

# Roma/Gypsy Migration: EU Fear of Flows and Local Development Projects

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Cluj, Romania, 2006

## The Roma Migration Problematique

- EU fear of the growing migration flows from the new applicant states
- Negative public/institutional discourses led to imposing new conditions on labor force mobility and asylum applications - defining the roots of the problems and solve it.
- Romanian governmental/non-governmental local development and social programs sustained by international institution
  - ➔ ● The expected results of these programs are supposed to ensure a decent life for the poor Roma: here and in the near future. The measures might have unintended results as well and exactly the opposite as intended: that is to offer the necessary resources for the Roma in order to temporarily leave the country.
  - The exact number of those Roma who choose temporary migration as “survival strategy” cannot be estimated using statistical methods: the labor force mediator institutions do not require the declaration of ethnicity and the size and effectiveness of informal networks can also be hardly be estimated.

## The Roma - Who are they?

### ■ History

- XIVth century as slaves
- XIXth century abolition of serfdom



- **Result:** long-term subordination and exploitation  
marginality and deprivation

**2 Identification problems:** 1. the term “Roma”- *generic* one which includes a number of clans

2. The autoidentification of the Roma is *situational*, it depends on the social context

**1992 National Census:** 409.723 (1.8%)

**2002 National Census:** 535.250 (2.5%)

**Non-official estimates:** between 1.1 to 2.5 million  
Roma (Minority Rights Watch)



# Social Context of the Roma Population in Romania

## Migration push-factors

1. Discriminative political context. Two typical image of the Roma
  - a.) romantic representation - embodiment of a natural freedom (Stewart 1993)
  - b.) negative image: dirty, lazy, thieves (Toma 2005, Culic, Horvath and Rat 2000: 340-341)

+ tolerant and appreciative representation in a well-defined patron-client relation:  
“My Gypsy is honest, but the others are thieves” (Toma 2005)

It led to differentiated and unfair treatment by administrative authorities or public service providers, to virulent hate speech, sometimes to aggressive oppression (Zoon 2001, Haller, 1995, the Reghin case - 7th of September 2007)

IPP survey 2003: 82% of Romania's adult population agrees that the most of the Roma are lawbreaker, apx. 50% would support measures that limit the freedom of movement for Roma internally or abroad, and considers that the state should intervene in order to stop the demographic expansion of Roma (IPP 2003:37)

## 2. High level of poverty of the community

Before 1989 full employment - and the excess of demand for unskilled labor together with ideologically motivated assimilationist policies - substantially reduced poverty among the Roma population (bottom of the occupational hierarchy: street cleaning, gardening, agriculture and entertainment, mining, heavy industry, construction with social insurance, monthly salary)(Ringold 2002:31)

In the 70s these declared integrationist, but better said assimilationist efforts of the system approached its end: the subjects of the 'hidden unemployment' - as a result of the delayed economic crisis - were again the Roma who meanwhile had to resign their traditional craftworks (Nastasa, Varga 2001)

Transition: The collapse of the state-owned industrial and agricultural enterprises has resulted in mass-unemployment among Roma. World Bank studies

Forced to develop new and strengthened traditional strategies to survive (traditional occupations, remittances, informal credit at stores, small trade, casual work, begging, seasonal work

Broom maker



## 2. High level of poverty of the community

The Roma tried to find niches in the secondary (grey and black) economy. Thought he efforts of the Roma to find additional resources for survival in the secondary economy are not peculiar for a single group, their presence in this segment of the economy was a convenient circumstance to enforce the already existing stereotypes of the Gadjó about the Roma. The emphasis is placed not on their presence in the secondary economy but on their absence in wage-work, as wage work is important not only in securing a decent, secure life for a family, but this represents the framework for models of everyday behaviour and interactions. (Wilson 1996:73)



## 2. High level of poverty of the community

- ICCV research reveals that 47% of the active Roma population is employed comparing to 61,7% of the population at large.
- Almost 60% of the interviewed Roma declare that the activities undertaken were based on simple verbal agreements, without any registered labor contracts. (ICCV 2002)
  - The low access of the Roma to the official labor market has two consequences:
    - 1. In order to assure a decent life for themselves and for their family they have to develop strategies on the grey or black market
    - 2. Creation of a significant segment of Roma beneficiaries, or potential beneficiaries, for the social protection system.

