



INTERVENTION IN ROMA COMMUNITIES. CONTEXTUALIZATION AND STRATEGIC APPROACHES

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Abstract: *This article analyzes the context of development from the 4 southern regions of development in Romania: South-East, South-Muntenia, South-West Oltenia and Bucharest-Ilfov. The study highlights regional specificities in terms of employment, education and the situation of the Roma population. The data are of secondary type and come from administrative and statistical sources. The role of contextualization is to outline the modalities of intervention through applied projects that contribute to increasing access to the labour market for the Roma population. Although the regions are similar, certain differences occur, which determine the appropriate interventions in the regional or local contexts. An integrated approach that considers many components of social life is best suited to responding to multiple growing needs.*

Keywords: *regional development, social development, employment, education, Roma communities*

Introduction

This study has been conducted within project “OPTIMAL- Establishment and development of a network of Centres of Social Inclusion for the Roma”, project co-financed from the European Social Fund through the Sectoral Operational Program Human Resources Development 2007-2013 “Invest in people”, implemented by the Association for Socio-Economic Development and Promotion, Catalactica, Bucharest, in partnership with the Foundation for Social Recovery Integration and Development, ECHOSOC, Bucharest, and the Association for Integrated Development, Olt, Slatina.

General objective of the project was to facilitate the access to labour market for a number of 1,088 Roma people from the rural areas covered by a network of 4 Centres

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of Social Inclusion for the Roma (CSIR) from the 4 southern regions of development in Romania: South-East, South-Muntenia, South-West Oltenia and Bucharest-Ilfov, in order to prevent their social exclusion and marginalisation, and to avoid discrimination and the risk of poverty.

The effects generated by the project considered not just improving the participation of the vulnerable groups to the labour market, but also the establishment of conditions for their subsequent development.

By its design and objectives, the project pursued three main directions:

1. Development of the personal capacities of the people from the vulnerable groups regarding their occupation, by supplying them integrated and specialised services (education, formation, information, counselling, market labour orientation, assistance in finding and getting a place of work);
2. Encouraging, by activation and mobilisation of the local communities and employers, to identify viable solutions to increase the level of professional insertion of the Roma people and to use their potential in a manner that ensures both the cohesion, and the social equity within the targeted communities.
3. Implementation of a set of measures adapted both to the specific needs of the target group, and to the opportunities circumscribed within the socio-economic context of the communities where the project is to be implemented, by scientific documentation, quantitative research and qualitative evaluation of the activities performed within the project, as well as of their impact on the target groups.

Any explanative action with actional finalities requires deepening the Roma problem detached from the existential context of the people belonging to the community. We focused our analysis on the segment of rural Roma population, whose structural conditionalities we will discuss for the 4 regions of development where the planned interventions are to be conducted. We analysed the 4 regions in a unitary manner, given the existing similitudes between them. At the same time, an analysis at the county level was conducted, on the specificity of each region.

1. Socio-demographic profile of the regions

According to the 2011 Census (that we used and that will be most often called as elements of reference throughout this study), the four regions have a stable population of more than 10,030,174 people, accounting for 49.84% of the national population at the time of the census (20,121,641 people). In other words, the 4 regions of development surveyed by us hold almost half of the Romanian population.

Of the total population from these 4 regions, according to aggregated INS data, more than 4,416 thousand people live in the rural, which means 44.02%, below the 46% national average (10,859 thousand people living in communes/villages, in absolute figures). There were 4,854 thousand men and 5,173 thousand women, which means 48.4% and 51.58%, of the total population, respectively, slightly different from the national averages of 48.6% for men, and 51.4% for women.

The level of ruralisation is strongly contrasting. In the four regions, only the counties of Constanța (with 68.8 %) and Brăila (with 82.5%) are among the highly urbanised counties, while the counties of Dâmbovița (with 71.1%), Giurgiu (with 70.8%) and Teleorman (with 67.6%) are among the top counties with more than two third of the population living in communes/villages. Compared to previous statistical observations, the total population of most counties decreased significantly, except Ilfov County (whose population increased by 32.8% from the time of the last census). This is the only county with a significant increase of the stable population (by 29.5%), phenomenon most probably explained by the migration from the urban area towards the close peri-urban area (located in Ilfov County). This assumption is also supported by the 2.2% decrease of the Bucharest population.

We may also note that the urban population increased by 5.1, 4.8 and 3.2 % in the counties of Vâlcea, Ialomița and Gorj, respectively, according to the regional trend of decreasing rural population, compared to the year 2002 (by 9.6% compared to just 5.0% for the urban). From this point of view, Prahova is one of the counties with a balanced rural and urban population (cu 50.9 and 49.1 %, respectively).

By age group, it is interesting to notice the situation of the counties whose economic potential is above the average, where the age groups include the active population: Bucharest (where 61.1% of the population is aged 24 to 65), Ilfov (with 58.3%), Constanța (with 58.2%), Argeș (with 57.5%) and Tulcea (with 57.1%). On the other hand, we have the contrasting situation of counties such as Călărași and Giurgiu, with proportions of the active population below the national average (52.8% and 52.6%, respectively).

In terms of trends, it might be interesting to notice the case of Brăila, Buzău, Teleorman and Tulcea counties, where the young people (school children and students) account for some 10% of the population. On the other hand, the ageing trends noticed in many of the surveyed counties are worrying, as they are pools of populations with high risk (age group of the people 65+): Teleorman (almost 25%), Buzău and Giurgiu (about 20.0% of the total population), Vrancea, Brăila, Olt, Vâlcea and Călărași (with about 18%). Predictable, Ilfov county has a very low proportion of this age category (12.9%).

The methodology of statistical survey of the 2011 Census, and that of most social surveys, presumes recording information exclusively by free statements of the interviewed persons. Because of this (particularly due to other mechanisms that bias the accurate collection of data, i.e. assumption of identity), the values recorded for variables such as “ethnic affiliation”, “maternal language” and “religion” are, most times, the object of strong public disagreements. Except for the cases where the information is not available, the percentages for the 3 ethno-cultural dimensions represent the number of people who stated them, related to the total count of stable population.

