforce in practice the objectives laid down in the government programme.

• The organisation was involved in elaborating in what form and manner the Roma should appear in the National Development Plan connected with the upcoming EU accession and the operative programmes.

• The Roma Affairs Council, a consulting body consisting of prominent Roma and non-Roma persons, was established under the leadership of the prime minister. This body was designed to pronounce an opinion in strategic matters and set guidelines.

• The Roma Affairs Office set to completely remodel the government resolution 1047/1999 (V.5.) in terms of approach and professional content. In the course of this work a new government programme started to take shape for the implementation of the
objectives specified in the Government Programme. This package, which was target-
ed at the Roma but which was not excluding any other social groups either, was meant
as the first element of the government effort to create equal opportunities for all dis-
advantaged social groups.

After the first few months’ work the following priorities began to take shape, which reflected a truly changed approach:

Equal rights – this area comprised, among other things, the elaboration of the anti-
discrimination law, the revision of the minority legislation, moderation of the election sys-
tem and process, the EU-compliant further training of civil servants and the creation of a
legal framework for more effective action against crimes of racist motivation.

Improvement of the quality of life—this area comprises, among other things, the
implementation of such complex pilot programmes which can serve as an example for
the continuous re-integration of the backward regions, the strengthening of health and
social services and their operation in a new approach, the clearance of slum colonies
and the promotion of business ventures that provide a living for the people of a region.

Education—this area comprises, among other things, the measures aimed at elim-
inating the inequalities rooted in the entire education system from kindergarten to
graduation, including the broadest possible access to kindergarten care, ensuring the
background conditions of learning, multicultural education, re-integration of school
drop-outs and eradication of segregation in schools.

Employment – this area comprises, among other things, the creation of opportu-
nities for employment in trades that will be competitive also in long term and tempo-
rary employment to provide subsistence for people who drop out of the labour market.

Identity- this area comprises, among other things, the creation of a Roma art fund,
the support of the community houses and the establishment of international cultural
relations.

Social communication—this area comprises, among other things, the efforts
aimed at raising the level of tolerance of the majority society, the support of public tel-
evision and radio programmes dealing with Roma issues and awareness raising to the
importance of IT literacy.

According to the plans, an independent multi-sector monitoring system, designed
to control and evaluate the use of the funds and the technical implementation of the
projects alike, and to make proposals for the necessary changes, would also have constituted an integral part of this government programme. Departing from these basic principles, the tasks and objectives of the Roma Affairs Office also included the elaboration of a long-term strategic programme representing a new approach and promoting of the equal social opportunities of the Roma.

It should also be mentioned in this context that the work of the Anti-discrimination Inter-ministerial Committee set up in 2001 quickly gathered momentum and by the end of 2002 the Committee came up with the concept of a draft legislation on equal treatment and equal opportunities.

The first two years—checked momentum
The ambitious plans aimed at improving the life of the Roma, which were also laid down in the government programme, and the work that started in the Roma Affairs Office in 2002 promised fundamental change of approach and significant changes in general. But this illusion had to be soon discarded. In vain were, after a long time, as many as four Gypsy members of parliament, in terms of public role they were clearly a disappointment. Many expected that at long last the elected Roma MPs will often and emphatically call the attention of the public to the difficult and often hopeless situation of the Roma. They could even have come to the idea that, putting aside different party interests, they should join forces to make effective politics in the interest of the Hungarian Roma. But this did not happen. In the first two years two of the four MPs failed even to deliver their ‘maiden speech’. Flórián Farkas and László Teleki burdened their fellow MPs with the problems of the Roma for less than 22 minutes altogether.

