

# Positive aspects of migration: Roma women as agents of change

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## Introduction

This research paper was written based on a study conducted within the project: *“Positive aspects of migration: Roma women and Roma craftspersons as agents of change”*, which was implemented by Eurocentrica, as part of the program PA17/RO13 - the promotion of diversity in arts and culture, within the European cultural heritage.

The general objective of the project was to enhance cultural dialogue and to preserve European identity through the understanding of cultural diversity by promoting positive aspects of Roma migration (Roma women and craftspersons as agents of change).

Within this context, the specific objectives of the project were:

- To document the cultural history of Roma and to determine a better understanding of cultural diversity by conducting a research study on the positive impact of migration for the emancipation of Roma women;
- To determine a better understanding of cultural diversity and to consolidate the intercultural dialogue by promoting the traditional Roma crafts through two events organized in Norway;
- To consolidate the access of a larger audience to Roma culture by disseminating the research study and by organizing two events in Norway focused on traditional Roma crafts;

## Scope, Objective and Methodology

The **scope** of the research was to identify the positive effects of migration on Roma women.

Its main **objectives** were:

- To identify which Roma women from the communities envisaged by the study have travelled abroad
- To map the main countries and destinations considered by Roma migration
- To identify the frequency of travelling abroad
- To identify the main effects of migration, with focus on positive effects
- To validate the hypothesis according to which migration generates a certain emancipation of Roma women within their own families and communities
- To identify the main modalities through which Roma improve their financial situation while abroad
- To correlate the data on socio-economic situation and education of Roma women with data on migration
- To identify Roma's perceptions on the effects of migration on their situation
- To invalidate generalized human trafficking
- To make recommendations based on the general conclusions of the study

In order to realize these objectives, we conducted a bi-dimensional research: quantitative and qualitative research.

## Data collection techniques and methods:

- Desk research which focused on the relevant literature in the area. The goal was to include this research within the larger body of literature on migration, Roma and gender.
- Quantitative research by elaborating and applying a questionnaire.
- Qualitative research by realizing 15 semi-structured interviews, containing predetermined questions. The method was used in order to explore the way in which respondents perceive migration, but also to identify persons whose opinions demand a detailed investigation.
- 5 in-depth interviews, following the identification within the semi-structured interviews. The method was chosen in order to focus on the life stories of Roma women in communities, told by themselves, and on their personal life experiences. Moreover, the method was chosen in order to counteract the weak aspects of semi-structured interviews (researchers would have difficulties in examining complex opinions and questions). Also, this method enables Roma women to share their experience in a format of their choice, in opposition to the semi-structured interviews, where the researcher had already established which are the important issues.
- Direct observation. However, it is important to highlight that this is not an anthropological research. Due to time limitation, we could

not realize an in-depth, long-term research in the communities envisaged.

We based our research on previous studies in the areas of sociology and anthropology<sup>1</sup>, on the national census<sup>2</sup> and on the term country reports drafted for the National Agency for Roma<sup>3</sup>. We gave special importance to the phrases and the elements used by Roma women in order to describe their own experiences regarding migration<sup>4</sup>.

The pre-determined questions focused on:

- Frequency of migration
- Routes of migration
- Support network (family etc.)
- Subjective experience of migration
- Reasons for migrating
- Impact of migration
- Possible cases of human trafficking

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1 Glick Schiller, N 2009, "A Global Perspective on Transnational Migration: Theorizing Migration without Methodological Nationalism", *Working Paper*, No. 67. Glick Schiller, N 2003, "The centrality of ethnography in the study of transnational migration: seeing the wetland instead of the swamp", in Foner, N (ed.) 2003, *American Arrivals: Anthropology Engages the New Immigration*, School of American Research Press, Santa Fe, pp. 99-128.

2 Romanian National Census, 2011.

3 National Agency for Roma, term reports.

4 Grill, J 2012, "Going up to England: Exploring Mobilities among Roma from Eastern Europe", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 38, no. 8, pp. 1269-1287.

**Representative sample:**

Probabilistic

**Research method:**

Face-to-face interviews and questionnaires.

**Instruments:**

- Questionnaire.
- Interview, questions.

## Desk research

This report is situated in the broader, complex context of contemporary Roma mobilities<sup>5</sup>. Referring to this problematic Jan Grill, for instance, talks of “various forms of mobility”<sup>6</sup>. However, when writing this report, researchers were faced with the dilemma of using the term “mobility(ies)” versus “migration(s)”. Whilst, “mobility(ies)” is more suitable to describe the constant, complex movements, both physical and existential<sup>7</sup> of Roma persons, the term “migration” was preferred in the end.

This choice is justified by the legal status of Norway - our main focus for this research paper - within the European Union: indeed, given that Norway is not a Member State of the European Union, the term “migration”, and the larger international migration law seemed the most adequate choice.

Furthermore, it is important to clarify the concept of “Roma” as well, and the way it is used within this research paper. The term “Roma” has been introduced into the international discourse in the 1970s by Roma

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<sup>5</sup>Sigona, N, Vermeersch, P 2012, “Introduction. The Roma in the New EU: Policies, Frames and Everyday Experiences”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 38, no. 8, p. 1189.

<sup>6</sup> Grill, *op.cit.*, p. 1190.

<sup>7</sup> Grill, *ibidem.*

representatives, in order to replace the term “Gypsies”, deemed to be discriminatory<sup>8</sup>.

According to linguistics, Roma comes from the Romani word “rom”, which means “man, husband”<sup>9</sup>. It is important to retain that Roma is currently used as an umbrella-term, denominating various sub-groups: Sinti, Manouches, Kalderash etc.

*The general usage of the term ‘Roma’ does not intent to minimize or to ignore the great diversity within the various Roma groups and communities. This term does not intend either to promote stereotypes (EU webpage)*

As for the purpose of this report, by Roma we refer to the so-called Eastern European Roma/Gypsies, and in particular to the Roma from the communities in the southern part of Romania, considered in by the field research.

Eastern European Roma/Gypsies “were of particular concern for many political actors and were seen as a litmus test in the accession process by human-rights groups, EU institutions and the member-states politicians”<sup>10</sup>. This correlation between the accession to EU and the situation of Roma in their respective Member States, as well as the

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<sup>8</sup> Klimova-Alexander, I 2005, *The Romani Voice in World Politics, The United Nations and Non-State Actors*, Ashgate, Hants.

<sup>9</sup> Hancock, I 2002, *We are the Romani People*, University of Hertfordshire Press, Hertfordshire.

<sup>10</sup> Vermeersch, P 2012, “Reframing the Roma: EU Initiatives and the Politics of Reinterpretation”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 38, no. 8, pp. 1195-1212.

potential increase of Roma migration, partially explain the explosion of academic research in relation to Roma over the past decades. Several directions of research in relation to Roma studies are to be identified:

- ✓ Linguistic studies<sup>11</sup>
- ✓ Historical studies<sup>12</sup>
- ✓ Anthropological studies<sup>13</sup>
- ✓ Sociological studies<sup>14</sup>
- ✓ Legal studies<sup>15</sup>

However, the vast majority of research in relation to Roma studies, is interdisciplinary, given the complexity of the topics. Roma migration is illustrative in this regard. Usually, Roma migration is described as being **family-oriented**. Gamella<sup>16</sup>, for instance, characterizes Roma migration as a “family journey”, making it uncommon to find men and women who migrate by themselves. This family migration is mostly dependent on

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<sup>11</sup> Matras, Y 2005, *Romani: A Linguistic Introduction*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

<sup>12</sup> Hancock, Y 1989, *The Pariah Syndrome, An Account of Gypsy Slavery and Persecution*, Karoma Publishers, Ann Arbor. Achim, V 2004, *The Roma in Romanian History*, Central European University Press, Budapest.

<sup>13</sup> Stewart, M 1997, *Time of the Gypsies*, Westview Press, Boulder. Lucassen, L 1991, “The power of definition. Stigmatization, Minoritisation and Ethnicity Illustrated by the History of Gypsies in the Netherlands”, *Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 27, no.2, pp. 80-91.

<sup>14</sup> Zamfir, C, Zamfir, E 1993, *Țiganiile între ignorare și îngrijorare*, Alternative, București. Fleck G, Rughiniș, C 2008, *Come Closer-Inclusion and Exclusion of Roma in Present-Day Romanian Society*, Human Dynamics, Bucharest.

<sup>15</sup> Ignățoiu-Sora, E 2011, “The discrimination discourse in relation to the Roma: its limits and benefits”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 34, no. 10, pp. 1697-1714. Goodwin, M 2006, *The romani claim to non-territorial nationhood: taking legitimacy-based claims seriously in international law*, PhD thesis, European University Institute.

<sup>16</sup> Gamella, J 2007, “La immigracio Ignorada: Roma/Gitanos de Europa Oriental en Espana, 1991-2006”, Available at: [http://www.ugr.es/~pwlac/G23\\_08JuanF\\_Gamella.html](http://www.ugr.es/~pwlac/G23_08JuanF_Gamella.html)

previous networks (kin and acquaintances), despite of some worries expressed in relation to human trafficking<sup>17</sup>. It is being characterized by great and **constant mobility**: not only Roma would migrate from Romania to Norway, for instance, but inside Norway, and inside Romania as well<sup>18</sup>.

It is rather **insignificant in terms of numbers**<sup>19</sup>, but highly important in terms of the reactions it triggers. It is usually considered to be driven by socio-economic rationales, because of racism and exclusion from the labour market. Most Roma who are active in the process of migration are in pursuit of a better life - symbolically and socially, and in this context, their migration is equated with carving a better future for themselves.

Roma migration is **not a recent phenomenon**, and the first laws targeted at preventing and controlling it date back to the 15th century. One common trait is that Roma migration has always been **under scrutiny and control** in one way or the other. Although recent measures to prevent and to control Roma migration are not new, they have, undoubtedly, acquired new dimensions, especially with the involvement of the EU institutions and the powerful reverberations in the media and in the

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<sup>17</sup> Helms, E 2013, *Invisible victims: an analysis of human trafficking vulnerability and prevention in Bulgarian Romani Communities*, PhD Thesis, University of Denver.