The situation of the main ethnic minorities in the 4 regions, related to the national level, is as follows:

Table 1. Main ethnic minorities in the area covered by the project

	Magyars	Roma	Turks	Russians/ Lipova	Tatars	Greeks	Chinese	Armenians
National (pers.)	1227623	621573	27698	23487	20282	3668	2017	1361
The 4 regions (pers.)	6232	295602	26848	17631	20207	2943	1806	1088
National (proportion)	0,06%	2,95%	0,27%	0,18%	0,20%	0,03%	0,02%	0,01%
The 4 regions (proportion)	0,51%	47,56%	96,93%	75,07%	99,63%	80,23%	89,54%	79,94%

Source: INS data, <http://www.recensamanromania.ro/rezultate-2/>

The data above highlights the situation of the Roma population, with proportions below the national average, but also with large ethnic communities that particularize the zonal multi-ethnic specificity. As we will show, the Roma community and the Magyar ethnics have a rather uniform territorial distribution, while other ethnic groups (the Chinese, for instance) have a non-uniform territorial distribution, being highly concentrated in Bucharest-Ilfov. One can also notice the 90% Turk ethnics located in Constanța and Tulcea counties, and in Bucharest and the 86.9% Russians-Lipova, strongly represented in Tulcea County (more than half of the total national count), and in Constanța and Brăila counties. We can also notice the high concentration of the Tatars in County Constanța (96.6% of the total national count, almost 20 thousand people).

Although they display values below the national average (3.3%), the Roma ethnics show increasing values compared to the 2002 Census, situation to be noticed in all regions of the country, explained by the fact that they assumed their identity, consolidated their communities and gained acknowledgement. Nevertheless, the real estimations exceed the statistics, which calls for multiple explanations of the significant differences between these data and the real situation of the community.

Regarding the religious identity, the Christian-Orthodox faith was declared by 97% of the people with stable residence in the counties of Olt (99.4%), Vâlcea (99.1%), Dolj (98.9%), Gorj (98.4%), Buzău (98.5%), Brăila (98.2%), Călărași, Giurgiu and Teleorman (98.3%), Argeș and Ialomița (97.9%), all of them located in the surveyed regions.

2. Economic profile of the regions

GDP is, most times, a sufficiently relevant indicator and it was also used in our survey of the dynamics of the economic activity in the 4 regions. Eurostat 2011 set the average European GDP to 25,100 Euro/inhabitant, while for Romania, the corresponding value was 7,184 Euro, under the conditions in which the volume of the economic activities in the Bucharest-Ilfov Region of Development was about 3 times higher than

the average of the surveyed regions, and double compared to the West Region of Development.

In Romania, the average work productivity was 15,500 Euro in Bucharest-Ilfov, 5,000 Euro in South-East region, 5,100 Euro in South-Muntenia region, and 4,700 Euro in South-West Oltenia region, the last 3 being much below the 75% of the EU average. Following is a detailed presentation of the specificities of each region.

South-East Region of Development

„The strategic location of the Black Sea is an element drawing foreign investments that can enhance competitiveness by technologic transfer, new markets and modern management, both for the EU society, for export, and for the extra-community ones, which penetrate the European space.” (Albu coord., 2001, p. 47)

The location of the nuclear power station from Cernavodă in this area, is another particularity of the area, being the only producer of nuclear power in Romania. The production of nuclear power accounts for about 18% of the total national production of electric power. The production of cheap electric power provides possibilities of exporting it (expansion of Cernavodă nuclear power plant).

The South-East region has many natural resources. Dobrogea is rich in iron ore, copper pyrite, complex lead and zinc sulphurs, quartz, granite, marble and limestone. The continental plat form of the Black Sea has large deposits of minerals and hydrocarbons, exploited by deep sea drilling equipment produced in Romania. Other deposits of liquid and gaseous hydrocarbons are in the counties of Brăila, Buzău, Vrancea and Galați. The only open area petroleum deposit in Europe is in Berca and Monteoru areas in Buzău County. A spring of sulphurous geothermal water having particular therapeutic qualities exists at Însurăței, in Brăila County. Large amounts of salt are extracted from the salt mines from Sari-Bisoca, Mânzălești and Viperești. The gravel pits and the loess deposits are important raw materials for construction and ceramics. The water and silt from the salt lakes from Techirghiol, Nuntași, Lacul Sărat, Movila Miresii, Amara and Balta Albă are famous for their therapeutic effect, being opportunities for the development of tourism in the region.

More than half of the fertile land from Bărăgan Field, known as the “country bread basket”, is in the South-East region. The large agricultural land and the fertile soil provide favourable conditions for ecological agriculture. The Danube Delta (one of the large natural reserves worldwide) and the Small Island of Brăila, whose flora and fauna are unique in Europe, are areas of touristic attraction. There is high international interest for the conservation of the diversity and promotion of tourism in the Danube Delta.

A characteristic of the region is its high touristic potential. The tourism sector is rather well developed. The Black Sea seashore and the Danube Delta, the spas from Lacul Sărat, Techirghiol, Sărata Monteoru, some agro-touristic boarding houses in mountains and in the Danube Delta, the monasteries from northern Dobrogea, from Buzău and Vrancea mountains, are points of touristic attraction. In 2009, this region covered about

45% of the national accommodation facilities, being on the top position among all regions.

The SME sector is rather well developed in the South-East region, compared to the other regions (in 2009, there were 62,155 SMEs, 13.1% of the national total, ranking 4th among the eight regions of development.” (Albu coord., 2011, p. 47–49)

„Of course, besides these strong points of the South-East region, which are development opportunities, the region also has fewer encouraging elements. The Danube Delta localities are isolated, with little work opportunities, which means a high level of poverty of the population. The hill area is vulnerable due to the isolated villages, insufficient hydro-technical facilities, roads and due to the tectonic movements of the Earth crust. The Black Sea shore tourism is seasonal, which means that when the season ends, part of the people employed during the summer have no job. The tourism infrastructure is poorly developed or aged, with discrepancies between the older and newer facilities. There is a competition from the foreign touristic regions, which offer higher quality services for competitive prices. The fragmented agricultural land, like in most parts of the country, maintains a low level of mechanisation and productivity in agriculture.” (Albu coord., 2011, p. 49)

South-Muntenia Region of Development

The aggregated national data show for the South-Muntenia Region of Development, and GDP/inhabitant (5,400 EUR per capita), lower than the country average, with significant differences between the composing counties.

The major differences are given by the partition of the region in two areas with distinct geographical and socio-economic particularities: the northern region, around the towns of Pitești, Târgoviște, Ploiești and the hilly and mountain regions) are characterized by a high level of industrialization, while the southern region is characterized by agricultural activities and underdevelopment.

The industrial activities are diversified in the northern region, including:

- Chemical and petrochemical industry,
- Manufacture of concrete, cement and gypsum elements;
- Production of rubber and plastic goods.
- Metallurgic industry and metallic constructions;
- Constructions of machinery, equipment, engines, electrical equipment, military equipment, oil extraction equipment, mining and chemical equipment, heavy-duty ball bearings, equipment and spare parts, etc.
- Garments industry;
- Leather products industry;
- Textile industry;
- Wood processing and furniture industry;
- Food industry (milling and bakery, meat processing, milk and dairy products, vegetables and fruits canning, etc.) wine making.

