

Paved with Intentions
Interpretation, Framing and Social Construction
in Roma Education Policies

A Doctoral (PhD) Thesis

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Many years ago, when I was working on a thesis for my teacher's degree, a fellow would-be teacher asked me what my topic was. "The education of Gypsy children," I replied. "Why? Should we educate Gypsy children differently from others?" he enquired, a little surprised. "No, I don't think we should," I said, "the problem is that we do."

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1 Introduction

1.1 Prologue

A gentleman I know once said to me he didn't like Thai food at all. This was when I had just returned from a trip to Thailand and was raving about the local food there. "Do you know Thai food?" I asked. "Of course, I do," came the reply, "I have prepared a Thai curry myself, using a recipe I found on the Internet. I did substitute some of the ingredients, though, because they were not available in the local supermarket".

In 2010, Angela Merkel announced that "multiculturalism has utterly failed", and her cabinet members had called for a stop to further immigration into Germany, claiming that immigrants were not able to integrate into German society. Nicolas Sarkozy, the then French president promptly followed suit, with David Cameron and other country premiers also joining the club of world leaders denouncing multiculturalism. They paid little attention to those frail voices coming from social and policy sciences that it was at least questionable whether any of these European countries had actually reached a state where we could say that multiculturalism had been put to the test. What failed, some said, was actually their attempts to create a multicultural society. Quite similarly to my friend's failed attempt to prepare an authentic Thai curry.

We think it is time to look at the social inclusion of Roma people and warn that the attempts in this field are not complete either. Some of the ingredients have been substituted for by more readily available, cheaper or more convenient raw materials, while some other ingredients have been entirely left out. The recipes, however, are available, at least there are main guidelines. So before some of the leaders announce that it is impossible to integrate the Roma, or that Roma inclusion itself has utterly failed¹, we should point out that the attempts themselves may be at fault.

The present research is one of the many that are trying to answer the question why Roma policies fail. The novelty of our research, however, is that we are not focussing our attention on the ingredients themselves – there is an abundance of such research material now, some of which will be used as the starting point in our work, too. Rather than dealing with technical elements and individual components of a good strategy, we are going to examine the context,

¹ We might actually be rather late: a lot of right wing parties have publicly claimed exactly these things.

the main goals, the underlying reasoning and the initial standpoints of the policymaker and look at a more complete picture. We believe that this kind of approach has still not gained popularity among researchers and policy analysts in general, and that this potentially makes explanations less complete and less revealing.

1.2 An “executive” summary

Solicited research publications for business purposes traditionally start with a so called executive summary which describes the problem, the questions, some major parts of the research findings, the conclusion and the recommendations, without going into details or even providing an elaborate argumentation or references. We believe that such a concise summary would also be beneficial for not-necessarily-executive professional audiences, such as some of the Readers of this dissertation, since in later chapters, it could certainly help them remain on track even when the writing includes detailed analyses of particular topics and phenomena, and help them see the whole context all through the details – an aspect we regard of central importance in policy analysis, too. In what follows below, we will indeed provide such an executive summary.

We are dealing with national Roma policies, mainly focussing on education. Our starting point is what the vast majority of existing researchers and practitioners claim: since Roma policies have not brought tangible results during the course of several decades, it can safely be concluded that these policies do not work. The most important question is, of course, why they fail, and what could be done to make them work. There is an ample amount of research and analysis dealing with precisely these questions, and they do provide answers, too. Indeed, we could already construct a very long list of the possible answers that have been offered so far. We will only name a few of the most often cited points here.

Roma policies do not contain a well-constructed budget, and very often, they lack budgeting figures altogether. They do not include an appropriate monitoring and evaluation system. There is an almost complete lack of relevant data, which in turn makes it impossible to use clear indicators. Policymakers do not pay attention to precise targeting, the Roma are very often not involved either in the policy process or the implementation. Local authorities and other local actors are seldom involved, putting the policy at risk of failure. Oftentimes, the target audience, the Roma themselves, do not get reached, with corruption also playing a role in this. Fighting discrimination and racism almost never gets enough attention.

Our list of possible problems could well grow and include dozens of further items. If this list is well founded, we could actually conclude our analytical work here and claim that if all or most of these problems were addressed, these policies would be able to bring concrete results and we would be much closer to the full social, economic and cultural integration of Roma people into mainstream societies.

But we believe this is not the case. We believe that even if *all* of the problems on this hypothetical list were successfully addressed (data made available, indicators and an M&E systems put in place etc), most of these policies as they exist today would still remain largely unfruitful. And this is because the problems mentioned so far are all concerned with purely technical details. The major problem with this approach is that the larger picture and the context itself may well be overlooked. We would like to emphasize that we do accept the validity of these existing analyses, and can only agree that the deficiencies revealed in them actually cause problems. But this analysis is unable to capture the main reason of policy failures. What, then, should be changed to reach the desired result and discover the primary problems?

In order to give an answer to that question, we must first look at some theoretical considerations. Policy analysis saw a major paradigm shift in the early 1990s with the appearance of the so-called Argumentative Turn. The new approach placed a major emphasis on context, linguistic analysis, and the important role discourses and argumentations play in the policy process. Most importantly for us, it utilised what social constructionism had long before claimed, that problems are never discovered, but they are constructed. The idea that at the initial steps of the policy cycle, before even agenda setting can occur, there is a fierce competition for defining the problem to be placed on the agenda was not new. What *was* new was that interpretative activities *in general* play a central role throughout the policy process and they are not limited to the initial agenda setting phase. After the Argumentative Turn, a new wave of theoretical models and approaches appeared. Of these, we have selected two which will particularly be helpful in providing an answer to the above question: how to analyse Roma policies so that we can discover the underlying cause of the problems.

One of them is Carol Bacchi's WPR approach, which says that problem definitions occur in action plans, too. Through recommending particular actions, the policymaker defines what he thinks the problem actually is. If, Bacchi says, the policy for gender equality recommends trainings for women, then the problem is defined as women's lack of trainings or qualifications. If, we may add, the policy for Roma integration recommends advice to parents about the importance of education, then the problem is defined as Roma parents' lack of understanding.

The other, considerably more detailed and complex theoretical model is named “the social construction of target populations” and was developed by Ann Schneider and Helen Ingram. This approach’s starting point is the fact that public policy decisions are made by the political elite, whose main aim is undoubtedly re-election, for which purpose they should avoid major confrontations with public opinions and should devise policies that can expect wide popular acceptance. If so, it is possible to calculate how public policies will treat certain target populations on the basis of two distinct parameters: the power that the target group has (be it economic, political or other) and the popular image that the group has. The values of both parameters can, and indeed quite often do, change in time. Whatever the current situation is will largely influence the policy treatment of the given target group: the more powerful they are and the better image they have, the more openly they are likely to be provided benefits. Image is especially important. If the target group has a very negative public image, it is highly risky for politicians to construct a policy which openly contradicts this image and gives the group benefits, when they are expected by the vast majority of the voters to actually be punished rather than be given benefits.

The policy process usually starts with agenda setting, which already presupposes an existing problem definition. Consequently, before any policy work may start, there usually is a big “definition competition” among various actors, including the government and other political actors. Roma policies, however, constitute a special case among public policies. After the political changes in the early 1990s, most governments, especially the ones with the largest Roma populations in CEE countries, were all but forced to construct Roma inclusion strategies and to start in earnest to solve the problems of their respective Roma populations. The request was made by various international organisations, and they became ever more increasingly assertive with the EU enlargement date approaching and accession negotiations already underway. For us, the crucial element is that the task of defining the problem had already been carried out by various NGOs, academic institutions, researchers and a list of highly important international organisations including the Council of Europe, the World Bank, the OSCE and others. Interestingly enough, these various sources defined *the core of problem* in a very similar way, and EU institutions gladly adopted this definition. But the definition of the problem was something that the vast majority of local populations in these countries would strongly oppose and reject: the Roma are discriminated against, they suffer high levels of racism and exclusion in all areas of life, and this is what causes the rest of the problems in housing, health, education and employment and elsewhere.

Why local populations would not be happy with this problem definition should be very clear: there is a generous amount of research which proves that the Roma are not simply *among* the most despised, but they are indeed *the* most despised minority all over Europe, but especially in Central-Eastern Europe. To construct a policy which essentially says that it is the majority and its institutions who are responsible for the discrimination and racism and that the Roma are the victims of this treatment, would clearly pose a threat to the political leaders, and would also go against the theoretical considerations mentioned above: a target group which has such an extremely negatively constructed image should actually be given burdens and punishments, according the theoretical model. At the same time, the Roma as a target group also has considerable power. This power came from international organisations, European Union bodies, major and influential NGOs and, certainly not least, academic research. Additionally, we have no reason to suppose that governments themselves would disagree with the general public about the negative and racist Roma image. On the contrary, we have seen the prime ministers of *all five* CEE countries under investigation openly using racist and discriminatory rhetoric against Roma repeatedly in public.

All this leads to a situation where policymakers in these countries need to walk a fine line between promoting the racist image and complying with EU and other international expectations and guidelines, human rights based considerations and academic research results. One possible “solution” for the policymaker aiming for political gains and re-election is redefining the problem itself, and constructing an image of the Roma where they are responsible for their own problems rather than the victims. An image in which the Roma are portrayed as the problem rather than having a problem. This, however, cannot be carried out openly if the risk of a clash with influential international organisations and human rights protection bodies is to be avoided. As we know from theoretical models, policies, on the other hand, are capable of shaping the image and framing the problem in a covert way, consequently, the policymaker is able to use these policies for precisely such purposes, too.

We have found evidence that Roma policies are indeed used as a tool for redefining the problem, reframing the situation and constructing an image of the Roma that is highly compatible with the stereotyped, racist image that exists in these societies among the general public. To name just a few of the major points discovered in the analysis that follows, all policies are carrying out a framing activity that is usually referred to as blaming the victim (a phrase coined by William Ryan in the 1970s). This phenomenon manifests itself both in the problem descriptions and in action plans, through claims such as the following. It is the Roma students who fail to

achieve or complete their studies rather than the school failing to provide them with quality education. Policies talk about Roma parents who do not send their children to school, and not about schools who fail to reach out to Roma students. They are blaming Roma parents for sending their children to special schools (and even threatening them with legal consequences for this), and never talk about the responsibility of the system or the specialists who classify entirely healthy children as mentally handicapped. Another major point is that policies also place the burden of acting on the Roma themselves rather than on the majority society and its institutions. Logically so, we should ironically add, since if the blame is on the Roma, then they should also be the ones who should be held responsible for addressing the issues. Actions normally target Roma students and Roma parents, and only marginally include teachers, but the educational institution itself or the system is never targeted at all. The vast majority of actions in education target out of school activities such as extra classes, preparatory programmes, second chance programmes and extra help for Roma students and parents in various forms, which means that it is them, the Roma, who should change and not the system or the educational institution.

Lastly, but very importantly, Roma integration policies very often contain discriminatory and sometimes out-and-out racist approaches and points of analyses. Roma culture is one topic that gets an incomprehensibly high emphasis in Roma policies, but there is a possible explanation for this: Roma culture is portrayed as the very cause of some or most of the problems Roma (and because of them, the whole society) suffer. Roma culture is called (or implied) a culture of poverty, a culture of criminality, a culture of discrimination (i.e. they, the Roma discriminate members of their own groups), sexism, work-shyness and others. This is not surprising, after all, if we consider what we have briefly mentioned above, namely that prime ministers and other political leaders of all five CEE countries (and a number of other countries such as France and Italy) have publicly expressed very similar opinions about the Roma.

Looking back at the existing analyses that deal with the technical problems in Roma policies, we now have a more holistic picture. If we suppose that the main goal of Roma integration policies is redefining the problem and constructing a negative image of the Roma, then it should come as no surprise that this activity is the main priority in action plans, too. This explains why the technical details do not get much attention: it is simply not a priority. If the problem has been successfully redefined in the policy, if the negative image has been successfully constructed, then these policies have successfully and fully completed their missions. There is no need for either budgeting or indicators, it is not necessary to develop, let alone employ, a

robust monitoring and evaluation system. The involvement of Roma or local actors is not among the aims. And lastly, it is only logical, that racism and discrimination should not be addressed or even discussed in these policies: it would openly go against the main goals: blaming the Roma and holding *them* responsible for all the problems they face. Discrimination and racism are thus either entirely denied or their importance is downplayed in policies.

As far as recommendations are concerned, the most important point is holding open an honest discussion with political leaders about problem definitions and image. It would be essential to convince them of what social sciences and other analysts have been claiming all along, namely that discrimination is causing most problems and fighting it is central to the success of any integration policy. It should also be made clear to them that policies should not be used as tools for redefining the already accepted problem definitions. Although policies are capable of shaping the image, this opportunity should be used to construct a better image of the Roma. After all, our theoretical model also suggests that the image can be shaped and changed – positively, too.