<sup>18</sup> Sordé Martí, T, Munté, A, Contreras A, Prieto-Flores, O 2012, "Immigrant and Native Romani Women in Spain: Building Alliances and Developing Shared Strategies", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 38, no. 8, pp. 1233-1249, p. 1234.

<sup>19</sup> Nacu, A 2012, "From Silent Marginality to Spotlight Scapegoating? A Brief Case Study of France's Policy Towards the Roma", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 38, no. 8, pp. 1323-1328.

society as such. The heated debates in the media and in society at large, following or at times even triggering swift legal, repressive measures are illustrative: in Norway, France, Italy, Denmark<sup>20</sup>. It is curious how a small number of migrants have provoked such vast reactions<sup>21</sup>, the French case being particularly telling. Alexandra Nacu, for instance, documents how over a matter of few weeks, in the summer of 2010, there were massive reactions to the presence of only a few hundred of Roma on the French territory<sup>22</sup>.

In relation to this, one line of recent academic research actually takes these issues one step forward, by looking at methods of framing and of interpreting Roma migration, mainly for political reasons. Peter Vermeersch discusses, for instance, in an article from 2012 on the ongoing reframing of Roma and on different politics of reinterpretation<sup>23</sup>. He uses the shifts in the EU policies towards Roma as a way to discuss the way their migration has been reframed by different actors: nation states, EU, European institutions and NGOs.

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<sup>20</sup> See media coverage.

<sup>21</sup> Sordé Martí, *op.cit.*, p. 1234: “*The LUNGO DROM observation project (2004-07) estimated the size of the Roma migrant population living around the Mediterranean coast to be between 5,900 and 7,100 people. More-recent data suggest that 600 to 700 Romani immigrants from Eastern Europe are living in the Barcelona area (FSGG 2009), another estimate, of 600, was made in 2005 (Generalitat de Catalunya 2006)*”

<sup>22</sup> Nacu, *op.cit.*

<sup>23</sup> Vermeersch, *op.cit.*

The danger in highlighting the European dimension of Roma is: “(...) to provide new discursive material for nationalist politicians with an anti-Romani agenda who try to minimise or evade their countries’ domestic responsibility by highlighting the role and responsibility of the EU. They also latch onto the alleged ,Europeanness’ of the Roma in order to exclude them symbolically from their own national space and frame them not only as ,Europeans’ but also as ,outsiders’ and cultural ,deviants’<sup>24</sup>.

*Vermeersch concludes: “The Roma are a unique case because their experiences of mobility are strongly affected by policy developments and debates”.*

A major part of the contemporary literature regarding Roma takes place within intra-EU mobility<sup>25</sup>, which adds a whole new dimension to the academic discussion, given the EU citizenship and the entitlements associated to it. The social benefits, in particular, have triggered some research on Roma allegedly abuse of welfare systems, or otherwise known as “welfare tourism”. This line of research, still under development, considers the link between welfare benefits and durational residence and resource requirements, especially in relation to Directive

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<sup>24</sup> However, Vermeersch underlines that over the past years there is a dual approach in relation to Roma: on the one hand there is the effort to frame Roma as a group in need for special attention and care, and on the other end there is the intention to make them look like scape-goats. Vermeersch, *ibidem*, p. 1195

<sup>25</sup> Sigona, Vermeersch, *op.cit.*, p. 1190.

38/2004, and in line of the interpretation adopted by the European Court of Justice, with its delicate and complex “balancing of interests”<sup>26</sup>.

The Dano case is of particular interest<sup>27</sup>. These discussions are very much related to the larger debate on social inclusion of Roma promoted at the EU level<sup>28</sup>, and they are complementary to a growing body of literature on the EU legal framework on social inclusion<sup>29</sup>.

Along with discourse tendencies and social inclusion, the academic literature regarding Roma migration takes into account as well the calls for security as a reason to control their mobilities.

Nando Sigona and Peter Vermeersch synthesize very well the embedment of Roma migration into a complex array of topics: *“policy debates about Romani mobilities at the EU level, as well as in member-states, are polarised between calls for security and control of mobility and migration on the one hand, and appeals to fight discrimination, increase the Roma’s chances for social inclusion and defend their minority rights*

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<sup>26</sup> Mather, JD 2005, “The Court of Justice and the Union Citizen”, *European Law Journal*, 2005, vol. 11, no. 6, pp. 722-743.

<sup>27</sup> Case C-333/13 Elisabeta Dano, Florin Dano v Jobcenter Leipzig.

<sup>28</sup> To name only a few: Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion; various financial instruments, such as the European Social Fund or the European Regional Development Fund. For more, see

<http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/file/improving-the-tools-for-the-social-inclusion-and-non-discrimination-of-roma-in-the-eu-2010.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> Dawson, M 2011, *New Governance and the Transformation of European Law: Coordinating EU Social Law and Policy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. Cantillon, B, Verschueren, H, Ploscar, P 2012, *Social Inclusion and Social Protection in the EU: Interactions between Law and Policy*, Intersentia, Antwerp.

on the other. These attempts at governing these various forms of Romani mobility have also produced changes in the way in which such mobilities have been experienced by the Roma themselves and on how the Roma have been framed in public discussions”<sup>30</sup>.

Another important line of research connects discrimination with migration: reasons behind Roma’s decisions to leave behind their home countries, and, as the same time, negative reception in host countries. Portes and Rumbaut had written on this perspective<sup>31</sup>, and in strict relation to Roma there are the studies conducted by Bancroft or Crowe (2003)<sup>32</sup>.

Another line of research analyses the impact of Roma migration on the demographics of Member States, in terms of values and Roma identity, as well as on policy behaviour of various actors and institutions. Sigona and Trehan analyse how following accession of Eastern European countries to the EU made it more difficult for the EU not to include Roma

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<sup>30</sup> Sigona, Vermeersch *op.cit.*, p. 1190. Sasse, G 2005, “Securitisation or securing rights? Exploring the conceptual foundations of policies towards minorities and migrants in Europe”, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 43, no.4, pp. 673-693: “throughout the last decade the EU has increasingly linked its security interests with the promotion of rights in the field of minority protection and anti-discrimination”.

<sup>31</sup> Portes, A, Rumbaut, R 2006, *Immigrant America: a Portrait*, University of California Press, Los Angeles and Berkeley. Portes, A & MacLeod, D 1996 “What shall I call myself? Hispanic identity formation in the second generation”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 523-547.

<sup>32</sup> Bancroft, A 2005, *Roma and Gypsy Travellers in Europe, Modernity, Race, Space and Exclusion*, Ashgate, Hants. Crowe, DM 1996, *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia*, I.B. Tauris, London.

migration in its policies<sup>33</sup>. In this context, Roma migration is presented as a factor for *“the EU to pressure for change in the candidate states in order to allay fears of large-scale migration to the West”*<sup>34</sup>.

The impact of migration on Roma is documented in articles such as the one written by Jan Grill, where he describes the experiences, especially at the existential level, of a Roma community involved in migration from Slovakia to the UK<sup>35</sup>. He makes the distinction between “physical” and “existential” migration to describe the imaginative and symbolic dimension associated with migration. Following the experience of a particular Roma man (Thulo) who decided to return from the UK, Grill manages to show that the decisions of Roma to engage or disengage from migration pathways are not necessarily linked to financial circumstances. Thulo decided to return to Slovakia not only because he could not find a job in UK, but because he felt disempowered and *“compromising his own sense of masculinity and location in the Roma social universe”*<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> See also Vermeersch, P, *ibidem*, p. 1196: *“the increase of Romani migration to Western Europe has made it more difficult for the EU to narrow down to merely a problem of Eastern Europe. It has also forced the old EU members in the West to take the situation of their own native Romani citizens, which they so far had more or less ignored, more seriously”*.

<sup>34</sup> Vermeersch, *op.cit.*, p. 1199.

<sup>35</sup> This article is placed in the larger research conducted especially in anthropology. See Berger J, Mohr, J 1975, *A Seventh Man*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, pp. 58: *“a migrant will leave his home because it held no future for him”*.

<sup>36</sup> Grill, *op.cit.*, p. 1275.

Grill's paper, in particular, is illustrative for the complexity of Roma migration, and the present report is very keen as well on showing the diversity of the situation of Roma. In fact, such diversity should be taken into account by decision-makers and policy-makers.

In the recent years, Roma's migration is being researched as a "significant movement", which empowers Roma and equips them with the hope for a better future. This empowerment feature is recent to migration studies, and especially to research focusing on women migration, as it is the case with this present research. In fact, there has been a growing tendency to incorporate gender in migration studies over the last three decades, the main lines of inquiry being on: why women migrate, the way migration affects on the host societies, the societies back home and their own families. This is however new and until the 1980s research on women migration was relatively scarce<sup>37</sup>.

Furthermore, when research was conducted, it pointed at the victimization of women in the context of migration, and it is only recently that there has been a shift towards migrant women's agency and empowerment. The present research is in line with this new tendency of research, embedded in the new approaches of the larger field of feminist studies - which have evolved from denouncing oppressive conditions and

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<sup>37</sup> Pessar, P, Mahler, S 2003, "Transnational migration: bringing gender in", *International Migration Review*, vol. 37, no. 3, pp. 812-846. Wright, C 1995, "Gender awareness in migration theory: synthetizing actor and structure in Southern Africa", *Development and Change*, vol. 26, no. 4, pp. 771-791.

relationships, to depicting women as significant agents in the process of migration.

*In more recent years, there has been growing recognition that perhaps too much emphasis has been placed on the victimization of migrant women, and a consequent shift has occurred towards focusing on migrant women's agency and empowerment*

Several studies written in the context of migration from the Philippines or from Mexico to the US, or from Germany to the EU are key to this new approach<sup>38</sup>. The research of Roma migration from Romania is currently under developed and it can only be **partially** situated into the existent literature on migration, and gender migration, given its specific features - the most important one being the legal status of Roma from Romania of EU citizens.