One must not forget the touristic and leisure activities (much of which in Prahova County), the historic tourism (Argeş, Dâmboviţa and Prahova counties), balneal tourism (Dâmboviţa, Prahova, Ialomiţa counties) or the religious tourism.

We can speak of a functional specialisation within the South-Muntenia region of development, which takes advantage of the available natural and economic potential. The vegetal production is directed mostly towards the crops of grain cereals, oil plants and fodder plants, barley, two-tow barley and wheat. The technical crops (soybeans, rapeseeds, beet, sunflower) are present in all four counties, as well as the vineyards and wine making.

The region is properly connected to the European transportation corridors by motorways A1, A2 and (a fragment of) A3, the traffic towards the Balkans being facilitated both by the bridge over the Danube from Giurgiu-Ruse, and by the Danube itself, by the Danube-Black Sea channel. The Danube provides access to the trans-European navigation through the harbours from Giurgiu, Călăraşi, Olteniţa, Turnu-Măgurele.

There also are land connexions to the other regions of development from Romania and/or towards areas with special economic potential. The 1,671 km railroad and the 11,104 km public roads (beginning of 2014), allow transportation of goods and people.

In 2011, 385 territorial-administrative units from South-Muntenia region were connected to the public water supply, accounting for almost 70% of the total 565 units in that region. The rate of connection is 100% for urban localities and 65% for rural localities (10% more compared to 2004). The lowest rate of connection to the public water supply is in Giurgiu County (25%), and the highest, in Călăraşi and Ialomiţa counties (84%).

South-West Oltenia Region of Development

In terms of density of enterprises (by 1,000 inhabitants, active population, aged 15-59), compared to the other regions of development, and to the national average, South-West Oltenia Region of Development has an unfavourable situation, ranking 7th, of 8, ahead only of the North-East region.

In terms of the foreign direct investments, South-West Oltenia region ranks 7th among the regions of development in Romania. The foreign investments in Romania are oriented according to the accessibility and potential of the locations, and according to the quality of the business environment and to the local and regional economic traditions. The most important foreign investment with economic and social impact in Oltenia was the purchase of the largest pack of shares of Automobile Craiova, in the autumn of 2007, by the Ford Motors Company.

The rural economy is not diversified, relying on the subsistence agriculture. The large number of small exploitations is owned by a large number of people beyond the age of retirement, being the main source of income for them. The incomes from wages and other similar rights account for just 5.5% of the total income of the agricultural households from South-West Oltenia region (lei/month/person), while the equivalent value of their consumption of agricultural products from own resources represents

44.2%. The high proportion of incomes from agriculture (19.9%), compared to the low proportion of the incomes from independent non-agricultural activities (2.4%), show the dependence of the rural economy on agriculture. This is also indicated by the fact that, at the regional level, in 2007, 43.9% of the occupied population was working in agriculture, while the agriculture contributed with 11.19% to the GDP. These figures reflect the very low productivity of the agricultural work because of the poor technical endowment, the fragmentation of the agricultural land, and the insufficient investments.

Bucharest-Ilfov Region of Development

As in many other Central and East-European states, Bucharest, the capital of Romania, experienced a much faster rate of economic growth than the other regions of the country, it adapted the fastest to the economic and social changes triggered by transition and attracted most of the foreign direct investments.

All industrial branches are present in Bucharest-Ilfov region, which is the main industrial agglomeration of the country. However, over the recent years, the labour force reoriented massively towards the sector of services, which accounts now for the greatest share in the economy of the region. Also, here, sectors such as constructions and the real estate business display the fastest rate of growth, followed by the retail, distribution and management activities.

3. The Roma population and its specific aspects

The provisional results of the 2011 Census, show that the number of those who stated to be Roma, exceeds 619 thousand people (3.2%). As mentioned previously, the proportion of the Roma ethnics in the counties and regions covered by the project was 295,602 people (with a balanced sex ratio, 50.92% men, and 49.07% women). Related to the national counts, the number represents 47.56% of the national total Roma population, and 2.95% from the total population of the 4 regions, below the national average.

Contrary to the majority population, which displays ageing trends, the Roma under the age of 20 account for 47.33% of the total Roma population, those aged 30+ account for almost a quarter, while the Roma aged 50+ represent just 10.8% of the population, with just 3.3% old/dependent Roma. This shows that the Roma population is young and may be included with priority in the programs of formation and occupation.

The statistics of the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice show that the rate of absolute poverty among the Roma population was 26.4% in 2010, almost 8 times higher than the national average. At the same time, the rate of severe poverty was 4.6%, compared to the national average of 0.6%, which qualifies the members of this ethnic minority as the poorest citizens of Romania (PRAOBI, 2012-2014).

The data of 2011 Census show that, at the national level, almost 40% of the Roma live in urban areas and little over 60% live in rural areas. Although it is difficult to analyse with high accuracy the regional distribution of the Roma, the 2011 Census shows counties with major imbalances in the number of Roma ethnics in the counties of the same regions.

The major problem for the correct calculation of the Roma population size is well-known: many of them do not declare themselves to be Roma, for the fear of stigmatization, discrimination or even repression on the side of the authorities (for instance, in the form of detailed fiscal inspection of the wealthy people or who have their own business). Thus, some Roma organisations consider that the real number of the Roma ethnics might be even 10 times higher than the official counts in some regions/localities. Overall, the situation of the Roma people in the area covered by the project (in terms of numbers and geographical distribution) is as follows:

Table 2. Roma population in the counties covered by the project

Region	County	Total population	Total Romanian ethnics	Total Roma ethnics	Proportion of the Roma ethnics within the total population
South-East		2,545,923	2,243,787	69,864	2.74%
	Brăila	321,212	291,899	8,555	2.66%
	Buzău	451,069	409,316	20,376	4.52%
	Constanța	684,082	570,754	8,554	1.25%
	Galați	536,167	482,932	16,990	3.17%
	Tulcea	213,083	180,496	3,423	1.61%
	Vrancea	340,310	308,390	11,966	3.52%
South-Muntenia		3,136,446	2,849,550	122,232	3.90%
	Argeș	612,431	571,149	16,476	2.69%
	Călărași	306,691	259,310	22,939	7.48%
	Dâmbovița	518,745	470,136	27,355	5.27%
	Giurgiu	281,422	248,355	15,223	5.41%
	Ialomița	274,148	241,765	14,278	5.21%
	Prahova	762,886	712,886	17,763	2.33%
	Teleorman	380,123	345,949	8,198	2.16%
Bucharest-Ilfov		2,272,163	2,272,163	39,607	1.74%
	Ilfov	388,738	388,738	15,634	4.02%
	Bucharest	1,883,425	1,883,425	23,973	1.27%
South-West Oltenia		2,075,642	1,901,330	63,899	3.08%
	Dolj	660,544	594,841	29,839	4.52%
	Gorj	341,594	321,686	6,698	1.96%
	Mehedinți	265,390	236,908	10,919	4.11%
	Olt	436,400	400,089	9,504	2.18%
	Vâlcea	371,714	347,806	6,939	1.87%
TOTAL		10,030,174	9,266,830	295,602	2.95%

Source: INS, <http://www.recensamantromania.ro/rezultate-2/>

4. Education at the regional level

Considering the rate of school attendance by the total school age population, we may say that it increased quite a lot from 1990 to 2012, more precisely, by 15.3% for the total school age population (Table 3). It increased more among the boys (16.8%), than among the girls (13.9%) and more for the age group 3 – 6 years (31.8%) and 19 - 23+ years (43.1%).