But László Teleki was given the opportunity to do something to improve the life of the Roma from a government position. His position of political under-secretary of state was always a little shaky in legal terms as he was given the mandate to shape and determine the Roma policy of the government with the involvement of the ministerial commissioners and Roma officers appointed in the different ministries. It turned out within a short time that this did not work in practice. Firstly, the process of appointments grew very slow, and even where the appointments did happen after all ministerial commissioners and Roma officers were put in a civil servant status and as such, under the direction of a given ministry, so the state secretary did not really have the authority to instruct
them or control their work. Despite their best intentions the appointed young Roma officers proved almost powerless in their position. On the one hand, they had little or no public administration experience, and on the other, as beginners they started at the bottom of the hierarchy, so in the absence of true administrative powers they could at best be onlookers rather than shapers of the Roma programmes of the ministries in question. There was one exception to that rule, Viktória Bernáth Mohácsi, who was appointed ministerial commissioner in the Ministry of Education by the will of the junior coalition party. She was the one who ‘condensed’ the political ideas of the SZDSZ in Roma matters and she was given both the opportunity and the support to implement an experiment for integrated education practice. Ms. Mohácsi (and later Gábor Daróczi who followed her in the post) had extreme luck because they had plenty of opportunities to realise their ideas, and also much underlying support which came from those liberal intellectuals who had long been planning these steps.

The intention that created the Roma Affairs Council also went awry. Originally, the organisation rallying prominent Roma and non-Roma personalities was intended as a consulting body, but the majority the participants wanted to have a say in shaping the Roma policy too. So the body was gradually reduced into a protocol organisation, in the last year the members resigned their office one after the other and the initiative slowly died away.

If we look back on the developments it can be seen that the principal engine of the work generated by the election promises was – or rather could have been - the Roma Affairs Office, and especially its leader Judit Berki. But the public administration position of the organisation, which should have been in charge of strategic planning also according to the original intentions, was rather shaky from the very start. It belonged to the Prime Minister’s Office led by Elemér Kiss, and its direct supervision was with Judit Berki in the position of under-secretary of state. László Tèleki was also attached to this office. But the relations were unclear from the very start which led to rather strange situations sometimes.

A typical example was the question of revision of the package of medium-term measures. On a political decision which was also conveyed by the secretary of state, the officers and employees of the Office reviewed the question and came to the conclusion that a programme with an entirely new approach had to be developed. Strategic
planning produced a programme whose implementation would have brought qualitative changes in the life of the Roma. However, it became clear in the course of the inter-ministry coordination process that the programme was impossible to be implemented. Such comprehensive programmes can only be realised with a massive concentration of duties and funds. But the political will did not go that far. The ministries wanted to continue the old practice in which themselves decided what programmes, also available for the Roma, they want to implement and how much money they would spend on them from their own budget. Finally this decade-old, unsuccessful but simple practice, whose ‘efficiency’ is well characterised by research results, received continued political support. Although, the government resolution no. 1021/2004 (III.18) which was approved after much labour reflects the new priorities, we have little information about actual implementation. The execution of the programme remained with the ministries and control with the Inter-ministerial Committee for Gypsy Affairs, whose operation was later criticised both by the incoming minister and department director.) No one had the will to generate true changes in the life of the Roma with targeted and concentrated steps. Rather the view (the already mentioned ‘philosophical question’) began to strike roots that “there is no such thing as Roma issue”. This political view, which became more and more accepted also at public administration level, condemned every institution and programme that targeted expressly the Roma because it conceived them as another form of segregation. Its place was taken by the so-called equal opportunities policy which has no dedicated Roma programme but which rather puts the Roma, the poor and the disabled in one and the same group of questions requiring solution. This political turn, or we can rather call it a philosophical development because several Roma politicians and even more researchers, especially social policy researchers who were also able to exercise influence on the government, endorsed this approach, spelt complete failure for the Roma Affairs Office. It was not able to implement its strategic programmes, the mills of public administration gradually began to grind up its organisation and its staff spent most of their time sorting out irrelevant matters. Their most important tasks were, for example, to comment the new Highway Code rules or the changes to the legislation on the protection of animals.

All in all, the government’s Roma policy was determined by spectacular questions which, however, failed to affect masses of Roma. The matter of elimination of the Roma
slums cropped up time and again but never reached completion; committees were formed, only to dissolve not much later. Genuine success, like during the previous administration, could only be achieved in most of the cases with the allocation of the intervention and other – not very large – funds, and with the eternal “hit”, scholarships.