When discussing the agency of women migration, we should, however, indicate that research evidence is highly contradictory. Whilst some authors equate migrant women with an increased economic autonomy<sup>39</sup>, with more participation to civic life and better awareness of their rights<sup>40</sup>, there is also a growing body of literature on the disempowerment of women because of migration.

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<sup>38</sup> Hochschild, AR 2000, "Global care chains and emotional surplus value", in Hutton, W, Giddens, A, Cape, J 2000, *Living on the edge: Living with global capitalism*, Vintage, London, pp. 130-146.

<sup>39</sup> Pessar, P Mahler, SJ 2003, *op. cit.*

<sup>40</sup> Hirsch, JS 1999, "El norte la mujer manda: gender, generation and geography in a Mexican transnational community", *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 42, no. 9, pp. 1332- 1349.

Authors, such as Hirsch,<sup>41</sup> evidenciate powerful, structural aspects, like global economic disparities, inequalities in payment among countries and human trafficking, which would disempower migrant women. There are authors going as far as to say that migration has an insignificant impact on gender inequalities<sup>42</sup>.

Nevertheless, there are some important key studies underlining the agency impact on migrant women

Leah Briones<sup>43</sup>, for instance, illustrates the manifestations and the effects of the globalization of migration. Based on 12 interviews with Filipino migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong and Paris, focused on their employment and work experiences, Briones concludes that, at times, the lives of women are positively affected by migration. Her main aim is to reconcile victimization with agency in the case of migrant women, and to bring a multifold dimension to women migration, especially by highlighting how, despite oppressive situations, migrant women are still able to “carve out spaces of control”.

According to this study, migrant women achieve some empowerment, by becoming the main economic contributors for their families. The central

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<sup>41</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>42</sup> Parrado, EA, Flippen, C 2005, “Migration and gender among Mexican women”, *American Sociological Review*, vol. 70, no. 4, pp. 606-632.

<sup>43</sup> Briones, L 2009, *Empowering Migrant Women: Why Agency and Rights are not Enough*, Ashgate, Hants.

element in her approach is on the “livelihood” of these women, and on their daily experiences.

Another key book for this new tendency in gender migration studies, focusing on agency, rather than on victimization, is the one written by Umut Erel<sup>44</sup> on the life stories of ten highly skilled Turkish women living in Germany and Britain. The key concepts are, similar to Leah Briones book, their daily experiences, their life stories, and how these women managed to build alternative identity definitions of themselves as Turkish women. The narratives of experiences of education are highly important for these women in negotiating their new roles within their families and at the workplace.

In the larger context of gender migration studies, studies on Roma women migration are, however, rather scarce and relatively new. This is no surprise given that, traditionally, the ethnic dimension has been marginalized even within gender studies. Gender studies, and gender migration studies are currently under growing criticism: some studies were criticized for being biased as they were conducted mostly by white, middle-class women. Because of these, the “other women”<sup>45</sup>, term under which many Roma women could be included, did not fit in research studies.

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<sup>44</sup> Erel, U 2009, *Migrant women Transforming Citizenship, Life-stories from Britain and Germany*, Ashgate, Hants.

<sup>45</sup> Puidgert, L 2001, *Las otras mujeres*, El Roure, Barcelona.

However, the tendency to ignore the situation of Roma women is not exclusive to migration. In fact, it can be observed in all other areas as well. Nevertheless, there is a growing tendency to encompass the gender dimension in policy and research related to Roma. For instance, the European Parliament emphasized, in its 2006 *Resolution on Roma women within the European Union*<sup>46</sup>, several worrying indicators in relation to Roma women: lower life expectancy, higher unemployment rate, structural discrimination, a lower school enrollment for girls, wide-spread practices in traditional, patriarchal communities to force young girls into marriages. It is commonly accepted that Roma women face a greater risk of social exclusion, and different national as well as international documents have constantly underlined the need to take into account the gender dimension<sup>47</sup>.

Among the few studies focusing on Roma migrants, we mention the paper written by Teresa Sordé Martí<sup>48</sup> on the strategies adopted by Roma women immigrants and Gitano women in Barcelona. The paper is based on 20 daily-life stories of immigrant Romani women, 10 native Gitano women, and 10 interviews with representatives of NGOs and social workers in the Barcelona region.

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<sup>46</sup> EU PA\_TA (2006) 0244A6-0148/2006, European Parliament resolution on the situation of Roma women in the European Union (2005/2164 (INI)

<sup>47</sup> The Ten Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion.

<sup>48</sup> Sordé Martí, *op.cit.*

By encounters in informal settings (parks, church), these women built alliances which then enable them to find and to share common strategies for improving their lives. The authors concludes that: *“common identification is promoted not only by political institutions and civil society, or by Romani transnational civic and political organizations, but also by grassroots everyday-life interactions in neighborhoods where they live together”*<sup>49</sup>.

A strong tendency in Roma gender migration studies is to situate such research within families, in the domestic, familiar context, in order to unveil what is beneath curtains of silence. In a recent article, Maria-Carmen Pantea<sup>50</sup>, for instance, conducted qualitative interviews with 54 women in six Roma communities in Romania (in the western part of the country - Transylvania), with the intention to explore gender norms and the way they are affected by migration. The question was, in a similar manner to the one proposed by our own research, whether, following migration, Roma women are gaining more power within their families and communities.

The conclusion of her study is that “Roma women’s migration is highly dependent on the ‘gender regime in their home communities’, and, that, in this context, *“women’s mobility tends to be seen as a moral statement*

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<sup>49</sup> Sordé Martí, *ibidem*, p. 1234

<sup>50</sup> Pantea, MC 2012, “From Making a Living to Getting Ahead: Roma Women’s Experiences of Migration”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 38, no. 8, pp. 1251-1268.

*that either enhances or relegates the image of a family or community".* The author argues that *"complexities involved in Roma migration cannot be properly analyzed if migration is only considered as a cultural practice or a group process"*, and thus she finally recommends for *"more refined policy interventions that consider the various 'subgroups' of women within Roma communities"*.

The types of research we have mentioned are indicative of this recent shift of perspective, which underlines the agency of Roma women, in all aspects of their lives. The present research is situated within the same theoretical perspective.

*"Today, Romani women are considered to be the key agents of social and cultural change among the Roma people"* Teresa Sordé Martí

## Historical factors explaining the current status of Roma women

The current situation of Roma communities in Romania, including the Roma women inferior status, could be explained for the most part by the historical evolution of Roma population in the territories inhabited mostly by Romanians. The main characteristic of this situation is the permanent **marginalization** of Roma communities both by the state authorities and by society at large<sup>51</sup>.

Due to marginalization, Roma preserved many traits of their archaic, patriarchal familial and social organization. On the other hand, marginalization amplified the negative influence that modernisation exerted over the professional and economic dimension of Roma traditional way of life, phenomenon that further contributed to an even deeper isolation of Roma from the rest of the society.

Roma's presence on the current territory of Romania is documented starting with the second half of 14<sup>th</sup> century<sup>52</sup>. The cause of Roma migration north of the Danube seems to be the disruption of social structures and institutions in the Balkan states in the context of Ottoman conquests.

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51 Achim V, 2004, *The Roma in Romanian History*, Central European University Press, Budapest, New York. p. 5-6 and p. 207-209.

52 *Ibidem*, p. 15-20.

From the very beginning the status of Roma in the Romanian principalities was that of *robi* (slaves)<sup>53</sup>, which was probably their former condition also in the south of the river. This meant that in exchange for some relatively high yearly paid taxes to their owners (central state authority, boyars and monasteries), Roma communities enjoyed a significant autonomy.

Thus, Roma were allowed to live as nomads and to practice crafts such as blacksmithing and carving wood<sup>54</sup> that differentiated them from the majority of the population, sedentary and occupied in agriculture. This situation was highly profitable to owners of Roma slaves and, as a consequence, it was preserved until the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century south and east of the Carpathians. Although the situation contributed to the isolation of Roma from the rest of the society, the slaves were not more heavily impoverished, economically and socially, than the Romanian serfs.

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53 *Ibidem*, p. 29-30. Based on the historical sources, we rather follow this reconstruction than the hypothesis that Roma were enslaved in the Romanian principalities at a later date. See Panaitescu, PN 1939, "Le Rôle économique et social des Tziganes au Moyen Age en Valachie et en Moldavie", *XVII-e Congrès International d'Anthropologie et d'Archéologie Préhistorique. VII-e Session de l'Institut International d'Anthropologie. Bucarest, 1-8 Septembre 1937*, București, pp. 933-942; and Gheorghe, N 1983, "Origin of Roma's Slavery in the Romanian Principalities", *Roma*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 12-27.

54 Depending on their owners and the crafts they practiced, Roma were divided into different categories, with different ways of life: *aurari* (goldsmiths), *ursari* (leaders of dancing tamed bears), *lingurari* (makers of spoons and other wooden objects), *lăieși* (mostly blacksmiths), *vătrași* (sedentary Roma). Kogălniceanu, M 1837, *Esquisse sur l'histoire, les mœurs et la langue des Cigains*, Behr, Berlin, *apud* Achim, *op. cit.*, p. 33-34.

The modernisation of the Romanian principalities brought forth the interest of the state in turning Roma into ordinary tax-payers, firstly in Transylvania, secondly in Wallachia and Moldavia. Several laws concerning Roma sedentarisation and emancipation were enacted between 1830 and 1860.

These measures were not accompanied by the allocation of resources needed to facilitate Roma's adaptation to their new status, which led to serious side effects. Although some of the emancipated Roma, mainly those who were compelled to leave their traditional communities, were quickly assimilated by the majority population, either Romanian, Hungarian, or German<sup>55</sup>, many others chose to migrate to Western Europe, which generated the greatest migratory wave of Roma since the 14<sup>th</sup> century<sup>56</sup>.