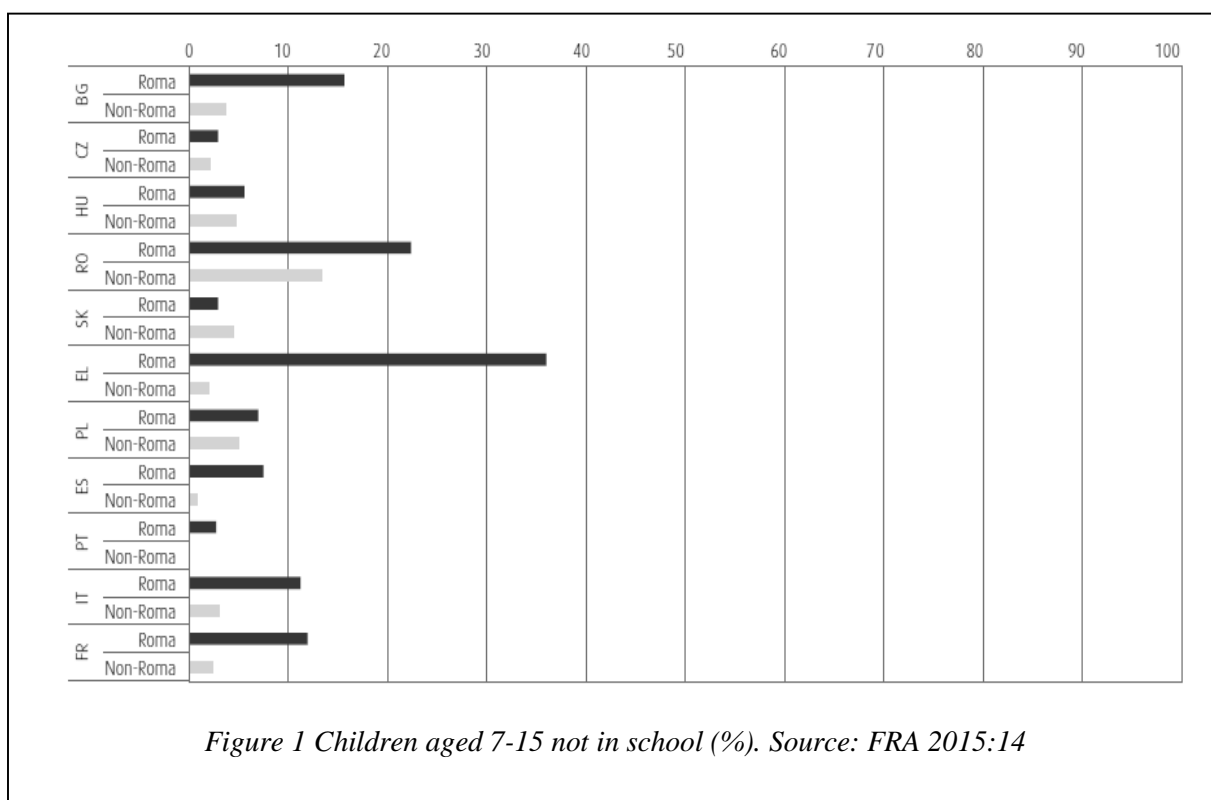
If and only if policymakers and political leaders understand this, can real attempts start to build a real and honest Roma integration and inclusion policy.

2 About the Research

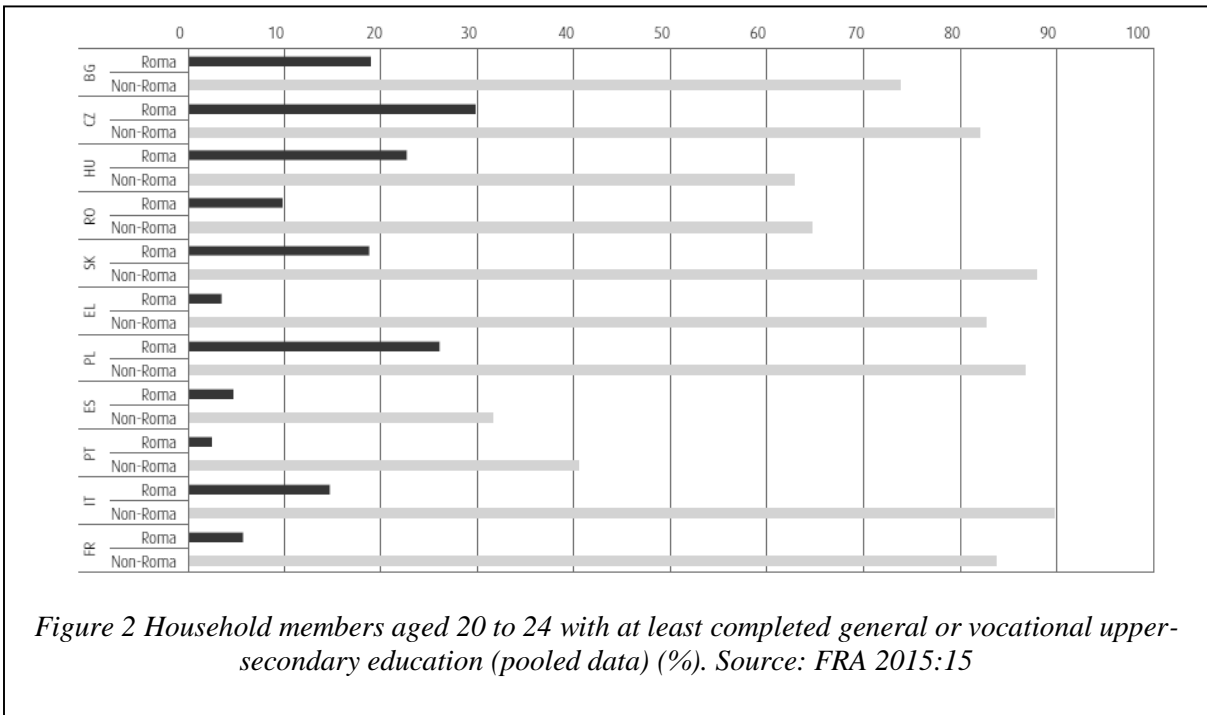
2.1 Problem Description

The first international Roma policy document which aimed to better the situation of Roma people and used a modern humanistic approach was prepared and published as early as 1969 (CoE 1969). Since then, numerous policy documents, strategy papers, government resolutions and decrees have been prepared and signed by decision makers. Yet, the situation of Roma has not improved much, even if there has been some development in a few fields. On the contrary and surprisingly, we can see deterioration in a number of fields like employment or socio-economic well-being, and discrimination in general. When it comes to education, our policy area of focus, there seems to be a nominal improvement regarding the number of Roma people finishing basic and secondary levels of education, but the gap between Roma and non Roma

has in some countries widened², which again shows a negative trend, although in some countries, the gap is slightly reduced (DECADE SECRETARIAT 2015:16). A survey conducted in 2011 (FRA 2012) shows that at elementary levels, the situation has considerably improved in almost all countries of the EU: 9 out of 10 Roma children of compulsory school age participate in education (see Figure 1). Preschool attendance is also on the rise, with literacy also improving significantly. What the results show is that the major problems start after lower secondary levels (i.e. the end of the compulsory school age), with only 15% of Roma children completing upper secondary levels or vocational education (see Figure 2). As a result, higher education attendance is still almost unmeasurably low, while among the majority populations, higher education has been steadily growing, as a result of the general trend of higher education expansion. The gap between Roma and non-Roma at secondary levels is also a key problem in finding appropriate employment. As we can see in Figure 2, in most of the countries, the vast majority of non-Roma people have completed at least upper-secondary education, while the figure for Roma populations is extremely low, which makes Roma people’s labour market chances very low.



² A “widening gap” is repeatedly mentioned in several analyses, see the Roma Education Fund’s regular reports at: http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/bg_country_assessment_2015_w eb.pdf or one of the World Bank’s latest analysis from 2014 about Romania at <http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/eca/romania/OutputEN.pdf>



The widening gap is, of course, not a theoretical problem but a rather practical one. While only a few decades ago, at least in the Eastern part of Europe (our area of focus), completing secondary education was regarded respectable achievement and an asset in the labour market competition, and elementary education as the basis, today the whole system has shifted, with secondary education being the basis and higher education necessary for most quality jobs. While in the 1970s, the gap between Roma and non-Roma appeared at lower levels of elementary education and even in literacy, today, it is observable in higher secondary levels. But we must realize that these two situations essentially mean the very same thing: the gap always appears at the level which makes a difference in careers, in employment and in general life chances. We can thus conclude that the situation in education has not improved at all, and we can find evidence for this in the labour market situation or the socio-economic well-being of Roma populations, which indeed shows deterioration rather than improvement.

This is in sharp contrast with the fact that we could see a surge in the number of policies supported by background materials and research activity already in the 1990s and particularly in the 2000s, presumably due to the expansion of the European Union, when attention to international social, economic and other problems grew considerably. The attention to the 'plight of the Roma', has grown ever since, with further and further policy papers, both international and national, prepared, revised or updated. Not only were policy papers produced, but huge amounts of financial resources were invested, especially after individual countries were able to, and even encouraged to use EU and other international funds for such targeted

purposes. Even without an in-depth analysis, at this point we are forced to conclude, that if the situation of the target group has not improved during the course of several decades of policy work (and large amounts of money spent), then these policies have utterly failed – and this is in fact one of the very few statements that practically everyone working in the field agrees with³. MARUSHIAKOVA–POPOV (2015:3) provides a summary of the literature in this respect, with some of them calling major programmes like the Decade or the 2011 concerted action “wasted efforts and wasted money”. OSF 2012 calls the 2011 strategies “work in progress” at best, and the EU Commission itself has expressed its disappointment about both the policies and the results several times in its evaluations⁴.

What is especially interesting is that the general public also finds governments’ efforts “to integrate the Roma” largely ineffective. A Eurobarometer survey conducted in 2012 reveals that about two thirds of respondents find these efforts ineffective in the countries with the largest Roma populations such as Hungary, the Czech Republic or Slovakia (EC 2012c).

The question arises naturally then: what are the most important factors that contributed to the failure of these policies? The possible answers, since they concern a complex problem, are obviously complex themselves. Any discussion about the situation of the Roma inevitably includes a number of social, economic, educational and political factors, to name just the most important ones. One may look at certain historical events, such as the end of the communist regime in the Eastern part of Europe, where the majority of the Roma live, and point out the fact that with the end of the 'planned economy' and the advent of the market economy, Roma people suffered especially badly due to the lack of qualifications that could and should have been used in the new market environment⁵ (CSERTI CSAPÓ 2008, FORRAY 2002). Another question that has widely been discussed is of a sociological nature: a special kind of socialisation process, a different culture or family background and, perhaps consequently, a lack of an adequate starting position makes it especially difficult for Roma people to break out of a vicious circle and receive competent qualifications through quality education, and with this, a

³ With the sole exception of governments themselves, which only shows the dire state of self-evaluation and, according to some, the lack of willingness to act.

⁴ See their website for evaluations: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/index_en.htm

⁵ Though not a central question in our research, we believe this is a problematic statement. Very soon after the political changes in Eastern Europe, it had already become a much too often cited cliché and, rather surprisingly, has remained so even today. However, we think it requires further research and analysis, and it should be proved at the very least that non-Roma people in the same situation suffered the same problems and to the same extent, ie. the consequences suffered were due to objective factors and not because of discrimination or racism. Even if one hypothesises that, with Roma, both factors played a role, the question still remains as to which factor contributed to this situation to what extent.

competitive position in the job market, with which, in turn, they could improve their economic, housing and health situation as well⁶ (FORRAY – HEGEDŰS 1998, FORRAY 2002, VARGA 2008). Others have looked at the sudden and intensive rise of far right political movements, especially, again, in Eastern Europe. When combined with the effects of the economic crisis that the whole of Europe has been suffering from in recent years, this creates a particularly dangerous situation. It is well-known that in times of crises, finding a scapegoat is one 'strategy' that certain groups of people, including political parties, follow, and the Roma are a much too easy candidate for a scapegoat, being 'traditionally' discriminated against and thus already having a highly negative image among majority populations (SOBOTKA 2007, FEISCHMIDT ET AL 2014).

Most of the above points can be regarded as external factors in the sense that they are beyond the direct control of the decision maker (i.e. the governments). In a classical SWOT analysis, they would fall into the category of threats.

Recently, on the other hand, a considerable amount of attention has been paid to a different type of factors, which would classify as weaknesses in a SWOT analysis. This means that they are well within the direct control and authority of the decision makers. These factors are in connection with the role that governments of individual countries are willing to play in devising, implementing and evaluating Roma inclusion strategies. Many have questioned the very willingness or at least the true devotion of governments to work for the social inclusion of Roma populations (MCGARRY 2011, OSF 2012, MCGARRY–DRAKE 2013). This criticism has gained a lot of attention and publicity at round tables, NGO discussions and semi-formal forums including online media, but the topic is only starting to make its way into academia and scientific analysis. One example is a recent legislation made by the Hungarian government to lower the age of compulsory education, when it is clear from different surveys (see Figure 1 and Figure 2 above) that Roma children usually drop out after compulsory education, and consequently, this step is likely to have a detrimental effect on Roma education results. Such analyses are normally found in non-academic publications, blogs⁷ and newspaper articles. There are, however, a number of journal articles which already examine the topic, albeit only from a *descriptive* point of view. They usually provide long and convincing lists of actions by governments, political leaders and government agencies that not only go against the aim of social inclusion, but are often plainly and openly racist in nature. RAM (2014) provides an

⁶ Such analyses very often leave out of the equation the role of the school which seems to be regarded as given and unchangeable in this context – a very serious problem, we believe! This important question will be revisited later on in this thesis.