Table 3. Rate of school attendance by the school age population (%)

Age groups	Gender	Year 1990	Year 2012
3 - 6 years	Total	54.3	86.1
	Male	53.2	85.6
	Female	55.5	86.6
7 - 10 years	Total	90.9	93.1
	Male	91.2	93.4
	Female	90.5	92.8
11 - 14 years	Total	91.4	91.7
	Male	91.1	92
	Female	91.8	91.3
15 - 18 years	Total	90.7	81.9
	Male	91.6	81.7
	Female	89.7	82.1
19 - 23+ years	Total	10.6	53.7
	Male	11.2	49.4
	Female	9.9	58.2
Total school age population	Total	63.5	78.8
	Male	63.7	77.6
	Female	63.3	80.1

Source: INS, TEMPO database

According to TEMPO database data (Table 4) regarding the structure of the school age population by level of education (last graduated level of education) and regions of development, the highest number of graduates of the preschool, elementary, middle school, high school and vocational education, is in South-Muntenia region, followed by South-East. In 2012, South-West Oltenia region had the highest number of graduates of post high school education, followed by South-Muntenia region. Bucharest-Ilfov region has a very large number of higher education graduates, but the lowest number of pre-university education graduates.

The educational infrastructure specific to the year 2012 (Tables 5, 6 and 7) shows that Bucharest-Ilfov region had the highest number of units for preschool and university education; the largest teaching staff for the higher education and the highest number of PC in the higher education units. Bucharest was the largest university centre among the surveyed regions.

South-Muntenia region had the largest teaching staff and the highest number of PC in the preschool education. Moreover, this region also displays the highest values for school units, teaching staff and PC in the elementary, middle school and high school education. South-Muntenia and South-East regions have the highest number of school units in the post high school education, while South-Muntenia region has the largest teaching staff and number of PC in the post high school education. Although South-West Oltenia region has the highest number of post high school education students, at the regional level the educational units might be overcrowded, hence a lower quality of the education.

Table 4. School population by level of education and region of development in 2012

Region	School population (2012)					
	Preschool education	Elementary and middle school education (including the special education)	High school education	Vocational education	Post high school education	Higher education
TOTAL Romania	581,144	1,744,192	831,810	19,734	92,854	464,592
South-East region	73,144	225,208	104,066	2,599	12,627	38,640
South-Muntenia region	80,876	263,670	120,447	2,647	9,989	22,361
Bucharest-Ilfov region	56,059	154,903	83,934	560	9,926	139,396
South-West Oltenia region	56,174	173,500	96,918	1,394	14,936	28,226

Source: INS, TEMPO database

Table 5. Distribution of school units by region of development in 2012

Region	School units					
	Preschool education	Elementary and middle school education (including the special education)	High school education	Vocational education	Post high school education	Higher education
South-East region	157	522	206	1	16	7
South-Muntenia region	124	670	209	0	16	4
Bucharest-Ilfov region	238	225	135	2	5	34
South-West Oltenia region	101	478	160	0	8	4

Source: INS, TEMPO database

Table 6. Teaching staff, by region of development, in 2012

Region	Teaching staff					
	Preschool education	Elementary and middle school education (including the special education)	High school education	Vocational education	Post high school education	Higher education
South-East region	4,244	15,406	7,063	10	332	1,607
South-Muntenia region	4,486	18,646	7,741	4	348	1,094
Bucharest-Ilfov region	3,391	9,551	5,326		127	9,048
South-West Oltenia region	3,377	13,302	6,652	10	220	1,531

Source: INS, TEMPO database

Table 7. Number of PC, by region of development, in 2012

Region	Number of PC				
	Elementary and middle school education (including the special education)	High school education	Vocational education	Post high school education	Higher education
South-East region	18,203	14,058	0	557	5,365
South-Muntenia region	19,663	14,503	11	534	3,173
Bucharest-Ilfov region	7,066	11,188	0	196	29,434
South-West Oltenia region	12,489	11,444	0	294	4,387

Source: INS, TEMPO database

According to Table 8, South-East region had, in 2010, the highest rate of school dropout for all the forms of pre-university education. High rates of school dropout also are in Bucharest-Ilfov region for the elementary, middle school and vocational education, while South-West Oltenia region had the highest rates of school dropout among the high school students. Therefore, the active measures to cut the school dropout should be directed particularly towards regions South-East, Bucharest-Ilfov and South-West Oltenia.

Table 8. Rate of school drop-out of pre-university education in 2010

Region	Rate of school dropout of pre-university education			
	Elementary and middle school education (including the special education)	High school education	Vocational education	Post high school education
South-East region	2.1	3.3	24.4	8.8
South-Muntenia region	1.6	2.4	20.6	5.8
Bucharest-Ilfov region	1.9	2.9	24.2	4.7
South-West Oltenia region	1.5	3.2	17.3	5.5

Source: INS, TEMPO database

5. Educational level of the Roma population

The topic of education is approached in terms of the regional gaps and socio-economic and cultural mechanisms that influence the situation of the Roma people. The regional analysis of the educational level and of the possible factors from the sphere of the educational infrastructure are argued in the first part of the chapter, making thus a regional overview of the institutional capacity to meet the attributes of high-quality education. Making the in-depth analysis of the aspects that influence the educational level of the Roma, we referred to the level of poverty, to the use of education within the Roma communities and to the social distance between *them* and *the others*.

The socio-economic and cultural mechanisms for slow recovery or stagnation of the Roma people situation can be explained by three underlying relations. The first relation highlights the reciprocal determination between the low educational level and the poverty confronting the Roma population (Fleck and Rughinis, 2008, p. 209). The economic mechanisms that perpetuate the difficult situation of the Roma people include the limited access to formal jobs or to jobs with high professional status, instability of their incomes and the lack of household appliances.