## Projects and Social Transfers

- Besides the “pariah syndrome” (Hancock) the Roma are regaded as “welfare dependent”
- Though we lack reliable statistical data, we can admit that the state transfers failed to alleviate poverty among the Roma (Rat 2005). Social benefits are generally conditioned by participation on the formal labor market.
- Eg. Child allowance (Law 61/1993, 119/1997, Oug 105/2003), birth-indemnity, maternity leave, parental leave
- Unemployment benefits(OU 98/1999, Law 76/2002)
- Welfare benefits (Law 67/1995, Law 208/1997)
- Alternatives to state support: National Strategy for improving the Situation of the Roma (GD HG 430/24.04.2001)





## Migratory Paths towards EU

- Types of the migrants: asylum seekers, illegal migrants, temporary migrants.
- Asylum seekers (Belgium - 1997: 641; 1998: 1572; 1999: 1703; 2000: 948; Norway - 1997: 19, 1998: 77; 1999: 153; 2000: 621 Data from ICMPD, EU Odysseus Programme, 2001)
- Irregular migration: after 2002, continuously changing new regulations on the travel of Romanian citizens abroad. Despite the restrictions on labor migration of the EU States many Romanians are working now in the EU, many of them illegally. There are no official figures of their number, estimates of Center for urban and Regional Sociology (CURS) are about of 1 million Romanians working abroad in 2003, and apx. 900.000 household had at least one member abroad at work (Chivu 2004). IOM estimatea about 1.7 million people working abroad (2003) The Department for Labor Abroad (2004) estimates about 2 million people, most of whom were working in Italy (800.000), Spain (400.000) and Portugal (over 40.000).
- Another indicator: remittances at USD 1.5 - 2 billion/year (Romanian National Bank, November 2004)



## Migratory Paths towards EU

- The factors that contribute to the growth of the number of migrants (asylum seekers) is on one side the freedom of travel, on the other side due to the impoverishment of communities, sometimes due to an increase in ethnic tensions. But as current researches underline extreme poverty level does not directly lead to migration. The number of those Roma who are living under the poverty level is much higher as compared to those who decide to migrate. The main pushing factor in leaving the country is an economic one, but the majority of the migrants are coming from a better-off communities. These communities are able to maintain a certain level of international informal network and to possess the necessary financial resources to leave the country.
- **Diaspora Policy of the Romanian State**
  - The Romanian authorities do not have interactions with the Romanian citizens living and working abroad, only in the area of cultural, religious and educational programs.
  - Non-governmental associations: no comprehensive research, but growing interest. "Community Force" EC 2005-2007 Project: different associations are based on informal networks. As the Romanian diaspora grows the need for legality is more and more accentuated: eg. travel agencies, little phone-companies, consultation services, postal services and so on.
  - There are no single report on existing legal association/organization which serve the interest of migrant Roma.

# Informal Institutions

- Adapt themselves in a natural way. Studies on migration emphasize the centrality of family and kin networks in migration decision and behavior (Voiculescu 2002)
- Informal networks as survival strategies
- According to Michael Kearney (1986: 353) the migrant networks have developmental cycle, with a lot of changing internal and external relationships that constitutes the lifecycle of the networks: flow of persons, information, goods, services and economic value. After 2002 (eg. Italy), after the liberalization of the borders, this network became more selective and more impermeable for most of the migrants. The networks became saturated and the tendency is to reduce itself, to become more family oriented and to close for the latest migrants.
- **Differences between the Romanian and Roma migrants**
  - intentions
  - host countries
  - distances
  - financial and network resources
  - type of jobs
  - urban-rural areas

# Case study - Roma of Nusfalau

- NW of Transylvania
- 2002 census: 650 Roma (11.78% of the total population in the village)
- physically-socially-economically segregated community
- Functional integration: cooperation and complementarity. The rules and norms of the relationship between the Roma and non-Roma are defined by the Romanians and Hungarians, in best cases after a negotiation process.