⁷ See among others the ERRC or the Roma Initiatives Office website.

overview of how a number of European countries have acted against Roma inclusion and provides a long list of discriminatory or outright racist rhetoric that leading politicians have used publicly during the past couple of years. And her list is far from being complete.

One topic that tops the list of agenda items for academic and professional circles is racism and discrimination against the Roma, but which gets little, if any, attention in government policies. This contradiction may well appear as a great puzzle for many. We believe that this research will provide a logical explanation for it.

Anti-Roma sentiments do abound all over Europe. A YouGov survey conducted in 2015 reveals that in Western and Northern Europe, between 45% and 72% of people have a negative opinion about Roma in general, Roma being the most negatively perceived group of all⁸. The situation is especially bad in countries with a larger Roma population (EC 2012c, FRA 2009). This is a well-documented phenomenon and there is plenty of research which suggest that the rate or intensity of racism towards Roma is not decreasing (Stewart 2012, Nicolae 2014). Therefore, it should not be surprising to find political forces who do not want to openly oppose these public views and risk losing popular support and votes. Such anti-Roma sentiments are very often packaged in public speeches of political leaders, government representatives and party leaders in a more sophisticated way than the ones mentioned by Ram (2014). These are usually references to the Roma in a way that blames them for not being willing to integrate or even work, hints and implications that do not openly name the Roma but which are easily understood to be like that⁹. These are usually examples of what some would call a hidden agenda, and this does not normally make headlines in the media, but their message is clearly understood by the general public. Such messages are blaming the Roma for whatever problems they face on the one hand, and for all the problems that the majority society “has to suffer” because of them on the other. This attitude is becoming more and more prominent in political discourses too, even among parliamentary parties. Explanations are of course not usually given, but the idea is repeated among many groups of the general society. These are issues that, although quite

⁸ The survey included Muslims (36-45% view them negatively), black people (8-20%), gay people (7-15%) and Jewish people (6-10%). The survey results are available at https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/g96awulgzv/Eurotrack_Minorities_W.pdf last accessed 21 November 2015.

⁹ Examples could be talking about job creation and saying “we want to create jobs for *those who want to work*” (Hungarian PM). Talking about social integration and saying that the government wants to make integration into the majority society possible *for those who want to integrate* (Bulgaria, Romania). Emphasizing that the government will do everything for inclusion *but the Roma also need to work* for it (the Czech Republic, Hungary). This is a complex phenomenon yet to be researched.

obviously false, are very hard to handle. On the one hand, one might wonder whether Roma policies in such contexts could really be expected to be working towards integration, on the other hand, no one has ever pointed out similar approaches or attitudes on the part of the policymaker in Roma *policies themselves*. Our research is aiming to deal with such questions. We believe that we can demonstrate how the policymaker is actually using these same, discriminatory and racist approaches in Roma integration strategies, but in a way which only becomes clear after an in-depth analysis.

If we look at evaluations of Roma integration policies, it is hard to find a single example which would be largely satisfied with either the results or the implementation or the strategy itself (see Chapter 4 for more details). According to most evaluations, one major point, namely discrimination and racism is not dealt with in the strategies and/or in the action plans, even though – and this is already our own comment – it is the major point that almost all of the analyses mention as the main cause of almost all other problems. Why racism, discrimination and segregation are not dealt with in government policies seems a mystery. We will show that the answer can only be found if we use a more holistic theoretical approach in trying to discover social constructions and problem framing, in which it is a logical consequence of the current state of affairs that racism and discrimination should not be a central question in government policies or action plans, if governments do not want to risk the image they are trying to construct of the problem and of the Roma in general. (Although far be it from us to legitimise any such policy solution or behaviour – see the recommendations section at the end of the thesis.)

Self-evaluations and self-assessments by governments or governmental institutions on the other hand very often fail to even mention problems in their findings. Instead, they usually make the situation appear entirely satisfactory and emphasize positive outcomes at all costs. Some of the countries have already prepared a second version of their National Roma Integrations Strategies (including Hungary, The Czech Republic and Romania¹⁰), but there is no sign of a major change or revision based on the external evaluations. On the contrary, the Hungarian government for example, published an evaluation which shows very high levels of success in almost every possible field (HUNGARIAN GOVERNMENT 2013).

All of the above points have led many analysts and especially advocacy groups to the conclusion that there is at least a certain level of unwillingness on the part of the individual

¹⁰ Also available on the Commission's website at http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma-integration/index_en.htm, together with the previous versions.

governments to effectively target problems of Roma exclusion. This is, of course, an assertion that only remains a hypothesis (or merely a “feeling”, one should say) without a solid, well-grounded and methodologically well-founded argumentation. So are governments willing or unwilling to address issues related to Roma? This is one question we would like to answer.

There is today a vast amount of literature analysing Roma integration policies, both from an academic point of view, and – perhaps more commonly – using an advocacy approach. In both cases, however, the analyses often seem to be fragmented. They do point out a number of very important points though. Among them, the most frequently discussed ones are the lack of focus on discrimination, the lack of data, the poor quality or the insufficient level of monitoring, evaluation and assessment, the lack of guarantees, the lack or low level of Roma or NGO involvement and budgetary questions (see Chapter 4 for more details).

However, these analyses often fail to look at the very basis of policies and strategies in question, and this carries the danger of losing perspective. In the current research, we are going to follow a different approach. Most importantly, we are going to use a theoretical background which in itself may already shed light on some of the problems in connection with Roma policies. We will look at specific elements of policy documents, but we will place them in a broader context. This will allow us to account for a large part of the questions mentioned above, but perhaps the most important advantage of using the theoretical approach will be that we will be able to discover the major factors leading to policy failures. In order to find the answers to questions of such importance (after all, millions of people around the continent are suffering), instead of fragmented analyses, not to mention pure criticisms of bits and pieces, what we need is a systemic analysis supported by well tested theoretical systems. In what follows, this is indeed what we are going to do.

As the title of our research says, we will try to discover what role social construction, problem framing and image construction play in these policies. That’s how the word “intentions” should be understood in the title. It is not meant to be a technical term as in pragmatics, philosophy or psychology. We are not literally aiming to discover the intentions of the policymaker, but interpretations, framing and image construction may naturally and necessarily express something about the agent’s intentions, so we may not be very far from those intentions after all. The main emphasis, however, is not on these intentions per sé. Indeed, we think that they do not have an influence on the outcome at all, and in this sense, intentionality or the lack of it may not be used as an argument either for or against any claims expressly included or implied in this work.

2.2 The Research Questions

The questions of this research (we believe, similarly to almost all other analytic investigations) may be organised into two groups. The first group may contain the non-technical types of questions, while the second set of questions may include technical ones that are to be answered in order to enable the researcher to provide proper and relevant answers to the ones in the first group. To put it simply, the first set of questions is similar to the ones a client could ask, while the second set could contain the ones the researcher will ask *first* so that he should be able to answer the client's questions. We believe that it will be useful to include both sets in this chapter (even if we obviously play the role of the client and the researcher at the same time).

The first set includes the very basic and general question of why Roma policies show so few results (utterly fail, some would say) even after decades of efforts, experience gained and a considerable amount of energy, work and financial resources invested, and despite the huge amount of expertise that is available for the policy maker.

This question is of course too general, so it needs to be broken down into smaller components if we want to be able to properly handle it. For this purpose, we will be using what other analysts, researchers and evaluators have found as unsatisfactory or “not working” in Roma policies. These points will be presented in Chapter 4 in more details below. One of the most important of these is perhaps why national Roma policies disregard discrimination and racism despite virtually all available academic and professional evidence. Missing the target is another major point: policies seem to repeat mistakes in funding, budgeting, data, using indicators, implementing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

To sum it up, the component questions are: (Q1) why do policies disregard discrimination and racism? (Q2) Why do policies miss targets (with budgeting, data and other problems)? (Q3) Why do policies consistently and constantly repeat the same mistakes? And of course, we have (Q0), why do Roma policies fail?

The organisation of the second, technical, set of questions is based on theoretical considerations, namely on an approach that is used by the vast majority of policy analysis and research. There are three elements that will probably be part of every type of policy structure, namely: (1) what is the problem, (2) who suffers and who can do something and (3) what should be done?

The first one of these is called problem definition in policy analysis. Each of the three points

mentioned above are highly important and the success of the policy will depend on them, but problem definition is perhaps the most elementary of all, and as such, it has a special status. If the problem definition is wrong, it may well happen that all the other elements are flawless and still, the overall goal is missed. If we were to deliberately change policy directions, we should certainly choose problem definition as a point of “intervention”. The question, very simply put, will be this: how do national Roma policies define the problem? What do they see as the most important reason for the unacceptable situation of the Roma? Do they identify underlying causes and if so what are they? Do they define some of the issues as elementary or crosscutting and if so, which ones? There will be an additional question, which is the result of our grounded theory type of preliminary research, and which may prove to be highly important: are there issues that are not included in national policies as part of the problem, contrary to expectations? What are they and why are they excluded?

The second area of investigation will be what policy analysis terminology calls target definition or the definition of target groups. Above, we have used the informal expressions “who suffers and who can do something”, which actually includes two elements, and not without reason. We believe that it is important to look at both of these two elements in target definitions, and only examining the population groups that are “affected” by the problem (a usual way of analysing policy) is not enough, especially in the case of minorities or, as Schneider and Ingram call them (see below), contenders. In our view, the target group who is expected to act or to “do something” (including the expectation to change some of their characteristic features) is highly important if present. The target group of a policy is often defined as the beneficiaries of a policy, which, we think, is *part of* a valid definition, but it does not describe the complete picture. Such a target group is the receiving or the passive player. In some policies, such as childcare, benefits to higher education students or pension policies, the receiving group is not normally expected to play an active role¹¹. Social policies for groups where changes are expected to happen within the group itself, however, belong to a different type. Examples for such policies may be poverty reduction or unemployment policies, and of course, minority policies, especially Roma policies. The policy’s aim in these cases is usually to change the situation of the target group, whereby, and most importantly, as a precondition for that change, the group and the individuals themselves are expected to undergo a change, sometimes a very serious one. The use of words

¹¹ But changes may happen, and this sometimes makes the situation extremely important to study. As an example, think of decisions to make some types of childcare benefits dependent on the number of children one has, or social benefits dependent on the family’s children’s school attendance or even the family’s „behaviour”.

will reflect a highly important difference: do they need to *undergo* a change, or do they need to *invoke change themselves*? It is important to see that, theoretically, it is not only the beneficiaries who might be expected to act.

In Roma education policies, the situation is similar to other target groups which are expected to change. Clearly, simply providing benefits (as pensions or student benefits in other policy areas) will not lead to results. What needs to change (or be changed) is a whole range of issues. Which of the stakeholders need to change will depend on the framing of the problem. Do we expect Roma children or Roma parents to change, or do we expect the school, the teachers, the management or even the whole system to change? In both cases, what exactly will bring about change? A simple listing of the problems may already shed light on the approach, e.g. is segregation listed at all, and is it seen as a major problem? Do policies see Roma children as unable to achieve results or do they see them as ones who have no access to quality education? Does the policymaker view Roma parents as ones who are unable to provide for their children's educational needs (for reasons beyond their control), or do they appear in policies as ones who are not caring enough, who lack motivation and who do not understand the importance of education? How do policies view the role of the school and the educational system? Are they mentioned at all? If so, what responsibility (or simply what role) are they assigned by the policy?

In summary, the first two points, target group definition and problem definition, will be discussed in details in Chapter 5 and 6 respectively. These two points will cover most of the concrete questions that could be asked. Such questions may include the following very specific points, not in order of importance. Who is suffering from the problems (defined as such), in other words: who is the bearer of the problem? Is anyone responsible for the problems and if so, who? Is anyone viewed as a victim? Are any of the players causing the problem (is anyone to blame)? Is it rather external circumstances that lead to the problems defined? Are the Roma regarded as passive beneficiaries or active players who need to actively do something? Why is it necessary, after all, to make a Roma policy? And of course: what should be done?

The last question is identical with the third point that we mentioned at the beginning of this subchapter. "What should be done" is one of the fundamental questions to ask in policy making and policy analysis alike. That is why we will extend the scope of this research to include actions recommended by policies and seek further evidence for or against what we have found in the previous parts of our analysis.

2.3 Hypotheses

We start from logical-empirical considerations. What we see is that governments do prepare Roma integration policies, they carry out revisions of these documents and publish a number of related materials as well, which means that they do invest a great deal of resources, but the results of these efforts are not obvious. If the criticism discussed in the problem description is valid, there are a limited number of possible solutions to this contradiction. Among them, there is one special area that can also be examined from a theoretical point of view. The main line of theory that we are going to use is that of social construction, together with other theoretical considerations¹² that, together, will make up a coherent background that will help us discover some of the reasons why Roma policies “miss targets”.