Nevertheless, most of them could not adapt to the new conditions and whilst industrialisation affected their traditional occupations, they were stricken by poverty and became peripheral social elements, gathered in the outskirts of villages or in city slums and often earning their living by seasonal migration<sup>57</sup>.

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55 Achim, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-120.

56 *Ibidem*, p. 120-127.

57 Oprean, O 2011, *The Roma of Romania*, College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences Theses and Dissertations, Paper 96, p. 16-17.

None of the political regimes in modern and contemporary Romania adopted and implemented a coherent strategy which would be based on the real problems of Roma communities, coming mainly from the discrepancy between their traditional way of life and the modern economic system and their historical isolation from the majority of the population. Roma have always been tolerated, but ignored at the same time. The Romanian society and the state have never been aware of and have never focused on solving the profound problems of the minority: in Romania, there have never been „a Roma issue” to arouse the interest of the majority.

As a consequence, the objectives of the authorities to turn Roma into “productive” citizens and to eradicate crime were only met partially and/or temporarily. In fact, the situation of Roma has worsened constantly, despite some progress registered during 1960-1970<sup>58</sup>: the marked absence of professional skills and the rise of unemployment among Roma bear testimony to this negative evolution.

In conclusion, in a time span of approximately a century and a half, Roma in Romania changed their status from a distinct social category specific to medieval organisation to a poor social class, unable to meet the new requirements on the market and consequently prone to anomy and criminality. They are, thus, caught in a vicious circle: marginalization

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58 Achim, *op. cit.*, p. 190-193; Oprean, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

brings poverty, lack of development and increasing social inequalities between Roma and Romanians, which generate further marginalization.

The cultural effects of Roma marginalization and pauperity are the preservation of practices and traditions specific to patriarchal societies, like early marriages, bride-selling and bride-buying, uncontrolled natality etc.<sup>59</sup> Traditional practices, combined with the lack of adaptation to modernity, have a negative impact on the status of Roma women.

Since 2000, as it was the case in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, one of the solutions adopted by Roma is to migrate towards West, in the favourable context provided by the association to and the joining of the EU by Romania. While in the 19<sup>th</sup> century migration to western countries was permanent, nowadays it is more and more accompanied and even totally replaced by its seasonal instance, the object of the current study.

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59 Synthetic observations on the status of Roma women in Chelcea, I 1944, *Țiganiii din România. Monografie etnografică*, Editura Institutului Central de Statistică, București, p. 194-198. The most comprehensive research on the Roma family and natality remains Zamfir, Zamfir, *op.cit.*, p. 66-90.

## Field research

Between the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> of May 2015, the research team, comprised of Emanuela Ignăţoiu-Sora and Liviu Iancu, went to Scoarţa, Târgu Cărbuneşti and Novaci (Gorj county), accompanied by the project manager, Eugen Stancu and the logistics assistant, Mihai Delea. The team was also accompanied by the medical doctor of Scoarţa, Tudoroiu Patega Elena, who is also the health mediator in Scoarţa. Thanks to her both roles, she facilitated the access of the research team in the community.

### Questionnaires & Interviews

The filling in of most of the questionnaires lasted around 10 minutes each. The shortest lasted for 5 minutes, whilst the longest lasted for 21 minutes. Researchers had to fill in the questionnaires in various circumstances: in the presence of other persons (children, relatives), noisy environment etc.

At times, outsiders intervened and suggested and/or gave themselves the answers. This is why the team did not manage to register some of the answers. Researchers were not invited into the house, with a single exception, when the respondent was paralysed.

We held the field-research in four stages:

1. Filling in the questionnaires
2. Semi-structured interviews

3. Free interviews (audio and video)
4. Interview with the doctor and with the Roma expert in Scoarța

## **Questionnaires**

There were a total of 62 respondents. The questionnaire comprised of 26 questions which focused on three categories:

- a. Socio-demographic data (gender, age, education, income)
- b. Aspects of migration (frequency of travels abroad, reasons for migration, modalities of generating income abroad, personal experience and perception of the respondents on the impact of migration on their personal lives).
- c. Relation with the authorities

## **Semi-structured Interviews**

We interviewed 15 persons, and the questions focused on several aspects:

- a. Their experience abroad
- b. The way in which the respondents perceive their families, communities and Romania.
- c. Future plans (in Romania and in Norway/abroad)
- d. What the respondents would change if they were decision-makers (mayor, Member of Parliament or prime-minister).

## **In-depth Interviews**

We interviewed 5 persons, which were selected out of the 15 persons interviewed previously, through semi-structured interviews.

The interviews varied in length (between 10-30 minutes). We held the interviews in the yard, on the road, at the Novaci fair, at a shop in Scoarța. The interviews took place in the presence of other members of the family (spouse, in-laws, and children). Researchers were keen on maintaining the direction of the interviews in line with the objectives of the research, but, at times, there were unpredicted, disturbing elements. For instance, one man in Scoarța asked for money in exchange for answering the questions (which the team refused to do). Another man became aggressive when the team expressed its intention to take a photo of his house.

## **Presentation of communities**

**Roma community in Scoarța** was comprised of 900 persons (out of a total of 5100 inhabitants).

The persons interviewed are part of a community of brickmakers. Before 1989, they used to make bricks in several parts of Romania. After 1989, many of them went abroad, especially in Portugal, but since with 2005-2006, they began to prefer Scandinavian countries (especially Norway and Sweden). One of the causes is the economic crisis and its rough impact on the economic situation in Portugal.

According to the answers given in the interviews, while in Portugal, most Roma travelled in nuclear family (mother-father-children), in the Scandinavian countries, Roma take turns when travelling (husband with wife/husband alone/parents). In general, they leave their children back home, in Romania, when they travel to Scandinavian countries. In Portugal they paid rent and utilities and had work contracts. In the Scandinavian countries instead, Roma usually live in precarious conditions (in cars) and they do not have access to facilities where they could take care of their personal hygiene. The main problems encountered by Roma, as indicated by the respondents:

- Lack of jobs (in Romania)
- Lack of jobs (in Scandinavian countries)
- Lack of knowledge of foreign languages (in Scandinavian countries)

**The community met at the Novaci fair** was comprised of coppersmiths, living in several villages in Gorj county. They have recently changed their traditional activity, and they now focus on producing plaster objects for gardens. Few of them have travelled abroad and even fewer expressed such intentions for the future. Although they make proof of entrepreneurial skills, most of them cannot imagine any future plans. As one interviewed women in Novaci said, in relation to what she wishes for her children: “(...) what wishes? Our children have not graduated from colleges like Romanians do”.

In opposition to Roma in Scoarța community, the coppersmiths in Novaci did not mention the lack of social benefits or the need to receive help; yet, they also do not seem to find economic solutions on the long term.

**Târgu Cărbunești community** - Târgu Cărbunești is a small town, of approximately 8000 inhabitants, where Roma represent 6.95% of the population. The community visited by the research team lives at the outskirts of the town, next to the railway. Roma belong to several subgroups “neamuri” and their economic situation is very diverse: from extreme poverty to opulence.

Although in the preliminary phase of the research, the team of researchers considered Budieni village (which is part of Scoarța commune), afterwards it was decided to collect data from Pișteștii din Deal (which is also part of Scoarța commune). The decision was taken by the research team, on the spot, at the recommendation of the medical doctor Tudoroiu Patega Elena who is familiarized with the situation of the community. The main arguments were: Roma in Pișteștii din Deal form a homogenous community, they travel frequently to Scandinavian countries, and they had previous experience in migration (in Portugal).

### **Unpredicted aspects**

During the questionnaires and the interviews, several Roma brought into discussion some aspects that were not considered initially by researchers as elements of interest. We have decided to include them in the report,

in order to have a complex and complete image of the situation of the Roma in those communities. Also, these aspects are telling for Roma's own perceptions and points of interest.

**Health problems** were brought in discussion by respondents at multiple times. One factor could be the presence of the doctor, who accompanied the research team, but it also shows the degree of concern expressed and felt by Roma in relation to their health. In fact, the discussion with the doctor revealed an increase in the prevalence of cancer among Roma in those communities over the last years. Also, the doctor expressed concern on their poor nutrition. It is important to underline that Roma in Scoarța are registered with the family doctor and they benefit of health insurance. Also, Scoarța has a permanent medical unit.

Respondents brought into discussion the issue of **running water**. There is only one functional public fountain for the entire community in Pișteștii din Deal and because of this, members of communities have difficulties in managing their daily life (washing clothes/showering).

**The lack of jobs in the region** was invoked in all interviews as the main cause for their problems, and, at the same time, the solution for a better life (if new jobs were created). Indeed, most of the factories which operated during communism were closed (the glass factory, the brick factory Unirea, the pig farm Suinprod, the chicken farm Avicola). At present, the only remaining jobs are in mines (Peșteana, Roșiuța, Motru).

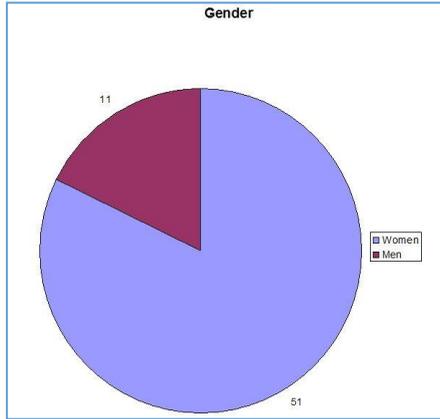
Shortly before the research team have visited these communities, there was another team of journalists from an Italian TV who visited Scoarța. Roma expressed their conviction that it is because of this Italian TV why foreigners (and Norwegians in particular) would want to “close their country” and to deny their entrance in the respective countries. This is one of the reasons why most respondents were reluctant in being photographed and/or having their houses photographed.

According to Roma in Scoarța, with no exception, **Romanians** lead a better life than themselves. There is no perception of poverty among the majority of the population. Because of this there is a strong feeling of social injustice.