The situation which was already bad enough was further aggravated by the permanent changes and the resultant inability to take decisions. First, Péter Kiss replaced Elemér Kiss at the top of the Prime Minister’s Office, and in the middle of 2003 Katalin Lévai was appointed minister without portfolio in charge of equal opportunities. In each case the apparatus had to wait out what new concept the new manager was to put forward in the matter, whether the programmes developed that far could be implemented or must be revised. The biggest change was undoubtedly brought by the appointment of Katalin Lévai who helped to final victory the concept which denied the existence of the ‘Roma issue’. According to the political concept, programmes of this type only increase the segregation of the Roma because primarily social issues were at stake which, however, should be addressed in the framework of general social policy. Anything ‘left out’ will be ‘handled’ by the equal opportunities policy.

It was with this approach that the anti-discrimination law, which had been missed for years and which also the European Union urged, was developed and approved under the title ‘Act CXXV of 2003 on equal treatment and the promotion of equal opportunities’. In that law the legislator paid an old debt, as the types of discrimination were also determined in the Hungarian legal system. But besides these positive elements the method of putting in the same league the extensive discriminatory practice hitting the Roma with other, completely different problems like disability, sexual identity, etc. received plenty of criticism. Many found this approach offensive. Not to speak about the fact that initially no such institutions were set up which would disclose and sanction segregationist attitudes.

By the end of 2003 the fate of the Roma Affairs Office that had started operation with such high ambitions, was sealed. After the appointment of Katalin Lévai it remained a pending question for a long time whether the office dealing with the Roma would stay inside the Prime Minister’s Office or would be removed from there and a quasi ministry would be set up through the combination of the areas supervised by Katalin Lévai. This latter option was chosen. The Government Office for Equal
Opportunities was established and Roma affairs were relegated to the rank of one of its General Directorates, at department level. In this situation Teleki was gradually pushed into a legal vacuum. Judit Berki did not wish to assist in this situation and resigned her position. With her resignation Roma affairs, which took such a promising start after the change of government, became an empty shell.

The first Gyurcsány government
“Zhanav ke jekh Ungriko them si: le romengo thaj gazhengo them”, Ferenc Gyurcsány included this Lovari sentence in the presentation of his government programme (provoking the heated protests of several MPs, ‘This is the Hungarian parliament’, someone shouted) and then he promised: his government will continue the equal opportunities programme of its predecessor to ensure the integration of the Roma in the community in the fields of education, work, health and culture. He did not cause any disappointment, the already running processes indeed continued, but reorganisations in the first place. After the new government entered into office, there emerged the Ministry for Equal Opportunities with Kinga Göncz in charge, and—for a change—one of its departments was made responsible for ‘Roma affairs’ (by way of an unexpected development this remained so until the end of the government cycle, although the new director of the department Andor Ürmös was only appointed a good half year later). From that time on we cannot really speak about ‘Roma affairs’, at least we could witness few genuine developments also conceivable for the public at large.

One of the focal questions became the abolition of Roma slum colonies. The preparation of this programme started back in 2002, but with the political change, complex implementation looked less and less feasible. ‘Pilot programme’ began to be the dominant term in this matter, which spelt no less than retreat given the large number (400-600) of the slums to be eliminated. Although, initially word went around about a foreign loan borrowing and a HUF 10 billion project, in the end only an experimental programme covering a few localities was launched, and even that rather as a symbolic gesture. (We dedicate a special study to the controversial colony clearance project in our report.)

The ‘success story’, the scholarship programme to which every government liked to refer as their single biggest achievement, suddenly collapsed too. Cases of major
fraud came to light and it also turned out that a large number of non-Roma students received grants under this support programme. The question of the scholarships always presented a fundamental problem because this form of support was given as a kind of implicit social subsidy, on ethnical basis (let us recall state secretary Csaba Hende who said that many Roma families would even beat their children to force them to go to school because they needed their scholarship to keep the family afloat). Under the effective laws anyone may ‘claim’ to be a Roma, no one will doubt their claim, and also many students only registered in an education institution to get the money and then disappeared. So the disbursement of this support was suspended, causing major disadvantage for those students who were indeed Roma and indeed wanted to study, and whose further education came at risk with the withdrawal of the support. What will be the fate of this form of support, whether it will stay or will be substituted with some other form, is still not to be known.