# Case study - Roma of Nusfalau

- Sources of income. Survival strategies.
  - 90% of the Roma are unemployed.
  - Regular incomes: CAP-pensions, child allowance
  - Irregular incomes: making of bricks, illegal commerce of chemical substances, commercialization of non-financial aids, entertainment, gathering of wild fruits, mushrooms, processing walnuts, day-laborers for the Romanian and Hungarian families.
  - Other survival strategies:
    - Godfathers: the Roma community's strongest link to the society at large
    - Informal credit: "the List"
- **TRUST**
  - Every relationship between Roma and non-Roma functions on the basis of a set of non-written rules. Living and acting according to these rules, the trust between them is guaranteed.

## Migration intentions in Nusfalau

- At the beginning of the fieldresearch (in 2002) only one person was working abroad from the Brazilia community and one from Bakos community.
- In 2006 August we have counted 14 men working abroad (Hungary), only 4 out of 14 have visas to Hungary and have contracts with the employer. The interviews revealed that the reason why the number of migrants has grew in the last few years was:
  - possession of financial resources
  - possession of network connection (the first two men)
  - trust of the employer in the recommendation of the first arrived

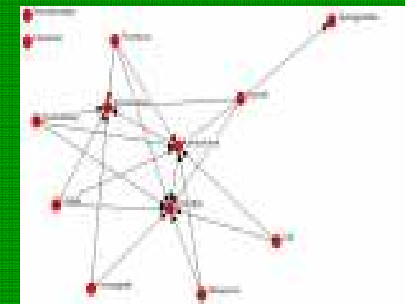


## Migration intentions in Nusfalau

- The first two Roma men who left for Hungary had initially Hungarian connections in finding a job.
- During the migration period none of those implied identify themselves as Roma - they declare that are Hungarians from Transylvania. They even can apply for the “Hungarian Legitimation” (an official identity card given by the Hungarian State to the Hungarians of Romania with the approval of the Romanian State and which gives special rights to the possessor: reduced travel tickets, student cards, teacher’s cards and so on)
- Subjects declared that even if there would exists a Roma NGO/Association/Organization which would help them in some way in finding a job, they would not use its services as they fear further discrimination in case that they openly declare their Roma ethnicity.

## Further Questions

- **Why social policies are ineffective in making decent living conditions for the Roma of Romania?**
  - Formally, the implementation are successful. Highly centralized implementation does not leave space for best practices for different communities.
  - Lack of reliable research and knowledge on different Roma communities.
  - Centralization: high number of mediating institutions/persons.
- **How Roma communities find alternative ways to survive?**
  - Occupying a position in the informal economy using extensive social networks (ex. Godparents)
  - Can extensive social networks replace the lack of financial resources in migration?
  - Qualitative network analysis: UCINET version.6





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## Useful Internet sites of the Roma and about the Roma



- European Roma Right Centre [www.errc.org](http://www.errc.org)
- European Roma Information Office [www.erionet.org](http://www.erionet.org)
- The OSCE Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues <http://www.osce.org/odihr/cprsi>
- Project on Ethnic Relations [www.per-usa.org](http://www.per-usa.org)
- The Roma Centre for Public Policies “Aven Amentza” [www.romanothan.ro](http://www.romanothan.ro)
- Rom-News Network Community [www.romnews.com](http://www.romnews.com)
- Resource Center for Roma Communities [www.romacenter.ro](http://www.romacenter.ro)
- Ethno-Diversity Resource Centre [www.edrc.ro](http://www.edrc.ro)
- Roma Women Association [www.romawoman.org](http://www.romawoman.org)
- UK: The National Romani Rights Association [www.camcnty.gov.uk/sub/resrchgp/travel](http://www.camcnty.gov.uk/sub/resrchgp/travel)
- The International Romani Union [www.unionromani.org](http://www.unionromani.org)
- The *Patrin* web journal [www.geocities.com/Paris/5121/patrin.htm](http://www.geocities.com/Paris/5121/patrin.htm)
- Romanian National Agency for the Roma [www.anr.guv.ro](http://www.anr.guv.ro)

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