# Results

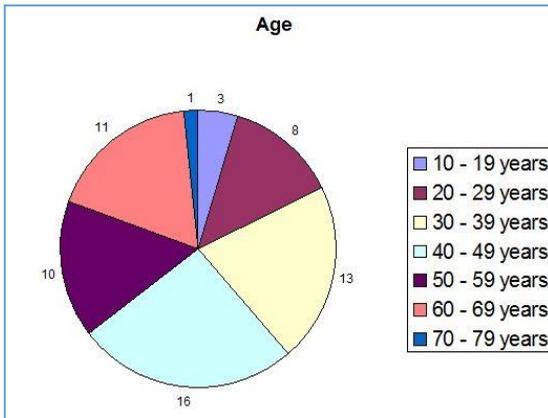
## Number and gender

We questioned 62 persons, out of which 51 women and 11 men.



## Age

Most of the persons are aged between 40-49 (16 persons). The youngest person is 18 years old; the oldest is 75 years old (both are women).



## Marital status

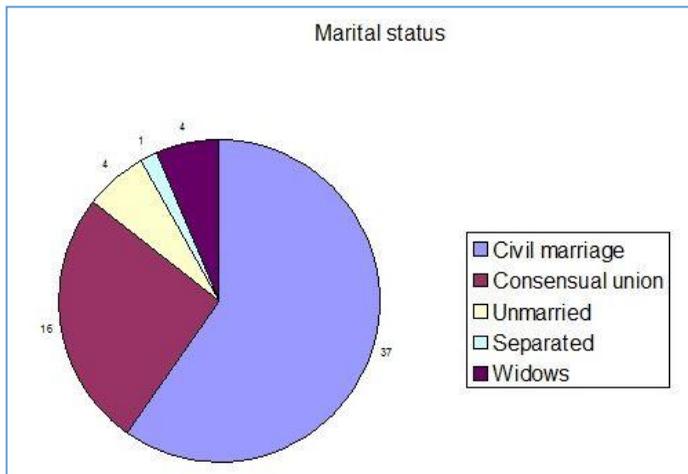
Most of the persons interviewed are married – legal marriage (37).

16 persons are in consensual union

4 persons are single/not married

1 person is separated

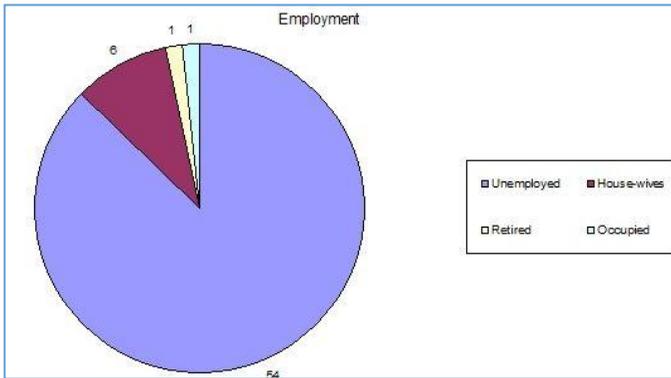
4 persons are widows



## Employment

Most persons are not employed (54). There is one retired person and 6 housewives.

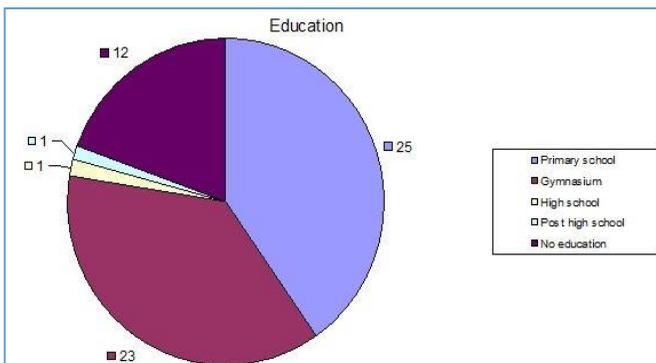
Only one woman is self-employed, she owns a shop together with her husband. It is important to retain that the same woman has graduated highschool. She worked as health mediator and she declared the highest income in the community (between 1500 and 2000 lei, approximately 350-450 euros).



## Education

44 out of the respondents have studies (22 finished primary school and 22 the elementary school). 2 persons finished 3 years of studies, one person finished 6 years of studies, one person graduated highschool (a man), one person has post-highschool studies (a woman); one woman finished one year of studies.

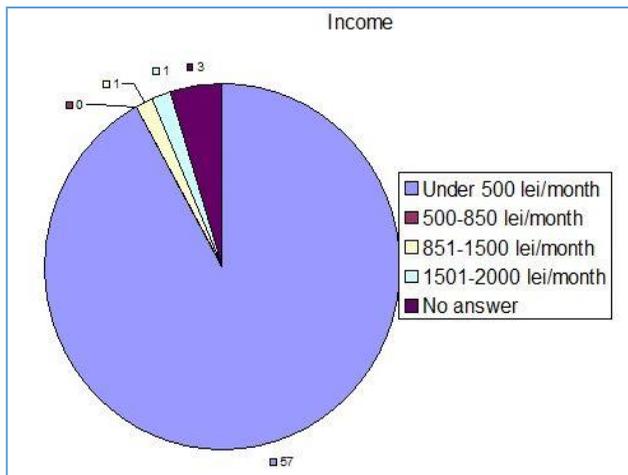
**12 persons did not attend school at all** (most of them are of ages 20-29 and 30-39). This kind of result, although it needs to be confirmed by further studies, could lead to a conclusion regarding the failure of the educational policies which were implemented by Romanian authorities in relation to Roma over the last 25 years.



## Income

Most of the respondents have an income lower than 500 lei (approx. 130 euros), representing social benefits. One respondent has an income between 500-850 lei (approx. 130-200 euros) and another person has an income between 1501 and 2000 lei (350-450 euros). 3 persons declined to reply.

It is important to underline that once a person migrates, she is no longer entitled to social benefits.

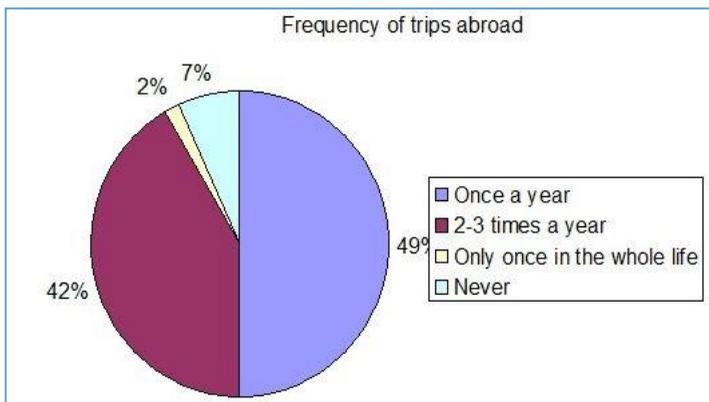


## Frequency of trips abroad

Most persons travel once a year (30). 25 travel several times a year (2-3 times a year). 4 persons have never travelled abroad (the person with the highest income and most years of study has never travelled abroad). One person travelled once (for 2 weeks only, in Germany, where she could not adapt).

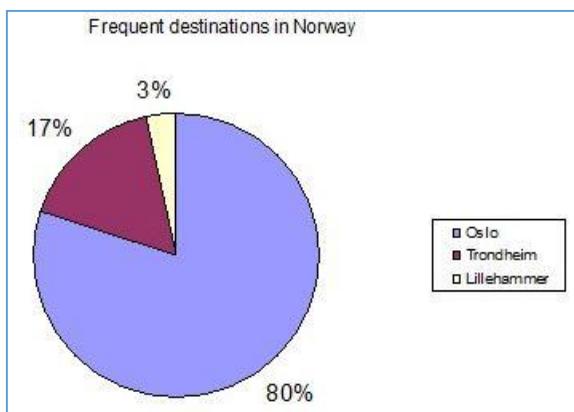
In the case of persons who travel twice or three times a year, they take turns (either the wife and the husband, or their parents; sometimes, the husband and the wife travel separately). One

reason is that they cannot bring their children along for fear of Social Services who might take their children away, but also because of poor living conditions in the Scandinavian countries.



### Destinations:

Most of the respondents travelled to Norway, mainly in Oslo (48), Trondheim (10), Lillehammer (2). Seven of them went to Sweden (two of them went to Malmo). Two persons went to France, and four persons went to Germany. One person went to Belgium and several persons went to Portugal.

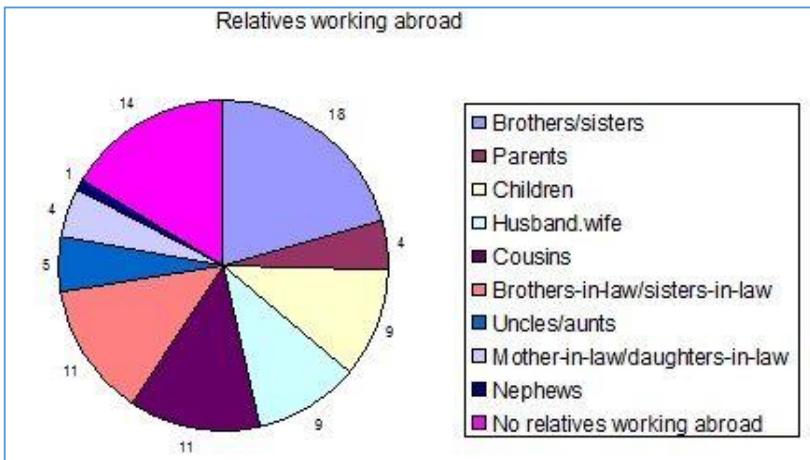


## When did you travel for the first time in Norway/abroad?

Immediately after the Revolution, three persons went to Italy and Germany. In 2000, Roma in the communities envisaged by the study went to Portugal, where they worked in agriculture (one person went to Portugal in 1996). 6 of the respondents went in Portugal for the first time between 2003-2006. In Norway, most persons travelled for the first time in 2010-2011 (18 persons), or 2012-2013 (10 persons).