The most important hypothesis we would like to test is this: one prominent function of Roma policies, especially national strategies, is that of problem definition and framing. On the other hand, the Roma issue needs no agenda setting today – it was elevated to the international and national agendas a long time ago and therefore we need to account for the high priority given to this function in policies. One possible explanation is that government policies will *redefine* both the problem and the target group in a way that is acceptable for their political and ideological approach. This is obviously nothing new in itself, all policies that respond to an existing (i.e. already defined) social problem will try to do that to some extent. What might be new and extraordinary in the case of Roma policies is that this function – according our hypothesis – is the main goal of the policymaker. Problem redefinitions in policies do not necessarily (indeed, not normally) happen in an explicit way, and this is why we need to use special research tools that will allow us to discover what is going on “behind the scenes”. Based on Carol Bacchi's WPR approach, we expect to find that the social construction process is going on in virtually all of the stages of the policy process, including the three main parts that we described in Chapter 2.2 above, and also including action plans.

Why would the policymaker put in so much effort to redefine the problem and frame it in a different way from the one that we can find in the academic literature and in most international policies? According to our hypothesis, the answer is to be found in political considerations that are explained in details in the social construction of target groups theory. To provide a very brief summary: it would be highly dangerous for governments to openly distribute benefits to a group which has an extremely negative public image, which is largely and historically regarded as

¹² For further details, see the chapter about theoretical background.

non-deserving, and by some, even as one that deserves burdens and punishments rather than benefits. The Roma are a group that can be characterized like this in all of the countries, without exceptions. Acknowledging for example, that the Roma suffer discrimination and racism, and that this is actually the main reason why they are in this depressing situation would be equal to confronting the opinion of the vast majority of voting citizens of the given country. One concrete item on our list of hypotheses is therefore that discrimination and racism will not be regarded as a main cause for the problems, even if it means contradicting all professional and academic opinions.

In this context and for similar reasons, the image of the Roma can neither be left unaltered by policies, if they want to avoid openly challenging and contradicting public opinion. According to the theory devised by Schneider and Ingram, a group which has a very negative image and a high power will usually be treated in a special way in policies. In the case of the Roma, however, there is a clash of images: on the one hand, Roma organisations and international policies see them as victims of discrimination, while the largest sections of societies throughout Europe are looking at them as troublemakers, non-deserving and even punishable. The makers of national policies consequently either have to abandon one of the images or, as a more convenient, although certainly less coherent option, balance between the two. Entirely abandoning one of the images is risky. It would either lead to a loss of voting power or provoking a large scale criticism, and possibly more, among a wide range of powerful and influential international organisations including EU bodies that have at least some tools to penalize member states (this is actually what we could call the power of the Roma, as far as social construction theory is concerned).

Therefore, our hypothesis is that there will also be a considerable amount of image construction in national Roma policies, which will try to balance between the two, extremely contradictory, images of the Roma, but with a trend that would tend to be closer to the publicly held negative image implicitly, and present some elements of the discrimination and human rights based, victim-like image on the surface.

If our hypothesis is correct, this image construction and problem framing will be present in all aspects of policy building, including not only the problem and the target definitions but the action plans themselves.

We should be aware that if the above hypotheses are correct, and both the problem and the target group is redefined (for reasons mentioned only briefly above), this consequently must lead to a

very high risk regarding the success of the policy. If this is really the case that policies deal with redefinitions and image constructions, it can at least partially explain why none of the Roma policies have worked. If the problem framing produces false interpretations and conclusions, if cause and effect relationships are incorrect, it is obvious that solution will not be achieved, regardless of the effort invested.

For a concrete example, if educational failure is viewed as the result of Roma students' unwillingness or attendance problems, if dropouts are linked to the parents' lack of motivation and care, the recommended solutions will inevitably target something that will not be able to solve most of the problems. If educational segregation is not regarded as a major problem, what's more, if it is considered as a way of helping the situation (as in the case of the Hungarian policy), failure is certain and inevitable.

In summary, the most important hypotheses are the following: (H1) national governments are not satisfied with the problem framing, interpretations and Roma image that is already existing in international documents and academic discourse. (H2) Consequently, governments want to change the framing, the interpretations and the image in order to make them more adequate to their own purposes. This will include excluding discrimination and racism from the underlying causes, while blaming the Roma and their culture for the problems may also be part of the image that is to be constructed. (H3) Governments feel they are unable to openly challenge the problem definitions and images in the official policy documents (because this is a target group with considerable power), so they will try to do this in a more implicit way. We will not go into much detail about the fourth point, but it is going to be an important point and it may provide an answer to the main question of why Roma policies do not work and why governments are repeating the same mistakes in spite of all the expert advice, evaluations and warnings. (H4) From a political point of view, and with today's political approaches and ideologies prevalent in CEE countries and elsewhere in Europe, it does not seem a priority for governments to solve the problem of Roma exclusion. This point may be examined in a later research in much more details, but it already goes beyond a policy analysis framework. One sign of this, however, may be discovered. If most of the strategy deals with image construction and problem redefinition, it is already a sign that other elements do not enjoy a priority and thus, they do not constitute an important goal at all.

2.4 The Purpose and Significance of the Research

The current research, similarly to most research in public policy, is dual-purpose. On the one hand, there is the task of scientific enquiry. This could mean a number of different things including collecting arguments for or against a theoretical approach. This is indeed one of the tasks we would like to accomplish with this work. The theoretical background will serve as the basis for this, while actual, written Roma policies will serve as the source of empirical evidence. Although the theoretical bases that we have selected are well researched with more and more interest directed towards social construction and framing, the significance of our research in this field becomes obvious if we consider the fact that there are relatively few such studies in connection with Roma policies. Image construction or social construction has been examined in connection with Roma inclusion, but not with a holistic approach and especially not in connection with policy making. In this respect, we believe that this research is filling a gap not only from a theoretical perspective, but it has a major practical significance, too. It will shed light on the underlying reasons for policy failures going well beyond the technical analyses that is available today.

We should also highlight the fact that the policies we are using as research materials are special from several respects. First, they have all been prepared or revised at the same time, as a response to the same request: they are the strategies submitted to the European Commission in 2011 by all EU member states. This means that they provide an excellent basis for comparison, since they were prepared in the same social, economic and political environment as far as the international stage is concerned. Moreover, all these strategies were supposedly built on the same single document that provided guidelines for them, which certainly makes conclusions stronger and better founded than what we could gain from a kaleidoscope of materials from different times, with different foundations and with different purposes¹³.

The academic side of the research is thus one of the goals. In our case, it is the examination of how social construction, framing and image construction operate in policies, how they appear in action plans and what tools are used for these purposes throughout the strategies. This type of inquiry allows us, or indeed requires us, to look at policies as if they were part of the natural world. We believe that policy research should not be any different from natural sciences when

¹³ Some of the strategy papers submitted were neither new nor revised, but this doesn't make the statement any weaker, since the governments who decided to submit these existing documents were well aware of the expectations, thus it was their conscious decision to use the old policies without changes.

it comes to fact-finding, argumentation or theory, which means that an evaluation of the findings is not in place. Good or bad are not part of strictly scientific vocabulary. Policy research, however, is most often expected to adopt a position. This means that in most policy analysis work, sooner or later the question invariably occurs regarding the practical use of the research results and even give an evaluation of the findings, what's more, to provide recommendations (as is the normal case in analysis *for* policy as opposed to analysis *of* policy). Therefore, we should be able to deal with these questions, too.

There is a straightforward and obvious answer to this which follows from the very starting point of this research. We based the “research problem” on the fact that there is consensus among policy analysts that Roma policies have not yielded results during the course of several decades, which means that there must be some *fundamental* problem with them. We believe that we have found the most important of these fundamental problems, which is none other than what is included in the main hypothesis: policies are not aimed to actually address Roma integration, but instead, they deal with problem redefinitions and image construction. The issues revealed during the analysis are also very often linked to practical considerations, which will be able to help practitioners, policymakers and policy analysts alike.

The novelty of our research is without doubt the approach that we are using. Rather than placing individual parts or sections of policies in focus, we are examining them from a wider perspective, and trying to discover overarching principles and foundations that these strategies employ. One problem that we see in most Roma policy analysis is that they are trying to evaluate specific components of strategies, which makes it very hard to arrive at a general picture regarding the actual aim of these policies. The holistic, comprehensive point of view that we are employing will make it possible to get a clearer picture of the very foundations and reveal systemic and systematic problems.

Altogether, we believe that finding answers to the questions described above will help both policy makers and analysts and a number of other shareholders, from advocacy groups to NGOs and field workers in better targeting their future activities in connection with Roma inclusion, both in the field of education and beyond.

2.5 Research methods

The main title of this work includes the word “intentions”. Although it clearly refers to the well-

known saying, we believe it is appropriate to account for its usage. By “intentions”, we mean all the elements that may be found in strategies of communication, similar to the ones that discourse analysis and pragmatics usually examine. The research will therefore include a great deal of language analysis. We regard policy papers as acts of communication (see also the argumentative turn described in Chapter 3.1). Besides the factual information, they contain messages that are not directly observable to the naked eye, but understood by the reader, otherwise the communication would be unsuccessful. In order to make this message clear and examinable, we will need to analyse, among others, the choice of words and the structure of the information in the texts. Along the way, we will need to operate with linguistic and logical reasoning. As an example, one of the findings of this research is that very often, policies are blaming the Roma for most of the problems they face. This is of course something that most policy papers will not put down on paper in black and white, but we can find ample evidence for this in the way they talk about some of these problems, how they organise the reasons, how they define the problem or what recommendations they make to address the problem.

Since we are dealing with policy documents and action plans, all of them written materials, the most evident research tool of choice is content analysis. We will examine written documents that are publicly available in all cases through the websites of government agencies, EU institutions and other relevant organisations. Here, we should note that in all cases, we have used the English language versions of the documents. These are most often documents translated from the original, sometimes containing minor errors in the target language, and we have taken this into consideration. We are not using arguments based on language subtleties or fine distinctions between English synonyms or the occasional awkward choice of vocabulary.

We used the classical methodology of computer assisted qualitative data analysis, from coding through synthesis to analysis, also utilising the methods of grounded theory, especially at the coding phase of the research. In the technical implementation, we used MaxQDA, a computer assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDA) software.

The reason for using these research tools is primarily based on the nature of the research materials, the type of research questions and the theoretical frameworks used. As we have noted above, all the research materials are written documents. Although a more extensive research may include extra materials (including background materials or records of policy debates), most of the research questions, especially if considered from the theoretical background's point of view, must concentrate on the written documents themselves if we want to discover how policies deal with questions of definitions or framing. Besides the usual linguistic analysis, we

occasionally use quantifiable data, mainly based on the initial and the second phase coding of the texts. This made it possible for us to compare different aspects in a quantitative manner if it was advantageous or necessary for the argument.

If and when we need to look at external factors not directly found in the documents themselves, we must rely on existing research results, mainly statistical data, but basically limit our research area to the policy documents and action plans.

The documents analysed are listed under a separate heading in the References section, to make it easier for the Reader to identify them.

3 Theoretical Background

3.1 Introduction: The Argumentative Turn in policy analysis

In the introductory chapters above, we have already listed the most important points of criticism that analyses have put forward in connection with Roma policies, and we will also offer a more complete overview of these criticisms in Chapter 4. One of the most important questions is whether rectifying these issues in national policies would lead to a satisfactory state of affairs or not. Would these policies bring tangible results if they included clear and well-founded budgeting and indicators, if there were disaggregated data available and if all the other problems were successfully addressed?

We believe the answer is a definite no. The reason is that these analyses usually disregard what has become known in policy analysis as the argumentative turn, and largely fail to examine the context, the policymakers' interpretative and framing attempts and are normally restricted in their scope, concentrating on the individual projects and programmes and actions planned. It is important to see that they all concern problems that we may call technical, such as budgeting or monitoring and evaluation. What is missing, to put it simply, is looking behind the scenes and discover highly important elements that we call 'intentions' in the title of this work but we may well label them as messages or efforts to frame the problem. Those intentions may well have the power to change the overall outcome of a given policy and may even override conclusions gained from examining the technical details.

This is actually what some of the policy analysts at the end of the twentieth century realised,

when they claimed that policy analysis needs to look beyond the traditional positivist approach. For most of the twentieth century, policy analysis relied on what some referred to as a positivist approach, which we may also call strictly technical. This approach, unfortunately, is still used in most of the existing analyses concerning Roma policies, making it impossible to see the whole context and focussing on largely technical details.

The Argumentative Turn in policy analysis brought forward new approaches which emphasised the importance of context, arguments and generally regarded policies as acts of communication rather than purely technical attempts to solve particular problems. Consequently, language became a highly important aspect to analyse. Some authors basically claimed that “public policy is made of language” and that policy analysis is a “rhetorical practice” (FISCHER – FORESTER 1993:117). In the early 1990s, a number of theoretical models and approaches were developed, most of them utilizing the central tenets of social constructionism. One of these principles was that language is very often used to construct, rather than describe social reality. For our research, the most important is its consequence on problem definitions and framing. What this means is that policies may offer an excellent tool for the policymaker to construct (rather than describe) social reality, including problems and target group images. This, of course should not necessarily be a redefining or reconstructing activity, but if there are conflicting views of certain social phenomena – and Roma inclusion is definitely one such topic – then the policymaker has, at least theoretically, several options at hand. He can choose to follow in the footsteps of social science and Roma advocacy groups, or go against it and opt for the version that certain ultra-right wing political groups have adopted and which is supported by vast numbers of populations in CEE countries.