It was also in the context of the scholarships that the financing practice of the Public Foundation for the Roma in Hungary (MACIKA) came under scrutiny. They tried in vain for four years to enforce a different concept, they failed to draft such amendment of the articles of association (change of the board of trustees) which the court would also accept. Now, it is rumoured that financial support will be withdrawn from them, the matter of the scholarships has also been removed from their authority, and we do not know any further about the fate of MACIKA.

By way of an unexpected development, at the end of 2005 with a four-party consensus parliament approved the amendment of the minority legislation. This affects the election rules primarily (you could read in our 2004 report several analyses about the failures through decades to carry out the amendment). But not only the acceptance of the amendment was surprising but also the fact that the version not supported by professional circles of the new element of ‘registration’ was approved. So we will only receive information about the effects and experiences of ‘state registration’ implemented under the law after the upcoming new elections. In this context, the complications around the National Gypsy Minority Self Government should also be mentioned as these amounted to a decisive ‘experience’ of this government cycle.
Interim note: complications around the National Gypsy Minority Self Government

January 2003 started with the election rally and scandal of the National Gypsy Minority Self Government (OCÖ). However, this was not a Gypsy scandal as many people wished to present it, but rather a situation that had been threatening with explosion for a long time, and whose causes were rooted in the legal regulations on the minorities and in the election system. The fact that it came to the surface was caused —for the first time in many years—by a genuine political race. For the first time during the election of the OCÖ members such political forces appeared on the scene which seemed capable of toppling the leaders who had been in power for two cycles. The incumbent ‘rulers’ were naturally less than happy about this development. Not a big problem so far, but it was topped by the impossible election rules. Under these rules the organisers rallied the people eligible to vote—over 4 thousand people in all!—to one place and tried to keep them together until the close of the elections, which meant almost a whole day. The majority of these people came from the country, left home very early in the morning, so they began to get tired as the day wore on. Political disputes and quarrels broke out which, after a while hit such low tones that they actually matched the standard of the 2002 parliamentary election rallies. And when it dawned on the incumbent coalition that they can no longer cling to power, they walked out on the election rally. The vote was naturally held and the National Election Committee (OVB) declared winner the members of the Democratic Roma Coalition. The Lungo Drom coalition led by Flórián Farkas appealed the decision. In principle, there was little chance that the appeal would be upheld because everything went in the same old system, which was regulated less by formal law than by custom, that was also used in the previous two cycles. Yet the Supreme Court upheld the appeal and ordered the election repeated. The principal argument in their explanation was that the 50% participation rate required by the law for quorum was not available in the final vote. However, the quoted regulation only requires such participation rate at the start of the election rally, and does not say anything about the final votes. The same interpretation was given at the time by the OVB and also by the Supreme Court itself. Since this interpretation was changed, and viewed from this angle the former two bodies were also elected in a manner which was against the law, it seemed necessary to call new
elections for 1 March. The lack of regulation, combined with the law interpretation, was a very powerful weapon in the hands of the political groups currently in a losing position, because by walking out on the rally they could annul the election. It was to be feared that under such situation the OCÖ could not be established. It is also characteristic of the uncertainties of regulation that the affected parties kept taking their complaints to different forums, asking for the appointment of a ministerial commissioner, government commissioner and the presence of international observers at the election. After such preliminaries the members of the Democratic Roma Coalition won the repeated elections with surprising smoothness and great majority, with only two of the ‘incumbent’ Lungo Drom members getting into the national body.