## Do you have relatives who work in Norway/ abroad?

14 persons do not have relatives working abroad. The 48 other respondents have relatives working abroad:



## The reason for going abroad?

59 persons indicated the lack of money as the main reason for migrating. Two persons indicated family reasons.

“Because of poverty. We have no jobs, no money. We cannot live”

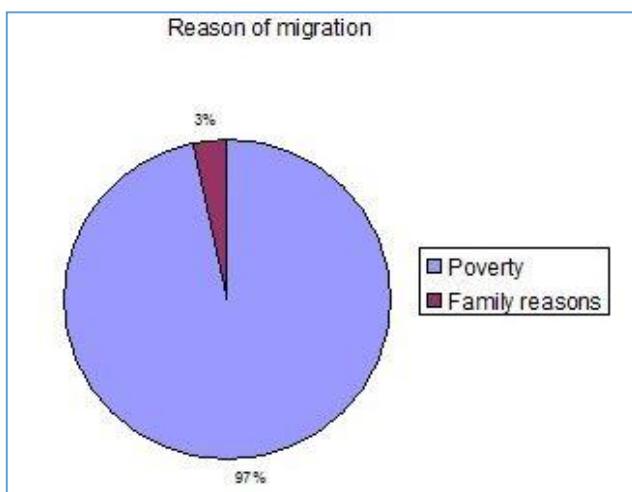
“Nobody wants to hire me”.

“I am old. Who would come to give me a job? Who would want to hire me at this age?”

“If it weren’t for this countries (Norway...), we would have died. I thank Jesus for their kindness. Our country (Romania) does not do anything for us.”

“If it weren’t for Norway, what would have become of us? We cannot thank enough the Norwegians.”

“Romanian politicians steal. If it weren’t for other countries, we, Gypsies, we would have been in a horrible situation”



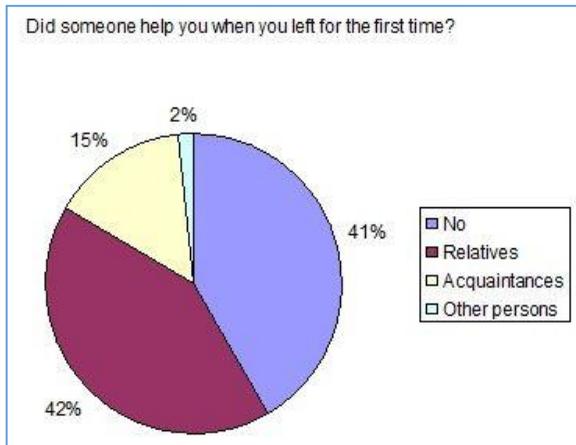
### Did someone help you when you left for the first time?

25 persons did not receive any help or assistance (“I heard about it”; “People told me”)

25 persons were helped by relatives (“they gave me money for the road”)

9 were helped by acquaintances

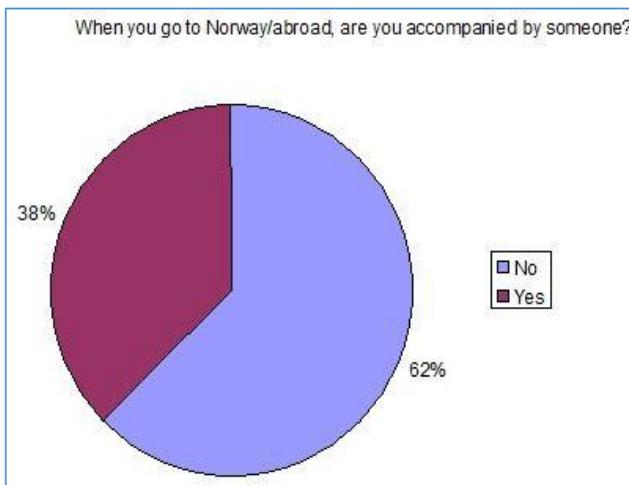
1 person was helped by somebody who is neither a relative, nor an acquaintance



When you go to Norway/abroad, are you accompanied by someone?

35 persons travelled alone.

21 persons did not travel alone.



## Who accompanies you?

31 were accompanied by relatives (especially husband/wife)

4 were accompanied by acquaintances.

## How do you spend time in Norway/ abroad?

Most persons declared that they make money (58 persons).

7 persons (all women) answered that they tidy the house.

## How do you make your money?

Most of the persons working in Portugal made money by working in agriculture.

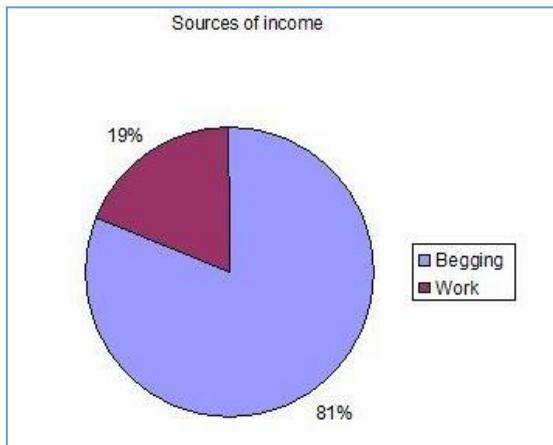
Most of the persons going to Norway beg (47 persons)

Some of the respondents work in Norway (11 persons), but only one person declared she has a work contract.

The way Roma describe begging:

“hold the hand. Please, please”

“I have a glass and I wait for people to put in coins.”



## How do you spend the money?

Most respondents use the money to buy things for their children (45) and family (8).

5 persons declare they keep the money for themselves.

2 persons buy clothes

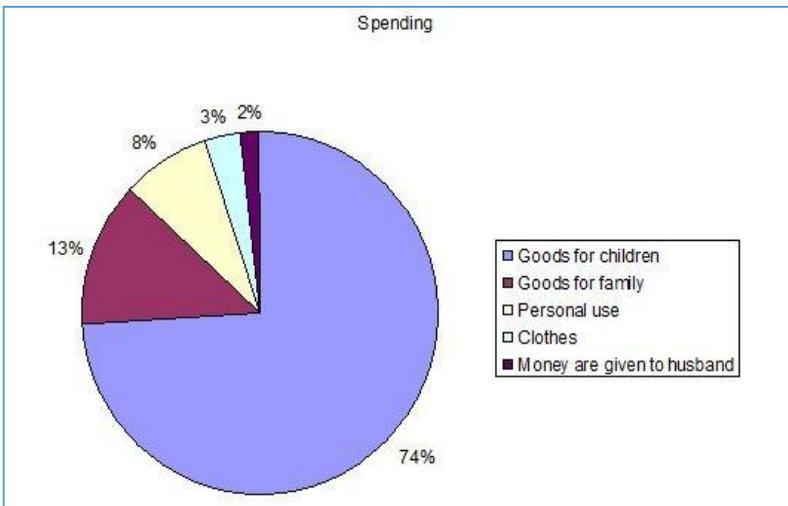
1 person gives the money to the husband.

Answers:

“I use the money to send my children to school, to buy them clothes”

“Wood, food, for the house”

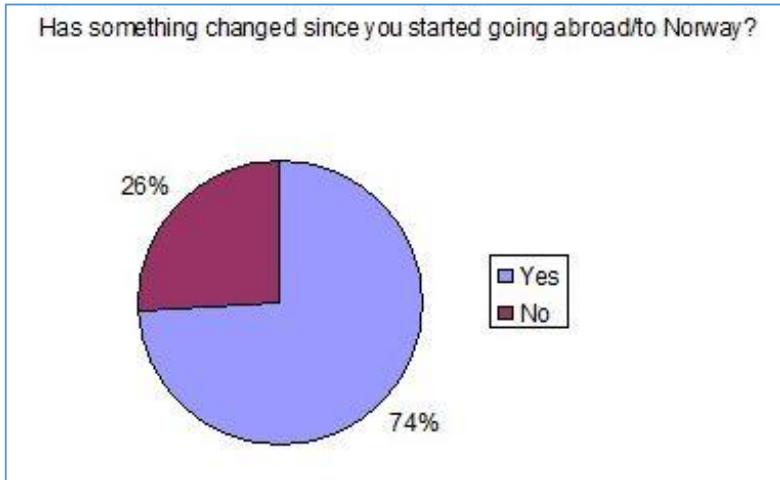
“I used them for my surgery”



## Has something changed since you started going abroad/to Norway?

45 persons declared YES

16 persons declared NO



## How has your life changed since you started going abroad/to Norway?

43 persons consider their life has improved thanks to migration

2 persons consider their life has worsened because of migration

For 14 persons there is no change in relation to migration

Answers:

“we now have a roof, a house, food, we can feed our grandchildren.”

I got depressed, I’m afraid, since the camp I was staying in was attacked by skinheads”

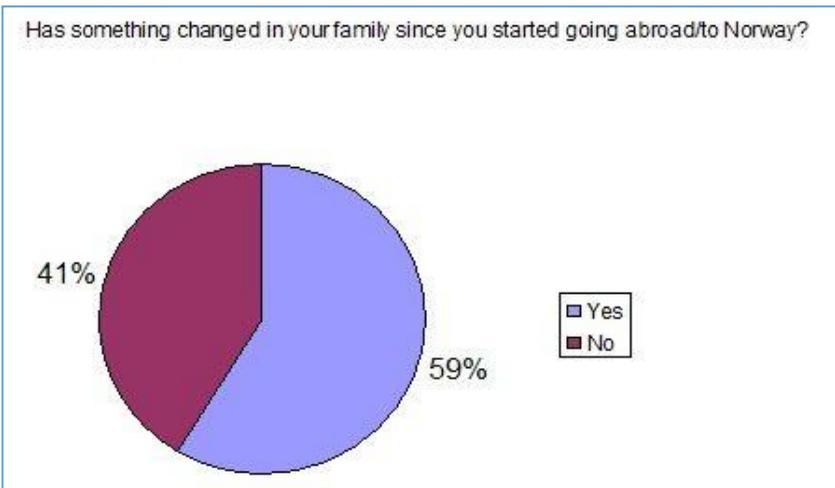
“the grass is growing and there is no one to cut it” (homesick)



Has something changed in your family since you started going abroad/to Norway?