Many of the Roma households (60%) have monthly incomes lower than the minimal national wage (Popovici and Ercus, 2013, p.75). These incomes should provide for the survival of an average of 5 people by household, because birth rate is much higher among the Roma population than among the majority population. However, the Roma households have, in average, a total income 3 times lower than that of the households of the majority population. The difficult economic situation (Fleck and Rughinis, 2008, p. 209) is supported by the fact that, unlike the interviewed non-Roma persons (12%), 62% of the Roma stated that one of the household members went to bed without eating, over the past month. Moreover, fewer Roma than non-Roma people have household appliances: for instance, 53% of the Roma and 92% of the non-Roma have a refrigerator, and 8% of the Roma and 24% of the non-Roma have a computer. In time, the educational level conditions the access to formal jobs, qualified, or with high professional status.

In conclusion, the increased access to education is essential to break the vicious circle of poverty, particularly among the poorest children. Ensuring this right from an early age, and decreasing the associated discrimination, might close the gaps due to the limited participation on the labour market, low rate of productivity, limited access to unsure and marginal positions on the labour market and, implicitly, of the precarious incomes.

The access to education is facilitated, besides by the standard of living, by the stability of parents' incomes, by the individual expectations, by the stated nationality/ethnic affiliation, and by the good knowledge of the official language. Knowing the official language is influenced especially by the aspect of living in a closed and isolated community, where the children get to use more frequently the official language only after the first years of elementary school.

The 2011 Census data show that 23-25% of the adult Roma people did not graduate the elementary school and declared to be illiterate (Popovici and Ercus, 2013, p.73).

The highest rate of illiteracy is among the old generation, because the compulsory education has been introduced by the communist regime after the 70s. Therefore, the mature population has the lowest rate of illiteracy. However, the young population too, is confronted with illiteracy, with a rate higher than that of the mature population. The gender difference, in the young population, in terms of illiteracy is different from the corresponding values for the mature or older population, where the illiterate women are twice as many compared to the men (Duminičă et.al., 2004, p. 46-47). There are slightly more young illiterate men than women.

About 20% of the Roma population did not attend school because of the lack of financial resources, ethnic discrimination, lack of efficient strategies to prevent school dropout, ethnic segregation, high proportion of unskilled teaching staff and insufficient endowment with equipment and materials of the educational unit (Popovici and Ercus, 2013, p.72).

The gender differences among the Roma population aged 16+ in terms of no school attendance are as follows: 14.5% are men and 23.5% are women (Duminičă et.al., 2004). Among the old Roma population, the proportion of women who did not attend school is twice that of the men who did not attend school. While this difference decreases slightly for the mature population, it is very small for the young Roma population. The trend by gender shows the emancipation of the Roma women, by the decreasing proportion of women who did not attend school from 19.5% among the mature population, to 16.4% among the young population, while the corresponding proportions for the young men who did not attend school reached 17.5%, although it was of just 10.9% among the mature population. The trend of family modernization and the challenge of gender roles within the family are possible explanations for this situation, that can be sustained by the decreasing evolution of the men to women ratio that graduate vocational schools, reducing thus the men to women inequality in terms of access to the labour market. For instance, this ratio was 5:1 among the older population, decreasing to 3:1 for the mature population and to 2:1 among the young population.

The expectations of the Roma parents regarding the educational level of their children are rather high. More precisely, secondary education is mentioned by 80% of the Roma parents. However, 40% fewer Roma children than majority population children attend the kindergarten, at least 75% of the Roma children do not finish the elementary or middle school, and just 17% are enrolled in vocational, high school or university studies (Popovici, Ercus, 2013, p.72-73). Therefore, according to the current laws, a large proportion of the Roma population did not graduate the compulsory education and, therefore, is not eligible for the programs of professional training.

According to Table 9, among the Roma population there are more women who did not attend school (55,107) than men (41,404); of which 40,136 women and 27,344 men are illiterate. Most of the Roma people have no studies above the secondary education. This situation is more frequent among the women, which drastically limits their access on the labour market. However, there are more women attending higher education (1,762) than men (1,635), while more boys are attending the post high school, vocational and higher education.

Table 9. Stable Roma population aged 10+, by gender, by area of residence and level of education

	Gender	Graduated level of education									
		Higher		Post high school and foremen	Secondary				Elementary	Did not graduate	
		Total	of which:		Total	Higher		Lower (middle school)		Total	of which:
			University licence	High school		Professional and apprentices	Illiterates				
National	males	1,635	1,528	521	117,270	13,238	14,009	90,023	81,379	41,404	27,344
	females	1,762	1,647	473	96,312	10,021	5,849	80,442	81,852	55,107	40,136
Urban	males	1,155	1,062	332	47,217	7,679	6,353	33,185	28,185	14,970	9,894
	females	1,248	1,159	322	39,644	6,199	3,009	30,436	28,288	19,626	14,332
Rural	males	480	466	189	70,053	5,559	7,656	56,838	53,194	26,434	17,450
	females	514	488	151	56,668	3,822	2,840	50,006	53,564	35,481	25,804

Source: INS, processed 2011 Census data

According to the study *Come closer* (Fleck and Rughinis, 2008, p. 209), the representative national sample for the Roma population shows that 9% of the Roma people graduated high school, while 2% graduated higher education, while 41% non-Roma people graduated high school and 27% graduated higher education. However, the comparative sample is not representative at the national and regional level, because it includes respondents living in the vicinity of the selected areas inhabited by Roma people. The data can be thus influenced by the fact that they live in the proximity of those areas. One of the most critical aspects regarding the education of the Roma population is the illiteracy, which contributes directly to the socio-economic exclusion of the Roma people. Thus, 22% of the Roma people aged 14+, from the Roma sample, are illiterate, while for the comparative sample, only 2% of the non-Roma are illiterate. It is worrying that 7% of the Roma respondents aged 14+, who graduated the elementary education, are illiterate.

The comparison with other ethnic groups (Romanians, Magyars, etc.) in terms of level of education, presented in the *Barometer of Roma Inclusion* (Bădescu et al., 2007, p.71), shows that the situation of the Roma people was, at least at the moment of the survey, rather worrying: 23% of the Roma respondents had no school studies, compared to just 2% for the other respondents; 28% of the Roma respondents graduated the elementary school, compared to 11% for the non-Roma respondents; 33% of the Roma respondents graduated middle school, compared to 24% for the non-Roma respondents; 15% of the Roma respondents graduated the school of apprentices, or vocational school, or high school, compared to 48% for the other respondents; and 1% of the Roma respondents graduated post high school or university education, compared to 15% for the non-Roma respondents.