But the series of scandals caused by the uncertainties of legislation did not end with this incident; in fact they fuelled public interest for the remaining three quarters of the year and relegated to the background all other Roma questions. The conflict continued, now between the newly elected coalition members, already at the founding meeting of the OCÖ. Since several people aspired for the president’s post, the candidates continuously questioned each other’s steps. The regulations on the minorities do not even specify who and when can convene the founding meeting of the OCÖ. At the founding meeting, which was held at last despite such preliminary events and where even violence occurred in the presence of the press, a radical Roma politician Aladár Horváth was elected as president, while one of the groupings forming the coalition withdrew from the operation of the OCÖ. The election of Horváth not only surprised, but also filled with fears many people, because he was the one who called the minority self government system harmful, a form of ‘institutionalised segregation’, and as such something that should be eliminated. Whether in his new position he would indeed attempt to drive the processes in such direction, we never learned. After three months, during which his efforts concentrated primarily on the assessment and consolidation of the situation of the OCÖ, his unhappy vice-president and the candidates who walked out on the founding meeting, called a vote of confidence and toppled Aladár Horváth who had barely entered his office. His place was taken by Orbán Kolompár. Instead of genuine work, the tone of the subsequent months was set by procedures filed against one another, the pursuit of law interpretations, and then Kolompár’s consolidation efforts.
Summing up the situation around OCÖ, we could even have witnessed a natural process. All that happened was that an old leadership was ousted, then Aladár Horváth, who enjoyed the support of the Roma and non-Roma intellectual community of the capital was toppled by Orbán Kolompár, a successful entrepreneur who enjoyed the support of the country Roma politicians and leaders. The problem is that all this took place amid a series of scandals which eroded to an extraordinary degree the prestige of Roma politics and consequently also of the Roma population.

We can only hope that the changed regulation will create other opportunities. But that much seems certain that Roma representation has been reduced in a significant area: and this is the abolishment of favoured mandates in the localities. Because the regulations, which were (by chance) working up to that time, were changed in such a way that the existing form became anti-constitutional and the Constitutional Court annulled the relevant regulations. And in vain did the Roma MPs (acting in unity at last) try to table an amendment motion at the end of the parliamentary cycle, the political conflicts proved to be more powerful than the will for agreement.

The single most significant initiative of the Gyurcsány government was, by all means, the programme against child poverty led by a prominent authority of the question (Zsuzsa Ferge). And although many people agreed that it is highly important and praiseworthy to support the poor groups of society, including naturally the Roma, it is not certain that the across-the-board support system will actually reduce the social differences between the Roma and non-Roma poor. Actual implementation is expected from the second half of 2006, although people many doubt that the programme will be able to start at all in view of the upcoming austerity measures. Even if it is implemented, many people believe that its results will be offset by the economic austerity measures which will affect everyone (VAT increase, gas price rise, tuition fees in higher education, etc.) and which will put a major burden on the society, and especially on the poor, including masses of Roma.

Summing up the events of the past four years, many people look back on them with disappointment. After 2002 even Roma people (including the emerging new intelligentsia) entertained great hopes that at long last after the change of regime the Roma cause would also take a favourable turn. These hopes were also fuelled by the new institutions and the newly appointed Roma leaders. As we can see, both caused
disappointment. The role of the political state secretary also remained unclear, he/she would probably have had the opportunity to push the new initiatives through the political decision makers, but this did not happen. The Roma Affairs Office fell to pieces, the officers in the different line ministries were struggling for authority (the only exemption was the ministerial commissioner in the field of education who managed to win the most independence, perhaps this is why he seems more successful than the others). It seems that the governing MSZP does not think very important the Roma cause, not even at symbolic level. They did not appoint any Roma candidates for the EU parliamentary elections on any important party lists, just as they did not do this for the 2006 parliamentary elections. Neither under-secretary of state Teleki, nor Katalin Kállai, who is said to have great influence in the MSZP, was given an opportunity. Although it seems rather probable that after the changes at the autumn local government elections Teleki will get a mandate for his loyalty to high politics. But, considering the experiences of the past years, this is not likely to generate any real changes.

Disappointment has become the ruling sentiment with Roma people and Roma politicians alike. As a fundamental sign of this there appeared, even though without much success for the time being, the demand for independent ethnic political activities. What everyone thought impossible so far seems to be approaching: notably, that the Roma will soon wake up and reject this humiliating, ‘1eat-from-my-hand’ method and will appear as an independent factor in the political life. Knowing the Hungarian society, this will fill many people with fear and with growing hatred.

(Ernő Kállai)