YES (34)

NO (24)

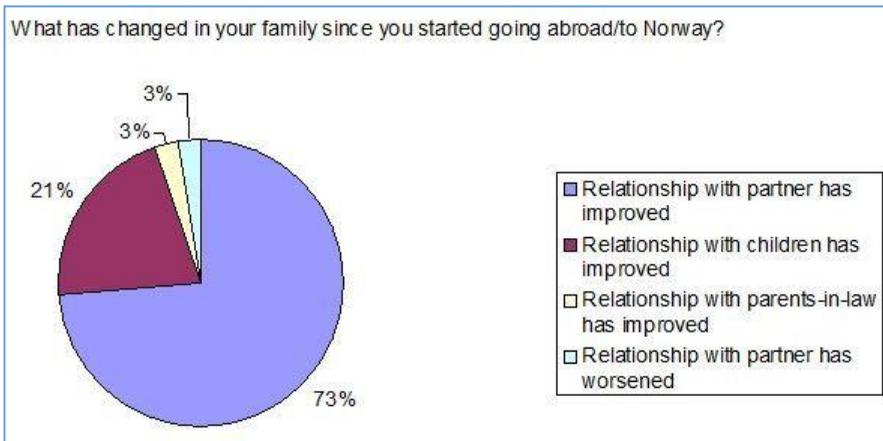


## What has changed in your family since you started going abroad/to Norway?

28 declared they get along better with their husband/wife. 8 get along better with their children. 1 person gets along better with their in-laws. 1 person does not get along anymore with her husband who became violent and aggressive. For 24 of them there is no change.

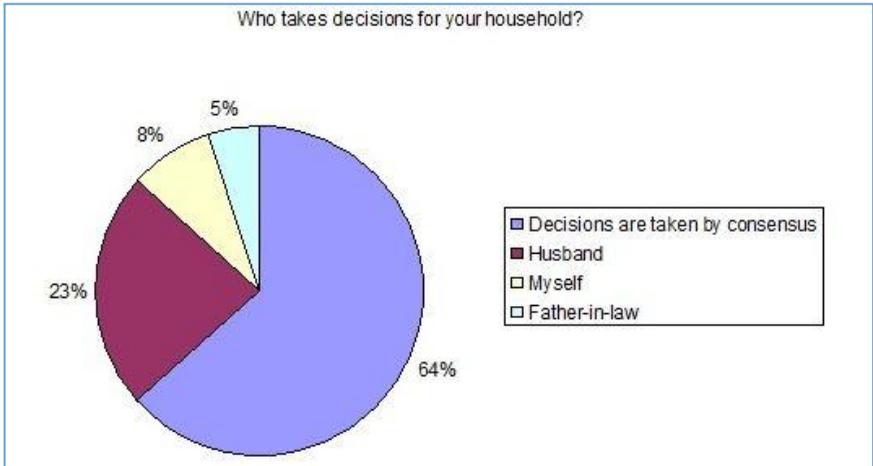
“When you are poor you argue a lot”

“We used to argue a lot, but now we have more money, so we do not have reasons to fight anymore.”



## Who takes decisions for your household?

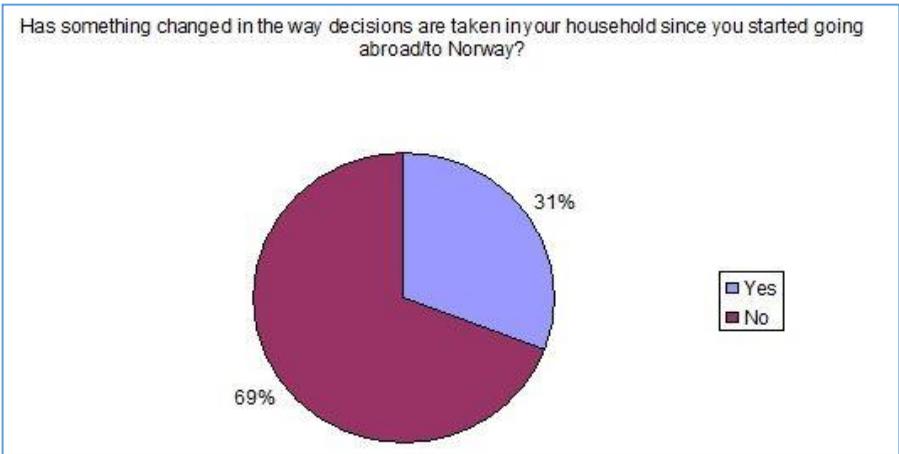
38 declared they take decisions together, as partners. At times, children/in-laws/parents can contribute to the decision-making. 14 indicated the husband as the person who decides, 5 persons take the decisions alone (mainly men, but also women who are widows and/or alone). 3 indicated their father-in-law as the decision-maker.



Has something changed in the way decisions are taken in your household since you started going abroad/to Norway?

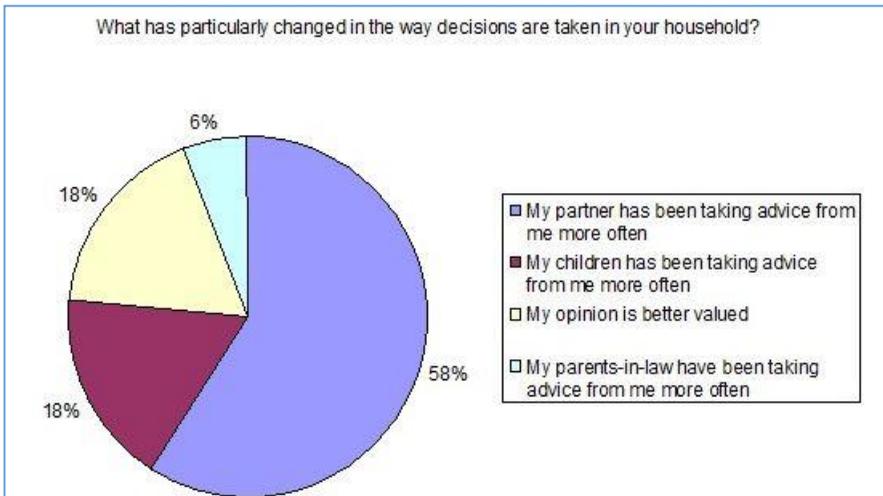
Yes (17)

No (3).



## What has particularly changed in the way decisions are taken in your household?

In 10 cases, the husband/wife consult more often with their spouse. In 3 cases, children consult more with their parents. In 3 cases, the opinion of the respondents is taken into account. In 1 case the father-in-law/ the mother-in-law consult more with their daughter in law. In 2 cases, the opinion of the respondent does not count. In 38 cases, there was no significant change.

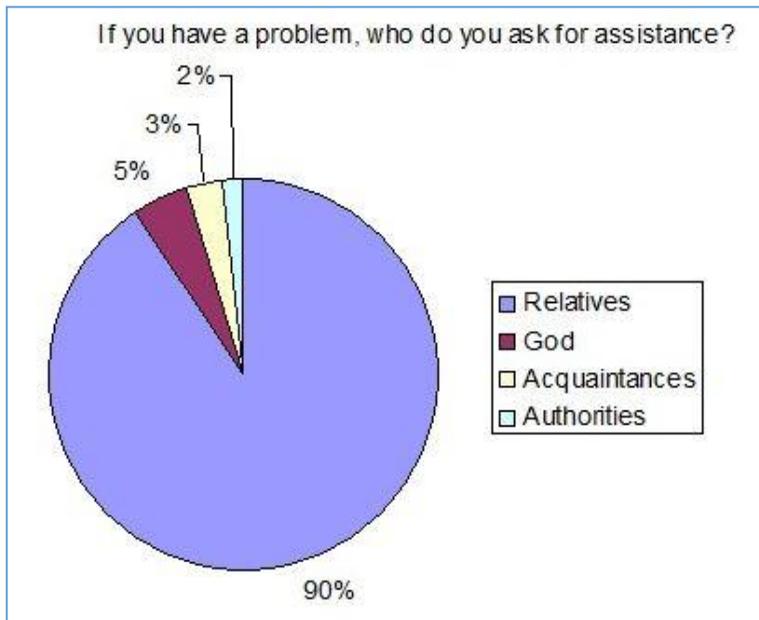


## If you have a problem, who do you ask for assistance?

Most persons indicated relatives (57 persons). 2 persons indicated acquaintances. One person indicated the authorities. 3 persons indicated God (Jesus/God).

We should mention that:

- God was not included in the questionnaire
- Most Roma in Scoarța belong to the Evangelic Church



### What authorities do you ask for assistance more often?

14 indicated the local expert for the Roma. 11 indicated the mayor. 1 person indicated Roma leaders. 1 person mentioned the justice system (even if it was not included as a possible answer in the questionnaire). God was also mentioned.

46 persons indicated the doctor, as the authority they go to usually.

Possible explanations:

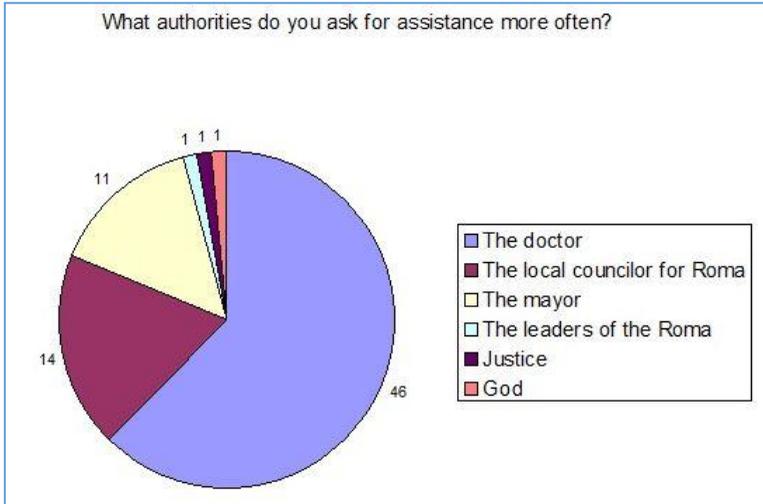
- The doctor accompanied the research team
- This specific doctor is very involved in the welfare of her patients.
- There is a national programme of health mediation in Roma communities aimed at providing information on health care.
- Respondents have poor health

- Respondents give priority to their health issues

“Nobody helps us”

“Everyone is taking care of their issues and not of our problems.”