Furthermore, the gap between the Roma and non-Roma regarding the improvement of the educational level in time, is noticed when we compare the schooling level of the people up to 40, with that of the people aged 40+, by ethnic affiliation (idem, p.76–77). The proportion of people below 40, with no schooling, is 20.9% for the Roma respondents, and 0.8% for the non-Roma respondents, while for the people aged 40+, the corresponding values are 26.3% for the Roma respondents, and 2.3% for the non-

Roma respondents. We also noticed a decrease, in time, of the elementary school graduates, higher for the non-Roma respondents, if we compare the people aged 40+ with the younger ones. Regarding the middle school studies, the proportion of graduates decreased by 8.5% for the non-Roma respondents, and increased by 11.5% for the Roma respondents, between the generation of people aged 40+ and below 40.

The educational level increased in time, more for the non-Roma respondents, if we take into consideration the education above middle school. The people below 40 with vocational studies (educational level that can follow the middle school, but which does not coincide with the high school education) represented 12.6% for the Roma respondents, and 25.3% for the non-Roma respondents, while for the people aged 40+, the corresponding values were 10.7% and 22.4%, for the Roma and non-Roma respondents, respectively.

A proportion of 4.3% of the Roma respondents below 40 had graduated the high school, while 42.4% of the non-Roma respondents below 40 graduated the high school, while for the respondents aged 40+, the corresponding values were 2.2% and 22.2%, for the Roma and non-Roma respondents, respectively. Moreover, 0.8% of the Roma, and 10.8% of the non-Roma respondents below 40 graduated higher education, and 0.6% of the Roma, and 8.2% of the non-Roma respondents aged 40+ graduated higher education.

In conclusion, after graduating the middle school, many of the Roma children give up school. This fact can be documented by the high differences between the number of Roma people graduates of elementary education, in 2011 (81,379 males and 81,852 females) and middle school (90,023 males and 80,442 females), and by the number of Roma people graduates of high school (13,238 males and 10,021 females) and of vocational and apprentices education (14,009 males and 5,849 females).

School drop-out is more frequent among the Roma population because of their poverty and of the low educational level of their parents, materialized in insufficient incomes to purchase clothing and shoes for the children, and to pay for the costs associated to education (transportation, school supplies, school clothes, etc.), because of the insufficient schooling awareness among the Roma communities and because of the overcrowding specific to poor households – the number of persons/room in the Roma households is more than double the number of persons/room in the non-Roma households (Fleck and Rughinis, 2008, p. 112; Bădescu et.al., 2007, p.34).

The risk of school dropout is disproportionately high, particularly among the girls, because of the cultural tradition of getting married and give birth at early ages. For instance, in 2011, 10% of the Roma girls had their first child at the age of 12-15, and 48% had their first child at the age of 16-18 (Popovici și Ercuș, 2013, p.73).

The second relation that influences the situation of the Roma population regards the insufficient awareness regarding education among the Roma communities and focusing on the means of living, by promoting work, rather than school among the children, work that was done either in the household, or in the field, for the rural areas (Toma and Fosztó, 2011), even though, a high professional status is given by an adequate professional training and by a high level of education.

This image is often sketched in the documents regarding the Roma population, but it should be interesting to investigate whether this idea can be identified among the poor population, irrespective of the ethnic affiliation.

The inter-generation stratification, defined by the transfer of the attributes of the socio-economic status between the parents and the children, can explain the influence of the educational level of the parents on that of their children. The parents with a high educational level, or with such aspirations, are able to understand the value of education for a high quality of life, and to support the schooling of their children, to back up financially the education of their children, because they have the necessary incomes from the formal economy, or a low number of children and a high standard of life (Cace et.al., 2010, p.57).

A pertinent question within the context of the intra-generation stratification would be: which parent might have a higher impact on the educational path of the individual? According to the report *At Risk: Roma and the Displaced in Southeast Europe 2006*, the children with the head of the family having a high level of education have three times higher rate of enrolment in the elementary education than the other children (UNDP, 2006, p. 36). In nowadays Romanian society, the man is considered to be head of the family, particularly in the rural areas and in the small urban areas. However, according to the study conducted by the Research Institute for the Quality of Life (Cace et. al., 2010, p. 57–58), it seems that the mother has a higher impact on the educational path of the Roma child (Table 10, Table 11). For instance, 77.8% of the respondents with elementary education have an educational level similar with that of their mother, while only 69.8% of the respondents with elementary education have fathers with the same level of education. 85.7% of the respondents with middle school education have mothers with a level of education at most equal with theirs, while 79.3% of the Roma children with middle school education, whose fathers have at most the same level of education.

Table 10. Generational educational mobility between the father and the child (%)

Education of the respondent	Education of the father					
	Elementary	Middle school	Apprentice/vocational school	High school	Post high school	Higher education
Elementary	69.8	17.5	2.1	0.4	0	0.2
Middle school	39.4	39.9	6.5	2.2	0.6	0.1
Apprentice/vocational school	25.1	46.4	15.6	5.2	0	0.5
High school	11.5	51.9	13.5	11.5	0	0
Post high school	42.9	14.3	28.6	0	14.3	0
Higher education	0	50.4	25	0	0	12.5

Source: Cace et.al., 2010, p.57

Table 11. Generational educational mobility between the mother and the child (%)

Education of the respondent	Education of the mother					
	Elementary	Middle school	Apprentice / vocational school	High school	Post high school	Higher education
Elementary	77.8	12.9	0.6	0.6	0	0
Middle school	49.1	36.6	3.2	1.3	0	0.1
Apprentice / vocational school	39.3	45	9	1.4	0	0
High school	28.8	50	7.7	3.8	0	0
Post high school	0	0	0	0	0	0
Higher education	12.5	62.5	12.5	0	0	0

Source: Cace et.al., 2010, p.58

Therefore, the involvement of the parents is essential for the success of the initiatives to increase the educational level of the Roma children and to improve their school performances, by their power of decision they may have in relation with the class/school and by proposing intercultural educational activities. The under-representation of the Roma parents within the decision-making structures within the schools, even in the schools where the Roma children are preponderant, is documented in the study by Duminičă and Ivasiuc (2010, p. 67), by figures showing that only 41% of the Roma parents participate in the parent councils, 37% of the Roma children participate in student councils, under the conditions in which 51% of the children attending the surveyed schools (100 schools) are Roma people.

The social distance between the Roma and the *others* (Fleck and Rughinis, 2008, p.210) is the third aspect that influences the educational level of the Roma population, implicitly their socio-economic situation. The behaviour towards the Roma is often outlined in opposition with the concept of the *others*, whose significance within this context refers to all those that can stay together in communities and schools, referring thus to a possible relation of determination between the ethnic, residential and educational or schooling segregation. The stereotypes, attitudes and behaviour towards the Roma spread, amplifying the social distance between *us* (all the *others*) and *them* (the Roma). The intolerance towards them is maintained due to the low school attendance, dependence on the financial support of the state and predominant employment in the informal economy, specific to the Roma community.