The theoretical frameworks and approaches below all share the basic idea put forward by the Argumentative Turn, but also go further than this. They aim to devise tools with the help of which it could be possible to reveal and/or account for some of these constructions: intentions, beliefs and viewpoints. Out of the many existing models and approaches, we have selected two, which will serve as the basis of our investigative work. The Social construction of target populations devised by Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram on the one hand, and the “What is the Problem Represented to Be” approach by Carol Bacchi. But before going into details about each of them, we think it is useful to look at the bases of the policy cycle theory in more general terms and have a closer look at the topic of agenda setting.

3.2 The Policy Cycle and agenda setting

Scientific attention to policy analysis first started to intensify in the 1950s. This was the time when the first versions of the policy stages theory started to formulate, which gave rise to the policy cycle theory, the basic elements of which are in general use even today, albeit with innumerable recommendations for modification. The policy cycle basically makes use of the stages that were first recommended in the early days of policy analysis theory going back to the work of Harold Lasswell (LASWELL 1935). Although different authors and schools have recommended adjustments and further elements to be included in the system, the basic stages are the following: agenda setting, policy formulation, decision making, implementation and evaluation. Being a cyclical model, the theory does not assume separate stages, the characteristics of process is emphasized, with a feed-back mechanism constantly at work. It is generally agreed that in real-life situations, we cannot identify separate stages in themselves. The stages, however, make sense in that they are logically, though not necessarily chronologically built on top of each other, and perhaps mainly because they make it possible to examine different areas of activity in policy making. As is well known, policies are seldom designed or expected to solve a problem once and for all, instead, they aim to provide *a way of* addressing a problem. Consequently, cycles will often restart, with possible modifications after the evaluation and analysis of the outcomes and achievements.

In the current research, we are mainly concerned with the first two stages of the cycle, namely agenda setting and policy formulation, with the latter possibly including decision making as well.

Agenda setting is loosely defined as a process through which certain issues or problems get public attention (see, among others, BIRKLAND 2007:63). The process is far from being straightforward and there are a number of questions which have been answered in several different ways by different researchers during the last couple of decades. Most of these include questions about who (or what) influences the process, what are the factors that contribute to an issue being elevated to the level of public attention, or why some of the issues get considerable attention while others are left out. One especially important aspect of agenda setting, and the most important one for our present research is problem definition. BIRKLAND (2007) seems to agree that there could be an identifiable group who is able to successfully define a problem at this stage, and consequently, will also be in the position to offer possible solutions to it. Current scholarship however, seriously questions this idea. Problem definition is seen as a far more

complex aspect of the policy process, and rather than being one step at the beginning of the policy cycle, it is an *ongoing activity*, which could be present throughout the policy process, from problem selection to as far as implementation and even evaluation. In the case of minority policies, or the ones that target contender groups (see the social construction of target groups below) this seems to be an especially important factor to consider.

Even though it is regarded a cycle, the policy process may, and certainly usually does, have a starting point. This is the stage where different issues become part of the agenda. Several authors provide a definition to agenda similar to this: “Agenda is a collection of problems, understandings of causes, symbols, solutions, and other elements of public problems that come to the attention of members of the public and their governmental officials” (BIRKLAND 2007:63). Policy researchers usually divide the agenda into different levels, the lowest of which is the systemic agenda¹⁴, which contains practically any issues that may or may not get considerable attention from officials, the media or other participants. Next is the institutional agenda, which includes ideas and issues that are already being considered by decision makers, while the highest level is the decision agenda where actual policy is prepared and decisions are made (BIRKLAND 2007).

Before an issue is able to make its way to the agenda, it must be defined as a problem (see more discussion about this in Chapter 6.1). Without a problem definition, it is simply a situation or a state or a phenomenon just like any other. Since the definition of the problem necessarily includes at least an implication on how the problem could be solved, defining the problem is of utmost importance in the future (and fate) of an issue, therefore different actors in the policy arena are usually striving to be the ones whose definition will eventually be accepted. Problem definitions ideally happen through analysis, but they may often be summarised in a single sentence. In any case, the definition of the problem will always, without exception, include suggestions on how the problem might be solved. This is a logical necessity and not a practical one. There is no way for a problem definition to avoid such suggestions. As an example, examine the following. There is an extraordinarily large difference between claiming that “Roma children do not have access to kindergarten education” (one kind of definition), or that “Roma parents do not send their children to kindergarten” (another, very different kind of definition). In both of these sentences, there is already a hint on whose responsibility and whose

¹⁴ Some, including BIRKLAND (2007), also talk about an „agenda universe”, where any and every idea may occur including racist and other ideas regarded unacceptable and „out of the question” by the particular society, and therefore only some of these are actually able to rise to the next level. Also, the labels given to each of the agenda levels may be different in some publications.

failure it is, which is only one step away from deciding where interventions are most relevant and necessary and even what types of interventions might be required. Some of the issues are defined even with using a label, such as gender inequality or racial discrimination. In the case of the Roma, “Roma problem/issues” is perhaps the label that is most commonly used, sometimes in the form of “Roma related issues”. If anything, this label might actually be suggesting that there is a problem with the Roma themselves. We know from experience that the first reactions to this point that we have just made may be disbelief and rejecting it as “hair-splitting”. If in doubt, compare this to the hypothetical labels of “the Jewish problem”, “Jewish issues”, “Jew-related issues”. What would they suggest, and would people be happy with these labels? Labels and words have power. And this power is present in agenda setting labels, too.

According to classical policy analysis, the competition to define the problem usually decreases after the issue is elevated into the institutional agenda, and even more so when it gets into the decision agenda. This doesn't mean though, that problem definition completely disappears as an issue gets higher in the agenda. Why *re*definitions may occur is a less intensively researched topic, but pure logic tells us that redefinitions will only occur if some of the participants are unsatisfied with the existing definition. This also means that the initial problem definition at the agenda setting phase was carried out by some other participants. This is indeed the case with Roma policies, where current governments had usually very little role in the early framing and social construction work, and in many cases, they had no options but to accept the already existing definitions under considerable pressure from international organisations and mainly EU bodies, mostly before accession to the EU.

Will they try to redefine the problem, and what should be meant by “Roma issues”? This is one central question that our research will try to answer.

3.3 The Social construction of target groups

The idea that reality is constructed and not necessarily a priori given has its roots in philosophical thinking and can be traced back to at least Husserl and his phenomenology, but the very idea of questioning what is real and what is knowledge finds its roots in the philosophical thinking millennia ago. However, the first work that made it an important perspective in the social sciences was that of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, who were among the first to argue that “reality is socially constructed” and that “reality and knowledge [possess a] social relativity” (BERGER–LUCKMANN 1966:13).

The classical ideas of social constructivism gradually appeared in policy analysis and eventually formed a theoretical framework: social constructionism. One of the most important publications in the field of policy analysis is SCHNEIDER–INGRAM (1993), in which the authors start their discussion with the statement that the “social construction of target populations is an important, albeit overlooked, political phenomenon that should take its place in the study of public policy” (SCHNEIDER–INGRAM 1993:334). Today, more than twenty years later, this statement looks still valid, at least in the mainstream and especially in the case of minority or Roma policy analyses, even if the approach can be regarded as one of the leading theories in policy analysis, but mainly in the United States and – as PIERCE ET AL (2014) finds – mostly among first authors, which means that the older generation of researchers still haven’t recognized, or perhaps are unwilling to recognize, its analytical strength. It is also important to note that research into minority policies hardly ever uses this theoretical framework, although, as we will demonstrate, it has the capacity to shed light on some of the most important factors in understanding why Roma policies (or perhaps ethnic minority policies in general) fail to achieve their stated goals, whether in education or in other policy areas.

The fundamental idea behind this approach is that one of the most important goals of governments (and thus, individual politicians and elected officials) is re-election, a point hardly questionable, even though this may result in a highly undesirable situation. While solving public problems is also expected to be at the centre of their activities, when trying to address problems, they distribute benefits and burdens to different groups of society on the basis of two parameters: power and deservedness. The former may seem more like an obvious variable in this equation: powerful groups do have an influence on policy decisions either through mobilization and voting power or in some other forms, and decision makers can gain benefits from giving advantages to these groups (and suffer disadvantages in the opposite case), while powerless groups do not possess the capacity to provide support in return for benefits and do not pose a threat.

The latter parameter, on the other hand is not necessarily an obvious one. The notion of deservedness is closely connected to the image of the particular group that is available about them among the public. The authors acknowledge that this idea is not new, and goes back to as early as the 1960s. What the social construction of target populations as a theoretical approach to policy analysis adds to this is that these public images have a strong influence on decision makers in devising policies and, perhaps even more importantly, in distributing benefits and burdens to particular groups. SCHNEIDER–INGRAM (1993) looks at this phenomenon as

something that necessarily follows from the political and social situation and structure, and says that “there are strong pressures for public officials to provide beneficial policy to powerful, positively constructed target populations and to devise punitive, punishment-oriented policy for negatively constructed groups” (SCHNEIDER–INGRAM 1993:334). The pressures originate from public opinion, which in turn is based on the image that has been constructed of the particular group. Public opinion holds that some of the groups are deserving (they are positively constructed), while others are non-deserving and should be punished. Public policies are also expected to send a clear message in line with this public expectation if political gain (re-election) is to be achieved. The policy and the distribution of burdens and benefits can thus be described in a matrix using the two axes of power and image. The result is four types of target groups: advantaged, dependent, contender and deviant groups (see table 1).

		Image	
		Positive	Negative
Power	Strong	Advantaged business people scientists veterans	Contenders the rich minorities big unions
	Weak	Dependants children mothers disabled	Deviants criminals drug addicts gangs

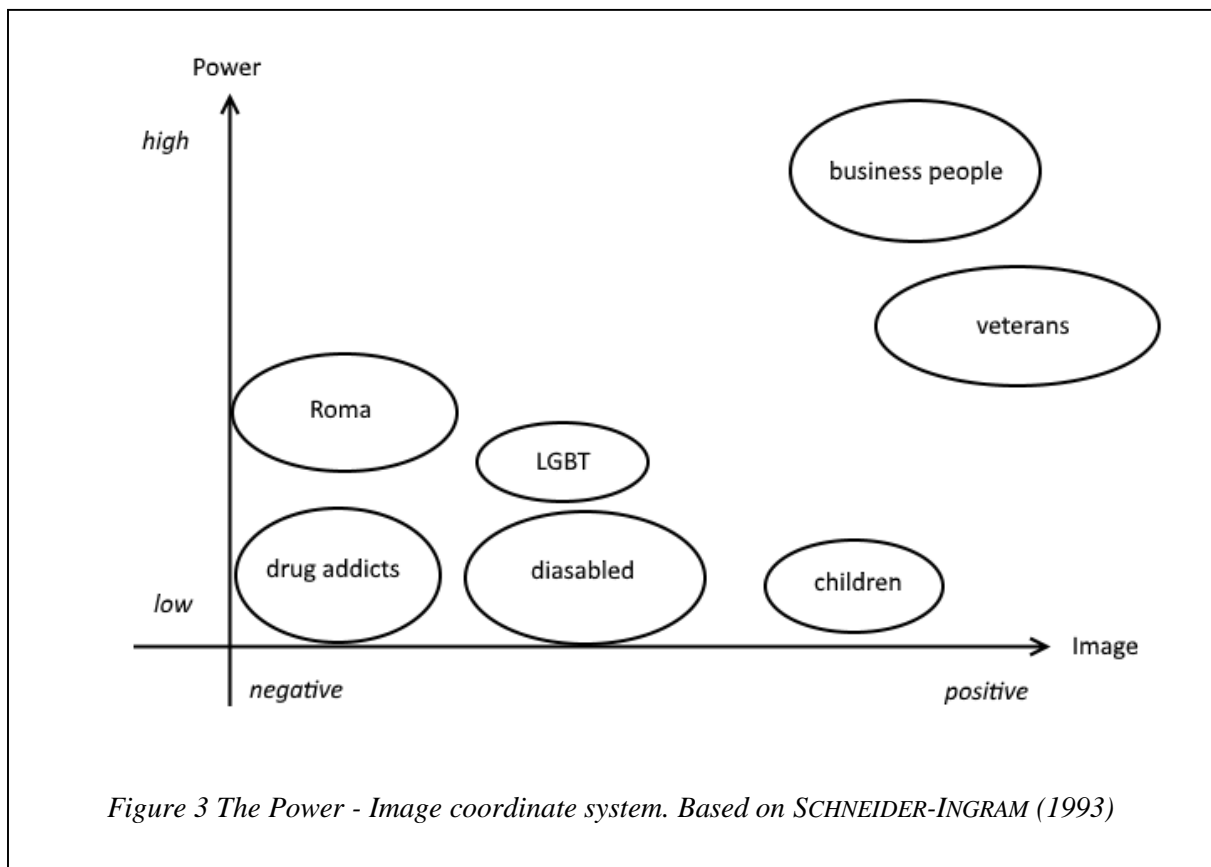
Table 1: Types of target populations - Based on SCHNEIDER–INGRAM (1993)

The four types can be characterised by specific ways of treatment in policies and in the messages that policy makers and more generally elected officials communicate in connection with them. In this matrix, advantaged groups are both powerful and positively constructed, which means that if they get benefits, it meets with public approval on the one hand, and results in political gains on the other. Policies are expected to form very positive messages in connection with them, and only target them with positive measures. Burdens are undersubscribed if present, benefits are oversubscribed. Dependants lack power, but they are viewed positively. Policies that target them positively are welcome by the general public, but it may only result in indirect gains as far as political power or re-election are concerned. The case of deviants is as obvious as that of advantaged groups: since they neither have power, nor are they viewed positively, it is safe, and even advantageous to place burdens on them with giving no benefits at all (or benefits must be covert); indeed, the general public may find it satisfactory

if they are punished in public policies and this may be beneficial from a political point of view.