“The other authorities do not help us, they do not even consult with.”



# Interpretation of the results

## Dimensions and characteristics of migration

We could say that the migration in the communities envisaged by the study represents a mass phenomenon, given that the majority of the families have at least one member involved in migration.

However, migration is a seasonal phenomenon and Roma alternate their periods of staying in Romania with periods of staying in Norway or abroad. These periods of staying abroad happen mostly in spring and summer. In general, men travel more frequently during a year, whilst Roma women usually travel abroad only once a year. But, at times, women also go abroad several times a year.

One of the element conditioning migration is that one adult needs to remain permanently at home in order to take care of the children. In the case where the ties in the extended family are stronger, it is usually the older women who take up this responsibility, allowing the young couples to leave abroad together.

There is also a certain alternance between men and women in going abroad, which is a novelty to the traditional patterns of Roma going abroad with the entire family.

## Countries preferred

Roma's migration do not target exclusively Norway. Other states where Roma travel frequently are: Denmark, Sweden, Germany, France, Italy, and Portugal. We could notice nevertheless a variation of preferences in relation to the economic situation of the countries in which Roma would go.

Initially, the main destination of Roma from Scoarța was Portugal, where they worked in low-skilled jobs in agriculture. Roma's migration to Portugal began, according to the data collected, before Romania had joined the EU, in early 2000. However, the enlargement brought a significant increase in the number of migrants.

The economic crisis in 2008 reduced the number of jobs available in Portugal. For the Roma, this meant that they had to find new destinations, in order to continue to have income. Therefore, by the end of the 2000s, Roma's migration from the communities we investigated turned toward the Scandinavian countries. One possible explanation is their better economic situation, in opposition to the rest of the European continent, including Romania, which was severely affected by the economic crisis.

Out of the Scandinavian countries, Norway is preferred, and especially Oslo. One possible explanation is the friendly attitude of authorities who are in direct interaction with the Roma (the police, in particular), and

especially the kindness and generosity of the locals. In fact, Roma have a positive perception of Norwegians, whom they consider to be kind, tolerant, generous and charitable.

### **Causes for migration**

The main reason for migration, as indicated in the answers, is the need for income, in the context where there are few job opportunities in Romania, and the income is very low. The main cause of migration is thus, poverty and lack of economic opportunities in Romania. Most resources of Roma in Romania comes from social benefits (such as children allowance and/or pensions of the old persons).

### **Roma's occupations in Norway**

It is difficult to make an accurate statistics of activities Roma perform abroad, mainly because of their reluctance to talk about this issue. They feel ashamed to talk about being involved in begging or stealing. They are also afraid of possible fiscal taxation, as well as of legal sanctions.

In general, the respondents mentioned that they are working abroad, without making specific remarks on their activities. However, their main activity seems to be begging in public spaces. Other activities imply the distribution of free magazines. Some of them are employed, on a short term, as unskilled workers, in small companies, such as car washing shops. Some of the respondents going to Denmark mentioned recycling

and doing trade with second-hand clothes. Only one person mentioned that some Roma who travel abroad could be involved in pickpocketing. But most of the Roma in the two communities distanced themselves from such activities, which would be done, according to their answers, by other Roma, from other counties.

There are several obstacles preventing Roma from accessing secure and well paid jobs: lack of knowledge of the local language (some of them have only basic knowledge of English); legal problems (lack of documents, they do not know the legal procedures, they do not have information on the taxation and other legal obligations accompanying a work contract).

It is important to notice that these features correspond to both women and men participating in migration towards Scandinavian countries.

### **General effects of migration**

Given that the migration in these communities is a mass phenomenon, there are some strong effects.

The most visible ones are the material ones: the income generated abroad allows the Roma to have their daily life ensured (food, clothes) for most of the year. Moreover, some of the money are used for repairing or modernizing their homes. A small number of families managed to save money in order to build a house. In some cases, the money were used to treat some serious health issues.

These positive materials effects lead indirectly to the improvement of their family relations. Most respondents indicated that thanks to migration, they suffer less because of financial problems, there are fewer tensions at home, and it is more likely that family members get along.

Migration led to a stronger social stratification: some Roma gained more money, whilst others only manage to ensure their daily income. Moreover, the number of Roma who generated important amount of money is insignificant; and the dimension of the houses is a telling indicator in this respect. Some Roma bought cars, which are used for personal transportation or for trading with second-hand clothes.

It is worth mentioning that Roma who generated more income are less inclined in talking about their experience in migration. We presume that part of this behaviour is explained by their fear of taxation.

However, most of the respondents do not feel their life has improved significantly thanks to migration. The persons who only manage to take care of their daily needs, feel more willing to share their experiences related to migration. They felt reluctant to disclose personal information only when feared their answers could put them at risk. For instance, one person refused to participate in the study as he had received a notification to pay for medical expenses in Norway.

In general, persons who left for the first time earlier tend to have more income. This is due to the fact that they managed to use the

opportunities available when the number of beneficiaries was reduced. However, personal skills and the willingness to adapt to new conditions enable even the persons involved in migration at later stages to get a good income. At present, there are some tensions because of this social stratification, but they are still insignificant.

The team of researchers identified some effects on their traditional lifestyle. Traditional crafts or occupations are being abandoned. However, migration is only one possible cause. Roma in Pișteștii din Deal, for instance, used to be brickmakers<sup>60</sup>. First communism, then capitalism made this occupation to be less appealing. In the context of migration, this occupation was finally abandoned in favour of other activities that generate more income, such as the distribution of the magazine “Volk er volk”.

One of the most serious problems we identified is the fact that although some persons obtain decent income thanks to migration, once returned to Romania, they do not have the knowledge to create their own business in order to produce more income. In the context where the possibilities generated by migration will dissipate, the lifestyle of these persons will seriously be affected.

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60 This is revealed by anthroponomy- numerous members of community are named Cărămidaru (brickmaker).

## **Particular effects on the status of Roma women**

Roma women are involved in migration in a percentage and range comparable to that of men - their activities are also comparable, as Roma women are also involved in activities generating income.

The answers to questionnaires demonstrate that Roma women are consulted and that their opinions are taken into account when decisions are made. This happened even before migration began, so the impact of migration is insignificant in relation to this aspect. However, the conditions under which migration takes place allows for some changes within the extended family and favours the development of real consultancy between man and woman as equal partners.

There is a difference in behaviour and mentality in relation to age. Older women are more traditional, and one episode during the field research is particularly telling. When the male co-author of the study was photographed together with the children in the community, he also invited a young mother to join along. She accepted but several older women commented that such behaviour is not allowed, given that the person was married. So, the young mother declined the invitation to be photographed under the pressure from the older women.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

This study brought into highlight some aspects, which had not been considered initially. There is, for instance, the fact that **discrimination** does not appear in the discourse of the respondents. Differences are perceived to refer rather to social the inequities: “Romanians have a better situation”, and different behaviors are explained by personal traits: “Norwegians are more merciful”.

The main problem identified by Roma in these communities is the lack of jobs. Thus, the solution would be to create jobs in the region. Most respondents are involved in activities that could be characterized as being of entrepreneurial type, yet they have a sporadic character, of subsistence. Roma in these communities do not seem to find solutions to turn their skills and income into businesses that would generate further income and profit on a longer term. Their expectations for the future are related to others, who could assist them: “(...) *they should give us (money, assistance, and help)*”.

Unfortunately, authorities do not play an important role in the life of these communities, and this is reinforced by the fact Pișteștii din Deal village, is situated far away from the centre of the commune, where the authorities have their headquarters. As seen from the questionnaires and from the interviews, Roma in these communities appeal to relatives, rather than to authorities in case of problems. The closest authority and

the one with whom they interact the most is the doctor. Respondents did not know which party their mayor belong to and they could not imagine what they would do in case they were elected as mayor. When asked what they would do if elected mayor, the women interviewed say “I would give to everyone”. Such generous, yet vague answer, lacks concrete elements.

This study revealed certain positive effects of migration on the communities studied, in accordance with our initial hypotheses. The main positive effect is at family level: members of the family get along better. Their material situation has improved: there is a certain regularity in income, better and bigger houses, and better hygiene conditions. However, Roma are caught in a circle of subsistence (begging - daily expenses), and they do not seem to be able to escape it.

As for the Roma women, their emancipation is not really related to their position within the family, as other studies quoted in the literature review might suggest. If, on the short term, their situation has improved (better daily life, they get along better with their spouses and other family members), on the long term, Roma women do not benefit fully of the migration in the Scandinavian countries: they are not exposed to different gender roles and they do not benefit of economic emancipation. There is also the potential for some serious negative impact on Roma women because of migration: they spend less time with their children, and, because of seasonal migration, they cannot care for

the health of their children (such as vaccination), or register them for school.

## **Recommendations**

- a. Investments in Romania to create jobs.
- b. The investments should consider poor communities, independently of ethnicity.
- c. Inclusive activities addressing people from both majority and minorities.
- d. Language classes in Scandinavian countries (so Roma population have access to the values and the know-how of countries of migration).
- e. Courses on entrepreneurial skills and on business plans.
- f. The creation in Norway of an organisation who could direct Roma to those activities where there is not enough work force and who could offer them legal assistance so they conform with all norms and legal obligations.
- g. Investment in the education and emancipation of Roma women (workshops for personal development, entrepreneurial activities).

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