Ethnic segregation can be reduced or eliminated as practice in schools, if the public institution empowered to manage this problem would have complete data on the ethnic school segregation among the pupils/students, the breakdown of children in segregated schools, the ethnic composition of the children within the schools with special education, the measures for school desegregation, or on the evolution of this phenomenon.

School segregation is not forbidden in schools (MECT, 2007), and no measures (laws) for its elimination are stipulated. The lack of information from the Ministry of Education and Research regarding this phenomenon is filled in by the non-governmental organisations. However, this approach provides a truncated image, which imbalances the development of pertinent public policies, because of the specificity of the data collected by the surveys conducted in particular areas/regions, because of the lack of statistic representativeness of the samples and different operationalization of the concepts.

According to the survey *Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma* (Open Society Institute, 2007, p. 362), the educational segregation is much more spread in the elementary and preschool education (Table 12). The intersectionality between ethnic affiliation and gender is highlighted by the fact that the proportion of women is much higher in the segregated schools, irrespective of the educational level.

Table 12. Ethnic segregation in schools and kindergartens (2006)

		Kindergarten	Elementary school (grades 1–4)	Middle school (grades 5-8)	High school (general, professional, vocational) (grades 9-12)
Total number of segregated schools		162	315	112	17
Roma children enrolled in segregated kindergartens and schools, percent (%) of the total enrolled Roma children (estimates)	boys	42.14	52.67	37.88	39.10
	girls	43.68	52.80	41.15	45.43

Source: Ministry of Education and Research, cited in OSI, 2007, p.362

As mentioned earlier, segregation is operationalised differently in the study by Laura Surdu (et.al., 2011, p. 11-14) than by the definition accepted by the Ministry of Education and Research. Therefore, this survey included the classes or schools in which the proportion of Roma children exceeded 50%. The importance of the study for our discussion comes from 2 aspects: diversity of the research methods employed by it, such as observation, focus-groups and survey; and the national statistic representativeness, provided by two samples of Roma people (one sample with adult Roma people having at least one child who dropped out school, and the second sample, consisting of children with 100% participation in preschool and school facilities). However, the representativeness of the samples is arguable as only compact communities of Roma people are included, excluding those from the mixed living environments (Moisă et. al., 2013, p.62).

According to the perception of the parents involved in the research (Surdu et.al., 2011, p.94), 59.1% (213 persons) stated that in the kindergarten group where his/her child was, there was approximatively the same number of Roma and non-Roma children (29.1%) or most Roma children (30%). 32.4% of the parents stated that that in the kindergarten group where his/her child was, there was most non-Roma children.

Segregation within the preschool institution is perceived by 59.1% of the parents, as follows: 30.5% of them said that the kindergartens where their children are, include mostly Roma children, 28.6% said that there is a balanced number of Roma and non-Roma children, while 29.6% said there was no segregation in the kindergartens where their children were.

The educational segregation in schools (idem, pp. 95 – 97) was reported at the class level by 56.3% (633 Roma adults) of the cases, meaning that the Roma adult stated that most children are Roma in the class where his/her child studies (28.8%), or that there is a balanced number of Roma and non-Roma children (27.7%). The data on school segregation in the school are similar with those at class level, most probably because the respondents did not make the difference between the class and school levels.

The Roma children from the segregated classes – those classes where there is at least an equal number of Roma and non-Roma children – have a higher proportion in the elementary education cycle (64.5%, or 123 people), than in the middle school cycle (53%, or 347 people). Furthermore, the difference between rural (68.6%) and urban (47.6%) in terms of school segregation is rather consistent. This can also be explained through the residential segregation, which much more frequent in the rural areas.

The study *A school for everybody? Access of Roma children to quality education* (Duminiță and Ivăsiuc 2010, p.33-35) included in its analysis 100 education units (77 schools and 23 kindergartens) attended by Roma children from 70 communities; interviews with the principals and teaching staff from those educational units, with the sanitary mediators allocated to the selected communities, with parents whose children are of school age, and children of school age.

The composite indicator (idem, p.116–117) used by them to sketch the size of the phenomenon of segregation, depends on: distance to the closest Roma community, proportion of the Roma children in the school and number of segregated classes (more than 50% of the pupils in the class are Roma people). Therefore, the research methodology used the operational definitions of segregation stipulated in the methodology of Order 1540 from 19.07.2007. this research distinguished the school segregation determined by the residence from that conditioned by the ethnic affiliation, using the distance to the closest Roma community. Residential segregation was present in the situations where the distance was smaller than 1 km and the proportion of Roma children was more than 50%, while the non-residential segregation was in the case meeting simultaneously the following criteria: distance to the Roma community was more than 1 km, proportion of Roma children was lower than 50% in the school, and there were classes with a majority of Roma children (more than 50%). According to the results of the quantitative research, the residential segregation was determined in 5

kindergartens and 11 schools, while the non-residential (exclusively ethnic), in 15 schools.

In the researches presented above, the image of the Roma communities is often that of a poor and poorly educated community. Leaving these difficulties behind might be done by decreasing the school segregation, namely enrolling the Roma children in unsegregated educational units and classes. Nevertheless, the Roma parents and children are confronted with the reticence of the principals and of the teaching staff, with the prejudices of people, with the subjective selection of the criteria of assignment by class, with the excessive bureaucracy and with the administrative measures from each school (Surdu et. al., 2011, p.96; Surdu, on-line, p.1).

In the ethnically segregated schools or classes (more than 50% Roma children), the quality of education is poor (Surdu, on-line, p.3–6) because of the following aspects:

- Overcrowding of classes;
- Orientation of the teachers towards discipline, to the detriment of learning;
- Insufficient equipment in the class;
- Inadequate endowment of the school libraries, necessary particularly in the poor environments where the families do not afford buying educational materials;
- Deficient training of the teaching staff;
- Low expectations regarding the potential and performance of the Roma children
- High rate of absenteeism (83.5%) of qualified teachers

School segregation by ethnic affiliation transforms the educational units in *second hand* units (Surdu, on-line, p. 6), because of the deficient facilities and insufficient training of the teaching staff. The rate of un skilled teachers is three times higher in the segregated schools where the Roma children predominate, than in the whole educational system. This has several consequences for the schools with high proportion (more than 70%) of Roma children: lower motivation of the Roma children to learn, materialized in a low rate of children (below 50%) who passed the capacity examinations; higher rate of school dropout and lower school performance (11.3% of the Roma children had to repeat the same school year).