For us, the most interesting case is that of contenders, since this is the group where Schneider and Ingram place minorities. But this group may be of special importance to policy analysis in general too, because of its special status. On the one hand, groups in this category are supposed to be powerful, which should drive policy makers to devise beneficial policies targeting them, the simple recipe for treating powerful groups being 'treat them well and this will bring its fruits'. On the other hand, they are viewed negatively by the general public, which means that any benefit that they are publicly and openly offered may lead to public opposition and dissatisfaction. SCHNEIDER-INGRAM (1993) (along with later publications by the same authors) note that benefits to these groups may be covert, policies may be *vague and indirect* to avoid much publicity, and with this, policymakers will try to hide it from the public eye.

It is important to see that the four groups are merely theoretical constructions, and in reality, particular groups will rather be placed in a coordinate system defined by the axis of power and the axis of image value. To show this, we have modified the system as seen in Figure 3.



This shows how different groups may be placed in the coordinate system depending on their power and their constructed image. Instead of being forced to choose one of the four categories above, this system allows for a more accurate way of representing the various groups¹⁵. INGRAM–SCHNEIDER (2007:102) already suggests a similar modification and draws up a modified *table*, but it may prove more advantageous to convert the table into a coordinate system similar to ours above. The reason why even in later publications, Schneider and Ingram maintain the four groups (and continue to use a table rather than a coordinate system) is supposedly because they want to be able to construct a certain typology, which may prove useful in presenting (though not necessarily explaining) the results of their theoretical system. While this typology (briefly described above) may help us in the typological work, another reason why the coordinate system could have more explanatory power is that over time, all the groups in a society that public policies may target may change both in power and in the image that is constructed of them. This practically means that they will “move around” in the coordinate system, even though they may still be considered to belong to the same typological group as before. LGBT people are one of the best examples for this, since only during the course of a couple of decades, their constructed image in most democratic societies has changed radically, from very negative to at least sympathising. Whether the power associated to LGBT groups has also changed remains to be discussed, but it is of crucial importance to understand that public opinion already implies a certain level and kind of power: punishing or imposing burdens on groups that the general public regards as deserving is extremely risky. Nothing shows this better than the miraculous journey from criminalising same sex *sexual activity* (!) until 1993 in Ireland to legalising same sex *marriage and adoption* in 2015 in the same country. For our topic, it is especially important to note that the 2015 Irish legislation was based on a referendum, with the vast majority of voters voting in favour, meaning that it was public decision rather than a political one.

The Roma population, on the other hand, is far from this miraculous success, even though we can see considerable changes in their locations in the coordinate system. Few would argue that only a few decades ago, Roma (Gypsy) people formed a group in most societies which had to be placed at the origin of the coordinate system, with zero power and the most negative image. This means that they belonged to the category of deviants rather than that of contenders (where

¹⁵ Although in this particular Figure, we were not aiming to represent the individual groups with a high level of accuracy, the chart is only meant to illustrate the way they may be represented in the coordinate system.

Schneider and Ingram usually place minorities).

Where does the power of the Roma come from? Usual sources of power might be economic strength or voting power. The former is obviously not the case, since the vast majority of Roma people live in deprivation and extreme poverty. As far as voting power is concerned, there have been a number of researchers and advocacy groups analysing this situation¹⁶, all of them agreeing that political participation among the Roma, regardless of which country's citizens they are, is at best very limited. Sources suggest that they are either very easily influenced or they lack interest in political participation (voting power). Political representation is also very weak: Roma parties do not usually reach the threshold at general elections, and major political parties rarely embrace the advocacy and the task of representation for this minority. According to the Fundamental Rights Agency Roma Survey conducted in 11 EU member states in 2011, only a fraction (7%) of Roma people aged 16 or above participate in any political or public organisation (FRA 2012). According to the same survey, 62% of Roma are not aware of any organisation working to help Roma in any way.

This is where the international stage plays a crucial role. Although international attention to Gypsies already appeared in the 1960s, it was not until the eastern expansion of the European Union became a reality after the fall of communism that European Union and other international organisations started to very seriously deal with the situation of the Roma – albeit only in the Eastern part of Europe, largely ignoring the fact that Western Europe also had Roma populations very often facing segregation and discrimination comparable to that suffered in the former socialist countries. This, however, does not alter the fact that the EU was clearly going to enforce policy changes towards the Roma in accession countries as a prerequisite to accession. Meanwhile, strong and powerful advocacy activities also started to formulate in the non-governmental field, with George Soros as a leading figure with his extensive network of foundations, which paid more and more attention to Roma inclusion, too, in its effort towards advocating “open societies”. The two sides gradually strengthened each other, while other powerful international organisations also joined the fight against the discrimination of the Roma. Policy, advocacy and research activities were already on the rise at the beginning of the nineties, and there was a stronger and stronger pressure on Central-Eastern European states with a high number of Roma citizens to act, as the date of the EU accession was approaching. The

¹⁶ Most typically in non-academic publications issued by, among others, various OSF Roma units, ERRC and others, and at conferences and workshops. News reports about the issue (buying the votes of the Roma etc) are numerous.

Roma Decade initiative was signed by a number of accession countries in 2005, again, mainly as the result of the efforts of George Soros himself and his foundations. The Decade website calls it “an unprecedented political commitment by European governments to eliminate discrimination against Roma and close the unacceptable gaps between Roma and the rest of society”. It can truly be called unprecedented with (eventually) 12 countries signing the initiative and committing themselves to work for Roma inclusion, but it would also be a mistake to ignore the fact that they hardly had a choice if they wanted to show how sincerely they embrace the “European values” they were *required* to pursue and protect – and perhaps even more importantly: to demonstrate that they did so – if they wanted to ensure a successful accession to the European Union. The Decade initiative itself was conceived in 2003¹⁷, just a year before the first eastern enlargement. Today, at the end of the decade devoted to Roma inclusion, we already see evaluations which usually see the project as having very little perceptible effects. One result however, should not be overlooked: it managed to keep Roma inclusion very high on the agenda of a number of countries, among them those with the largest Roma populations in the world. For our research purposes, it is important to see that the power in the coordinate system mentioned above is in large part coming from exactly such sources: international organisations and especially EU bodies, which very often have the capacity to force individual countries to at least keep Roma inclusion on the agenda. Especially important is the Framework for National Roma Inclusion Strategies adopted by the European Commission in 2011. It urged all EU member states to prepare or revise their Roma inclusion strategies in line with the Framework document. Despite all doubts and expectations, every single EU country prepared a document (even Malta sent a reply explaining why they did not need a Roma inclusion strategy), albeit most of them received very strong criticism, and some of them could hardly be called cooperative or even well meaning (particularly the Netherlands, Denmark or France). However, what we are concerned with here is the fact that the EU Commission was able to exert a rather strong pressure on national governments, and most of them did comply. This pressure, complemented by other international organisations and NGOs working in the field of Roma inclusion constitutes the power that the Roma minority as a target group for public policies possesses.

As far as the image axis is concerned, at this point, we do not need to go into much detail in order to prove that the Roma as a group carry one of the most negative connotations in each of the countries. There are, however, numerous reports and surveys with alarming findings. One

¹⁷ See: www.romadecade.org/about-the-decade-decade-in-brief

of the latest is a Eurobarometer report (EC 2012), according to which 34% of all Europeans think that their fellow citizens would feel uncomfortable about their children having a Roma schoolmate, which is already high, but there are considerable differences from country to country. The ratio is 58% in Slovakia, 52% in the Czech Republic, and more than 40% in a number of other countries (Hungary, Italy, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Denmark). This, we think is a good marker of the highly negative image constructed about the Roma all over Europe, which puts the Roma minority near the bottom of the image scale in the coordinate system above. However, we think that the image is also changing, although very slowly. The result of the Eurobarometer survey also includes that more than half of the people in most of the European countries and almost half of the people in other countries think that the majority of the people would not have a problem with their children having Roma classmates. Even if we account for possible distortions in the results (the white flight that we see in Slovakia, Hungary and a number of other countries implies a rather more negative situation, and the question in the survey was about how the respondent evaluated other people's opinions), it certainly provides reason for hope: the image can change over time.

How can the image change? The answer is based on the very foundations of the present theory of social construction. As we have described at the beginning of this chapter, social problems are not pre-existing objects, they need to be constructed. And if so, reconstructions are also possible. The nature of image construction in the non-political sphere is a well-researched topic, and it has implications for policy formulation as well. Agenda setting is obviously influenced by the media (in policy analysis, we normally differentiate it from other fields calling it the 'media agenda'), but it is also a prominent domain for image constructions. News reports, media appearances, films and popular culture appearances all have a great influence on how the public modifies or reconstructs their images of certain groups. This, however, is beyond the scope of our research interest now.

INGRAM ET AL (2007), similarly to our research, focuses on the area of policy and politics when they describe the social construction of particular groups, calling problem definition itself a political exercise. Defining social problems eventually happens in the political sphere, and policies themselves may prove an especially effective tool for reframing problems and reconstructing images.

How they carry out this task is a complex question. On the one hand, in most cases, there is an explicit problem description in policy documents, whether it is officially labelled as problem definition or is presented as a context analysis. Roma integration policies vary considerably in

this respect, but they usually start with an introduction. This already gives us an excellent opportunity to examine how they view the problem, what they put at the centre of attention how they define the target group, the causes and possible tools. This is going to be an important field of investigation in further chapters below.

However, there is much more to problem definitions than the explicit, actual wording used in the introductory parts of policy documents. The case of the Roma, put in the category of contenders by Schneider and Ingram, is a very special case, as we discussed above. Policies may not always use very open and direct approaches to the problems, since they need to balance between power and image, and the solution may not be straightforward. This is an intricate phenomenon that needs further research then, and to discover what is going on “behind the scenes”, we will turn to another theoretical tool devised by Carol Bacchi.

3.4 The WPR approach

By examining the explicit descriptions of problems, goals and targets in policy documents, very often, it is only possible to get a vague picture, which may not be supported by either the outcome of the policy in question or the general approach of policymakers in other fields. This is especially true in Roma policies, where one of the main criticisms is that policies miss targets, even though the policy descriptions are at times more or less accurate and even partly evidence based.

Carol Bacchi's WPR (“What is the problem represented to be”) approach is based on the idea that “policies and policy proposals contain *implicit* representations of what is considered to be the 'problem'” (BACCHI 2012:21). What this approach focuses on is representations in addition to the explicit definitions found in policy documents, most typically in the actions proposed. Bacchi gives the following example from gender equality policies: “if forms of training are recommended to improve women’s status and promotion opportunities, the implication is that *their lack of training* is the ‘problem’, responsible for ‘holding them back’” (BACCHI 2012:21). Bacchi then goes on to recommend a set of questions to help the analysis of this implicit representation, most of which are centred round trying to discover the underlying premises and presuppositions, and what consequences these might have on the policy itself.

One especially important starting point in Bacchi's WPR approach is very similar to part of the conclusion our research is to arrive at, namely that policies are not the primary tools to solve

social problems. This is a statement that Bacchi highlights in her description of the WPR tool (BACCHI 2012:22), and we suppose, very few would disagree with it. Solving social problems can be carried out with the help of a number of other tools. Legislation for example, is much more effective than producing policy documents. Policies are very seldom legally binding, and even if they might have a strong influence on public opinion and even legislative work, they are certainly not aimed at actually solving a given problem. We have extended Bacchi's statement and we also say that the aim of policies is not *primarily* to solve social problems. This statement follows from our own analysis, although Bacchi also seems to agree when she says that policies, rather than solving problems, "produce problems with particular meanings". What she means by "producing problems" should be understood in the policy analysis terminology, i.e. that policies construct or define problems. Whether this applies to policies in general or not is a question that needs further research, but it definitely seems to be the case with Roma inclusion policies. What we want to test is this hypothesis: one main role that policies play is interpretations, framing and problem definitions. We are going to analyse this in much more detail in the following chapters. For now, it is important to remember that the major criticism related to Roma policies is that even if the descriptions of the general situation and the starting positions are satisfactory, the actual recommendations for action and the action plans themselves may not be in line with this.

Bacchi emphasizes that the implicitness mentioned above should be understood in its original sense. The goal of a WPR analysis is not (necessarily) to discover hidden agendas or behind the scenes workings by policymakers. These may not be present at all as far as the motive is concerned, but some intentions or presuppositions may be at work anyway. This is where the image, described above in the analysis of social constructions, play a crucial role. Creating this image, as we have seen, is not only happening in the public (the press, films and television etc.), but is often carried out in policies as well. Whether this image construction is deliberate or not, however interesting the question, may not have a strong influence on the outcome. In the current research, we are not undertaking the task of finding an answer to this. What we would like to discover, however, is to what extent this image construction plays a role in Roma education policies and how we can describe the process. Describing the representation itself is an obvious task of our research. As suggested by the WPR tool recommendations, a further goal is to find the answers to a set of questions recommended by BACCHI (2012). How has this representation of the problem come about? What are some of the underlying premises behind these representations? What are the gaps and limitations in this representation of the problems? And also: what does this all lead the policy to?

4 An overview of the problems with Roma policies

4.1 Introduction

Before we move on to our main field of investigation, we believe it is useful to include an overview of the main problems that are most often mentioned in connection with Roma inclusion policies. On the one hand, we will be using these as reference points in our analysis, but even more importantly, they will also serve as starting points in our main argumentation, as stated above.

Above, we have described the main problem: Roma policies do not yield results. The next logical question to ask is what makes them fail and what could be done to improve the efficiency of these policies. One way of answering the question is looking at existing analyses and listing the main points of criticism.

Our research is not aiming to analyse, let alone evaluate, concrete strategy elements from a practitioner's point of view. We are not even analysing the particular problems that evaluations revealed, so this chapter is going to be a simple overview of these problematic points. As we have said, they serve the purpose of reference points in our actual analysis concerning framing and social constructions that appear in policies. In this role, however, they will be very important, that's why we have included them as a separate chapter. As an example, we are not dealing with questions why the lack of data is a major problem and we are not offering solutions to address this problem – this is a task that a large number of publications have already addressed. We only use the results of these evaluations in our analysis of framing and social constructions.

In the rest of this chapter, we will collect the most often mentioned points of criticism found in various sources that evaluated Roma integration policies. Among the sources, there are international and intergovernmental organisations, NGOs, and publications by individual researchers.

Although in this research we are focusing on education, in this chapter we must look at reviews of Roma inclusion policies in general. Firstly, because in what follows, we need to operate with more generic indicators, and secondly, because it is neither practical nor feasible to separate points only relevant to education from the rest of the policies.

4.2 Overview and general criticism

“Devastating” is perhaps the word that best describes the general criticism towards Roma integration policies if we look at reviews and reports that are not linked to (commissioned by or carried out by) governments themselves. Academic papers may use a much more sophisticated way of expressing a very similar conclusion, but the results remain largely the same. The Open Society Foundations examined the 2011 Roma integration strategies prepared by countries that were founding members of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, a project whose main goals and guidelines were almost identical with those of the 2011 EC Framework. The results of their analyses made them use harsh words that are rarely found in such documents: “The NRIS¹⁸ submitted to the Commission can only be regarded as first drafts, as work in progress. The documents are replete with weaknesses already evident in the Decade NAPs¹⁹” (OSF 2012:2). The European Commission, in its 2012 evaluation, calls the strategies “a first step”, which, considering that 2011 was far from being the beginning of Roma policy work in most of the countries, seems just a diplomatic version of the same criticism that the OSF was not shy to express in more ordinary words. The furthest that evaluations may go in describing positive aspects is saying that there is “some development” in “some fields”. The European Roma Policy Coalition, an umbrella organisation with more than ten member organisations, including large institutions like the Open Society Foundations and Amnesty International, published a 66-page document with the findings of their evaluations, listing numerous problems and recommendations. The document has one small paragraph at the end, which includes what could be regarded as a general positive remark: “some good practices have emerged in this initial stage of implementation of the European Framework. For instance, the Spanish NRIS was rated positively by the ERPC”. (ERPC 2012:59).

The overall evaluations of Roma policies, including but not limited to the 2011 documents, is generally extremely negative, regardless of the evaluator. We were unable to find an evaluation which was satisfied with the overall policy/strategy, or even one according to which most of the policy examined was well conceived and would only need *some* modifications. Evidently, we did not include governmental self-evaluations here: they are always positive, and very rarely do they include even problematic points and instead focus on what that they regard positive results (but which are sometimes deemed discriminatory by external evaluations²⁰). This trend

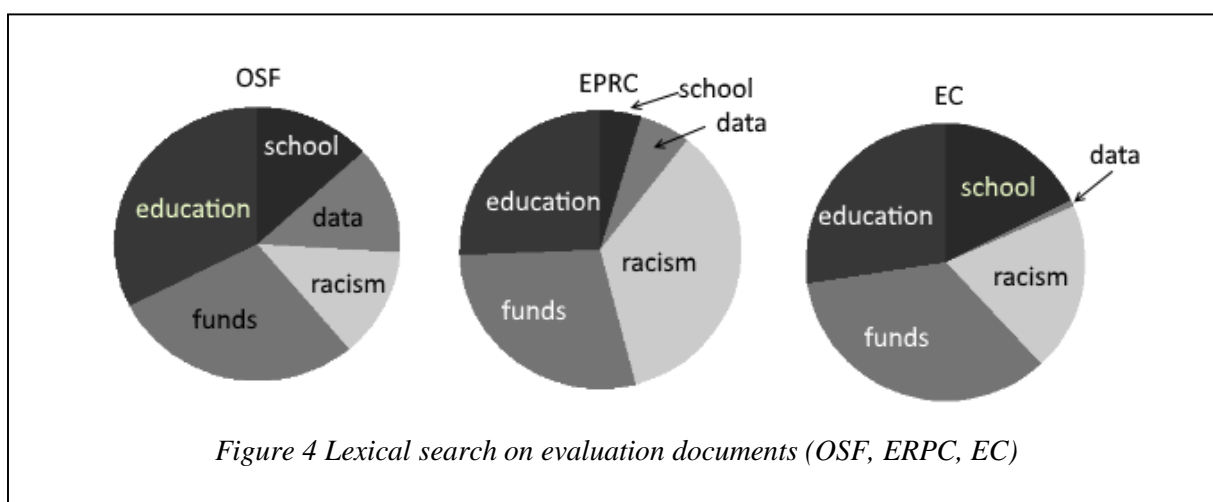
¹⁸ National Roma Integration Strategies

¹⁹ National Action Plans (prepared and submitted within the Decade of Roma Inclusion)

²⁰ See for example the Hungarian evaluation from 2014, which regards community work as a positive

is so strong that we must simply disqualify government self-evaluations and regard them entirely irrelevant²¹.

In the following points, we are going to look at concrete points of criticism most often found in evaluations of Roma integration strategies. Figure 4 shows the results of a simple lexical search on the documents of three important evaluations prepared by the Open Society Foundations (OSF), the European Roma Policy Coalition (ERPC) and the European Commission (EC). It is clear that funding and budgeting, together with racism and discrimination are central topics in evaluations of Roma policies. For the purpose of comparison, we included “education” and “school” – which, as expected, obviously also play a central role in evaluations and reviews. Surprisingly though, in some of the evaluations, they are overshadowed by the topics of racism/discrimination or funds and budgeting. The problem of data, although very often mentioned by practitioners and analysts, does not constitute a large section of the pie. We must emphasize, that this simple lexical search is not meant to reveal how certain points are highlighted in the evaluations or what weight they are given in the actual analyses. The numbers, however, may still reveal a lot about some of the topics we have selected. The OSF document is 75 pages long, and contains 188 occurrences of the words budget/funds, 84 occurrences of racism/discrimination – that is, more than one instance per page. The 66-page ERPC document contains 158 occurrences of racism/discrimination and 127 occurrences of budget/funds. For a comparison with other topics: the EC document contains 39 occurrences of “education” and 49 occurrences for budget/funds.



tool, while all reviewers and analysts have criticized it as discriminatory and harmful.

²¹ We only exclude them from the evaluations, but they may be important to look at later in our analysis, especially because we are dealing with intentions and constructions in policies. See later chapters about Problem Definitions and the Conclusions.

4.3 Racism and discrimination

One of the most serious and most often expressed criticisms is that policies do not address racism and discrimination in Roma policies in an efficient way. This is regarded an acute problem which can hardly be new to policymakers either. It has been repeated over and over again by practically all external evaluations for decades now, which makes the work of policymakers even more subject to criticism. One of the latest EC evaluations at the time of writing in the field of Roma inclusion is an analysis of IPA²² projects, according to which “around 1% of all IPA I funds was allocated for Roma inclusion”, of which “less than 2% was allocated for anti-discrimination efforts” (EC 2015:10). But this one per cent still seems a very good ratio compared to the 2011 integration policy action plans.

Besides the budgeting problems and the ratios, the most serious criticism is that racism and discrimination are very rarely seen as a problem at all in Roma integration policies. KULLMANN ET AL. (2012) lists evaluation results for a number of countries, all of which contain problems in the field of fighting discrimination and racism. Even if racism, discrimination and anti-Roma attitudes are common in all of the countries, policies fail to either include plans to address the problem or even acknowledge that this problem exists.

We have no information about whether and how policymakers react to these criticisms, but policies themselves vary greatly with regard to how discrimination and racism appear in their problem descriptions. Some of them choose to emphasize that the basic problem is poverty, and their main goal is reducing poverty. Even if they mention discrimination, they may regard it as a *consequence* of poverty (HU-11). Others choose to entirely be silent about racism and discrimination, and yet others identify it as an existing problem, but fail to include anything in the action plans or recommendations that would address it.

Most evaluations claim that no Roma inclusion policy can be successful without targeting racism and discrimination. Looking at the problem from this point of view, the overall success of these policies is at a major risk already at this point.

²² Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance

4.4 The data problem

When it comes to quantitative indicators, Roma inclusion policies will have to fall back on estimates. No official data exist about the Roma in any of the countries under examination. This results in a situation that many would call absurd: governments are devising policies, planning projects and action plans targeting an ethnic minority group, about which there is no reliable data available. Policies and projects are working with estimates that have been proposed by various civil society organisations, researchers with various professional backgrounds and surveys with samples ranging from very small to considerably large. None of these data sources cover more than a fraction of the fields (from the numerous subfields of education through employment to health and beyond) necessary for a comprehensive policy. Many emphasize that besides targeting and planning problems, the lack of data also makes it impossible to carry out meaningful monitoring and evaluations. OSF (2010) offers a summary of the problems together with recommendations. The report questions if policymakers are at all able to devise effective policies and allocate resources without data.

The reason given for the lack of data is the existence of legislation that prohibits data collection on ethnicity. Some countries go as far as denying either the usefulness or the relevance of any discussion about ethnicities in their countries, France being one of the most infamous examples²³. Although countries tend to agree that disaggregated data is essential for the success of Roma policies (OSF 2010:9), they are reluctant to change this situation. Some of the analysts suggest that governments misunderstand and/or misinterpret obligations stemming from data protection laws. They claim that collecting ethnicity related data would be possible without compromising the use of sensitive data (OSF 2010:12). It seems that, however hard some of the NGOs and academics try to “demystify data protection laws” (OSF 2010), governments are not listening: nothing has changed in this regard since the end of the 1990s, when civil society organisations first started to draw attention to this basic problem in Roma policies.

4.5 Budgeting problems

Besides tackling discrimination and racism and the data problem, budgeting is the third most often mentioned problematic area in connection with Roma policies (see the results of the

²³ Although this, interestingly enough, did not stop French PMs from talking about *Roma* people rather than *Romanian or Bulgarian citizens* when a large number of people, all of them EU citizens, were forced to leave (some say deported from) France.

lexical analysis in Figure 4 above). One EC evaluation directly links budgeting to member states' political will to address Roma exclusion: "In order to ensure the sustainable implementation of their Roma inclusion strategies, Member States should show a clear commitment to securing their financing up to 2020, *thereby reflecting their political will* to address Roma exclusion" (EC 2012:15, emphasis added).

The major problems in this field include vague or even non-existent budgeting plans, uncertainty regarding the financial sources or including figures that do not match the given programming task or action. One common problem is not specifying which measures will be covered by EU funds and which ones will be covered by national financial resources (ERPC 2012). All external evaluations have found problems with most of the Roma policies, criticism ranging from "inadequate" and "unclear" to "no funding". One evaluation from 2013 finds that none of the strategies examined meet requirements in budgeting, with the Romanian strategy being the worst, which "does not meet the standard of government strategies" (KULLMANN ET AL 2013:28). Although with less harsh words used, another analysis reaches similar conclusions about the Romanian policy: "The Strategy has no progress indicators and the budgetary indications are very general (e.g. structural funds, local budget, and other sources)" (ERPC 2012:19).

In conclusion, even if policies should contain action plans that could be regarded relevant and effective (which is unfortunately not the case), with no relevant and reliable budget figures, they can hardly be regarded serious.