According to the 2012 estimations of the Roma Education Fund for Romania, the segregated schools comprehended 13-45% of the Roma pupils (Moisă et. al., 2013, p.63). The quality of education in the segregated schools is low due to the low training of the teaching staff, lack of equipment and facilities, large number of pupils per class and low expectations for the school performance of the Roma pupils, expressed both by them, and by the teachers and parents.

The importance of education is asserted by the fact that it can increase the opportunities of access to the labour market. As Table 13 shows, the rate of employed people increases with the level of education. The people who graduated elementary education, middle school or professional schools only, have lower employment rates than those with higher educational levels.

Table 13. Rate of occupied people of working age (15 – 64 years) depending on their level of education (%)

		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Elementary, middle, or professional schools	Total	40.3	41.0	42.0	43.0	40.5	41.9	42.1
	Women	35.1	35.5	36.3	36.9	35.7	36.6	36.0
	Men	46.9	47.9	49.1	50.5	46.3	48.2	49.5
High school and post high school	Total	63.9	63.5	62.2	62.2	62.3	63.1	62.9
	Women	58.2	56.6	55.0	54.6	54.6	54.8	54.6
	Men	69.0	69.6	68.7	69.1	69.2	70.6	70.3
Higher education	Total	85.8	85.7	84.1	82.4	82.1	81.4	81.7
	Women	84.7	84.6	83.1	81.2	80.4	79.3	79.7
	Men	86.9	86.8	85.2	83.6	84.0	83.7	83.9

Source: Labour Force Survey, Eurostat

An initiative to improve the quality of education and to support the inclusive environment, consists in the presence of the Roma Teaching Assistant in the class, with the purpose of supporting the activity of the teaching staff (UNICEF 2010:29). The use of Step by Step methodologies, in combination with the presence of the Roma Teaching Assistant, had a high impact on both Roma and non-Roma pupils.

We spoke above of the impact of the stereotypes and image of the Roma population in consolidating the social distance between *us* and *them*. We could be aware of the fact that we transmit and maintain a specific image of them through the research, papers, advertising campaigns, documents of public policies, financed projects, documentaries and photos. The attempts of the experts to identify and reveal the problems of the Roma communities only sketch the differences between the Roma and us. By focusing on charting the situation of the Roma people with the purpose of justifying the excessive financing of the projects addressing them, we tend to outline the negative image of the Roma, which they internalize and reproduce it (Surdu, 2014). Hence, it is more than necessary to exert precaution in the way in which we try to present the vulnerable, uneducated, lazy people depending on financial aid from the state.

Conclusions

Most of the possible conclusions and recommendations that can be put into action are strongly related to the specificity of the target group: adult Roma people living in communities with low educational stock, placed very far from the success routes of the policies and interventions intended for vulnerable communities. Most of the respondents, both natural persons, and relevant community representatives see in education/training/formation one of the few potentially successful opportunities: qualifications for as many Roma as possible, coherent programs for basic formation, jobs specific to the Roma patterns, etc.

At the declarative level, one can notice that the community assumes responsibility for the topic of the professional occupation. The research data reveal, however,

contradictory details, non-personal and inconsistent manners of interaction. For instance, the preferable manner of information of the population is by notices displayed at the town hall noticeboard (a space that is rather outside the daily, usual routes of the citizens, or which presume effort and more than the simple displaying). This approach has, as specificity, a precarious control over the information and the lack of the support mechanisms, depersonalization of the message, etc.

In the same line, the consumption of media, pointed out as one of the sources of information regarding the available jobs (although its efficiency in such situations is rather low). The adult involved in multiple roles, reorganises his/her adequacy at reality, but not with a passive attitude. Hence, the use of direct active and participative forms and procedures, which to exploit the motivation of the adult is recommended insistently.

The negative perception on the odds of improving the situation at the local level is a form of sabotage of any similar approach. Therefore, the actual activity of community development, must compulsorily consider the development of positive representations regarding the existing jobs, regarding the concern for the problems of the Roma people.

The design and implementation of activities, projects and programs which to cover essentially the need for education (for children, considered to be the future) and for the adults (with instrumental value, to form the essential abilities of a profession/trade) is to be preferred to the measures of assistance. The lack of institutional vigour (“*political will*”), the deficient context of the functioning and information of the administration are just major impediments that fracture “*at grassroots*” any strategic action (which, nevertheless, is not of the competence of the local administrations, but rather of the county and national authorities).

The special jobs for Roma ethnics and the forms of organisation of the economic activities must be reviewed critically under the conditions of a competitive, non-protectionist environment, and considered as provisional and transient options to reduce the gap and inequity. They belong, however, to a broader context, in which the local leadership and the initiatives of socio-economic development benefit of an intelligent design, equitable in the long run.

The secondary data identified for the subject of education revealed the following:

School attendance increased by 15.3% from 1990 to 2012 (INS, 2012), more for the preschool education and for the young people aged 19+, who either resumed education even at older ages, or attended the post high school education or higher education.

The South-Muntenia region has the highest concentration of school population for all levels of education up to the professional education included, and in Bucharest-Ilfov, for the higher education.

According to (Popovici and Ercus, 2013, p.75), 60% of the Roma households have monthly incomes below the minimal national wage to support and average 5 people per household.

According to the 2011 Census, 23-25% of the Roma adults did not graduate the primary education and declared to be illiterate (idem, pp. 72 - 73). In 2011, 20% of the Roma children did not attend school, and more than 75% of them did not finish the 8 grades cycle; 26% of the adult Roma graduated the basic education, 34% middle school and 17% were attending high school, professional school or university.

The educational route of the Roma child is influenced much by the educational level of the mother (Cace et.al., 2010, p.57–58).

The educational level of the Roma people shows a high proportion of people with elementary school and middle school, and a lower proportion for the other levels of education. Having limited aspirations for their educational route, the poorly educated people, the Roma particularly, cannot provide for a decent standard of living based on the job they have. More than that, the low investments in education, the rather low level of education, the effect of prejudices and of stereotypes and the limited efficiency of the measures to control unemployment, limit their access to the labour market and stresses the level of poverty among the Roma communities.

The social distance between the Roma and the *others* is shown by the practice of segregation, perceived by 59.1% of the parents at the level of the group within the preschool institutions, and by 56.5% of them at the level of the school class (Surdu et al., 2010, p.94–97). The quality of education in the segregated schools is low, influencing their opportunities of access to the labour market.

The image of the Roma people, considering the difference between *us* and *them*, is sketched by the financed projects, by the documents and scientific, cultural and artistic materials that were delivered. These aspects are internalized and reproduced at the level of the society. In conclusion, caution is more than necessary when presenting the image of the Roma.

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