4.6 EU funding problems

The Open Society Foundations and the European Commission have repeatedly highlighted the problem of funding in their analyses, with the OSF even setting up a separate organisation to help improve the situation²⁴. Although EU funds are readily available, they are hardly used effectively for Roma inclusion by individual countries, even if the EC has made it clear several times that they expect member states to invest in Roma inclusion using various EU funds. According to the OSF analysis, part of the problem is "a lack of know-how, [...] weak inclusion strategies and bottlenecks at national regional and local levels" (OSF 2012:3). The OSF review underlines the lack of a strategic approach in policies for using funds, while other reviews draw

²⁴ Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma (MtM). See their website at:

<https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/about/programs/making-most-eu-funds-roma>

attention to the unsatisfactory structure of programmes at the local level, the result of which is that the target group (the Roma) do not benefit from the programmes as much as they could. The Decade evaluation pointed out practical barriers, one of which was that “over-complicated processes preclude most Romani organisations from accessing EU funds” and that “the average size of grants is too large for grass-roots organisations” (KULLMANN ET AL 2013:16).

EU funds are mentioned in the budget of action plans, but they are not allocated in a clear way, and one of the most important issues is whether they are able to reach the target population or not (see the next point).

4.7 Targeting problems

Targeting problems are evidently closely related to other problems in policies, most importantly the problem of data, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation. The main consequence of all these is that very often, policies may not reach Roma populations in an efficient way. The State Audit Office of Hungary in its comprehensive report and analysis emphasizes that the lack of objective data only makes it possible to use estimates (ÁSZ 2008:5), which makes evaluations extremely difficult. This, as we have seen above, is far from being a unique criticism. A new aspect that the Audit Office report offers, however, is a very important point, sometimes overlooked in other evaluations: besides the lack of data, the *vagueness* of targeting is also responsible for the lack of objective and clear monitoring and evaluation. The question whether Roma policies should pursue an ethnic or a socio-economic approach has been discussed in separate analyses both in academia and in advocacy work, but no definitive conclusion has been reached. The ÁSZ report claims that the desired balance between the two approaches has not been achieved in any of the government approaches. In recent development plans in Hungary, the Roma appear as a target group, but only as “disadvantaged groups including Roma”, almost always together with women and people living with disabilities (ÁSZ 2008:11). This type of targeting is far from being unique to Hungary. Several new Roma policies have been prepared since the publication of the ÁSZ report, yet, none of them used any of the recommendations put forward in the report.

Policymakers sometimes explain their approach of not exclusively targeting the Roma by referring to the 10 common basic principles (COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION 2009), which is also recommended by the EU Framework. According to this, national strategies should use “explicit but not exclusive targeting”. This is a very serious problem that we will discuss in

Chapter 5.1 below.

The consequence of non-specific or vague targeting is that policies whose main aim is the inclusion of Roma may not reach the Roma themselves. In any case, with the other problems present, there is no objective way of evaluating how policies reach their target group, most importantly because of a problem with evaluations themselves.

4.8 Lack of Indicators, monitoring and evaluations

The lack of reliable data, and the unwillingness of governments to collect disaggregated data related provides explanation for this problem area: policies obviously lack clear indicators if there are no data to support them (OSF 2010). This, in turn, makes it extremely difficult to monitor implementation and to carry out objective evaluations. It is not surprising then, that policies do not usually include feasible plans for monitoring and evaluation. The Civil Society Monitoring Report claims that, in some countries, there is not even “an evidence of intent” to create a robust monitoring and evaluation mechanism (KULLMANN ET AL 2013:33), which certainly goes beyond the objective barriers of the lack of data.

The problem, however, is that this way, policies may, and do, repeat earlier mistakes and failures. We should add, that on top of all these problems, policymakers do not seem intent on using even the results of external evaluations carried out by independent researchers (NGOs, think tanks and other organisations). It seems as if there were two separate worlds side by side, without contact: that of policymakers and that of civil society and academia. The lack of cooperation between governments and civil society is indeed often mentioned as a problem area in evaluations of policies.

4.9 What next?

The problems described above are far from being new. Indeed, they have been repeated for decades now, with no success whatsoever: they invariably fall on deaf ears, with governments routinely and completely ignoring them as if they did not exist at all. Not only are the recommendations not implemented in the next round of policy work, but even the arguments remain unanswered by governments. What can be done then?

There is one highly important point that we would like to repeat here, already made clear above

in the introductory chapters. We don't believe that addressing the above technical problems would considerably change anything in the policy outcomes. The reason for this is that these problems are technical issues and they are unable to capture the whole idea behind governments' Roma policy efforts. Evaluations should primarily deal with the whole context, the "intentions", and only then should they go into details – if at all necessary after the context has been described and evaluated.

This is what we will do in the next chapters: look at what is really happening in Roma education policies. After we have done this investigation, we hope we will be able to demonstrate that these technical problems are logically present. They are a symptom, a consequence, and not the cause.

We now invite the Reader to join us in discovering what we believe is the real cause of the above mentioned symptoms.

5 Defining the target group

5.1 A foreword to targeting: universalism, targeting and something in between

Choosing the type of targeting (targeting now used in the non-technical sense of the word) is obviously one of the most important issues in public policies. In the technical sense, policies may follow a universalistic approach or use targeting proper. The former, as the name implies, uses a universalistic method, where the target group includes the whole society or at least a larger part of it, while with targeting, the policy is directed towards a specific, well-defined group.

The debate about universalism versus targeting seems to have largely concluded and today, social policies use at least some kind of targeting (for a discussion see MKANDAWIRE 2005) although there is some discussion still going on (HORTON 2011). In the case of minority policies (irrespective of the aspect they aim to deal with from human rights to employment or education), targeting seems to be the exclusive method, although it is not uncommon to find references to universalistic considerations. Almost all of the 2011 Roma policies include references to legislation that covers all citizens of the given country, rightly pointing out that the Roma, like any other citizens, are already covered by the general protection against exclusion and discrimination of all kinds.

This, however, may eventually turn out to be a trap, and it is closely related to both the question of universalism versus targeting and the rationale for, or simply the existence of, minority policies. All countries examined in our research have some kind of high level legislation that prohibits *any kind of* discrimination or unjust treatment in *any possible way* in *all fields* of life, for *all people*. This is a universal approach. However, minority policies are precisely prepared because there is a problem with the implementation of these universal laws and policies, these high level policies and legislations have failed. It seems that universalism is in trouble. What is problematic is obviously implementation: it is not uncommon for dictatorships to have very similar human rights declarations in high level legally binding documents, most often in their constitutions. Only for the system to ignore them completely.

The question of universalism or targeting has an important role to play in defining the target group of Roma policies, too. This is what various NGOs and lobby groups have realised when the so-called “10 Common Basic Principles of Roma Inclusion” was prepared (COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION 2009). One very often cited point is Principle 2, “Explicit but not exclusive targeting”. The advice given is to adopt a combination of universalism and targeting. According to the document, this approach will “go beyond this debate” by “focusing on Roma people as a target group without excluding others who live under similar socio-economic conditions. Policies and projects should be geared towards ‘vulnerable groups’, ‘groups at the margins of the labour market’, ‘disadvantaged groups’, or ‘groups living in deprived areas’, etc. with a clear mention that these groups include the Roma”. The intention of the authors – though not explicitly explained in the document – seems to be in connection with mainstreaming rather than solving the “problem” of targeting vs. universalism. In the unfortunately very brief description, the document emphasises the need to avoid “separating Roma-focused interventions from broader policy initiatives”, which, in itself, is a goal to be welcomed, but the authors should have realized that it has nothing to do with universalism versus targeting. However, the principle does not seem to be well founded and contains some serious logical mistakes as well.

The first (logical) problem is that using targeting rather than universalism does not necessarily mean that the policy will be separated from the mainstream. Such separation may be caused by a number of factors including considerations in connection with political gains, but using targeted policies cannot be a reason in itself. Likewise, using a universalistic approach does not lead to mainstreaming in itself. It is perfectly possible to construct a universalistic Roma policy which is light years away from mainstream policies. Indeed, this is exactly what is happening

in a number of countries, Hungary being perhaps the most blatant example, with most evaluations criticising the country for implementing mainstream policies that clearly go against the goals put forward in its Roma integration strategy (OSF 2012, ERPC 2012). In conclusion: mainstreaming policies have nothing to do with universalism versus targeting.

Another important circumstance that seems to be overlooked is that this mixed approach recommended by the Principles is still targeted rather than universalistic. It is still a Roma policy separate from mainstream education, employment or other policies, not only in its name, but also in its contents. The problem description is not usually dealing with “vulnerable groups” or “groups at the margins of the labour market”, but rather the Roma. The action plans contain items most of which clearly target Roma people and not the unemployed or people with a low level of education.

Another equally important problem with Principle 2 is that it entirely ignores what all research and analysis agrees on, that the main problem causing Roma exclusion is racism and discrimination, rather than social and economic circumstances, which should rather be regarded as consequences. Principle 2, however, recommends that Roma policies should be targeted at populations “who live under similar socio-economic conditions” rather than at populations who may be the targets of similar racist or ethnically based discrimination. Let us emphasize that we would strongly question the use or the well groundedness of such a recommendation, too. Here, we only want to point out the serious logical problem inherent in the recommendation – and thus, in most of the national policies as well.

There is another theoretical problem with this approach. The groups mentioned by the principle, i.e. those living “at the margins of the labour market” or “living in deprived areas” do include some of the Roma, but definitely not all of them. Discrimination, on the other hand, as we have seen from surveys, may affect Roma as an entire group, regardless of their financial, labour market or other conditions²⁵. A well devised Roma policy should aim to address all of the problems affecting all of the Roma. If it aims to address partial problems, it is then a partially

²⁵ One of the latest news reports appeared just weeks before the time of writing, of a clearly racist treatment of a Hungarian citizen by airport officials in Vienna who did not let the Roma woman board a plane to Toronto with no explanation. News sources reported that it was a Romani researcher on her way to Canada to conduct sociological research. Though she chose to withhold her identity to the press, it is highly unlikely that she belongs to any of the groups mentioned by the Basic Principles. She, however, does belong to the group which may suffer everyday discrimination and degrading treatment: the Roma people. One of the sources in English: <http://hungarianfreepress.com/2015/05/11/canadian-authorities-ban-hungarian-roma-researcher-from-boarding-flight-to-toronto/> (accessed September 2, 2015)

Roma policy.

Lastly, Principle 2 – perhaps unknowingly and unintentionally – offers a definition for Roma when it recommends that Roma policies should target groups who live under “*similar socio-economic conditions*” (emphasis is ours), which can only be interpreted that socio-economic deprivation is a defining characteristic feature of Roma people. The conceptual uncertainty is only increased when the principle advises that Roma policies should include in their targeting other “disadvantaged” and “vulnerable” groups. It should come as no surprise then that some of the national Roma policies indeed include, at least in their problem descriptions, children, women or young people leaving state care. Far be it from us to offer a joke in this essay, but we must seriously wonder if and when some later Roma policies will also be targeted at gay and lesbian people, single mothers, people leaving prison, disabled people or drug addicts. All of these groups are vulnerable, they may face serious challenges in the labour market or in various other areas of life. We should realize that this does not make them belong to the same group in all respects, especially from the point of view of a Roma inclusion policy. Were we to devise a labour market equality policy, there may be a possibility to include most or all of them, but that is already far beyond the scope of our topic.

Self-evident as it may be, after all of the above, it is perhaps not unnecessary to remind ourselves that a *Roma integration policy* is supposed to be a *Roma policy*. This automatically means that it is a targeted type of policy and the moment it becomes universalistic, it ceases to be a Roma policy. It is possible to devise a policy which utilizes both approaches, but there are guidelines that should be followed in order for the policy to be coherent and meaningful. First and foremost, the target group has to share some common characteristic features either in group definitions or regarding the challenges that they all face to more or less the same extent. This is not true in the case of Roma and women, Roma and children living in poverty or Roma and unemployed young people. There are certain problems that both groups face, but first of all, these problems may not be caused by the same factors, may not be of the same type and the same degree, and second, Roma people still have an additional problem which appears to be the *primary* reason for other challenges faced. It is not without reason after all, that numerous organisations, including EU bodies, are specifically requesting *Roma* policies from member states and not policies for vulnerable people²⁶.

A very serious danger that the Common Basic Principles is unwittingly creating is that the target

²⁶ Furthermore, there are other policies expected to target other specific vulnerable groups.

of Roma policies may be missed. Policies with uncertain, vague targeting are very likely to fail. And fail, Roma policies have.

One last remark will be central to supporting some of our conclusions in this thesis. Some analysts have suggested that some types of targeted policies may carry with themselves a certain danger. Tim Horton refers to studies of public attitudes when he claims that “while people are often supportive of policies that give more to those on lower incomes, they feel uneasy about programmes restricted only to those on low incomes” (HORTON 2011:106). Although Horton only looks at welfare policies, this also offers an important aspect for our own analysis. Descriptions in policies and publicly constructed images clearly suggest that low income is one of the most prominent (though not a defining!) characteristics of Roma. If HORTON (2011) is right, this means that while the public may be accepting towards policies that target a wide range of population segments, it may not view positively policies targeted towards the Roma only. This is in line with what the social construction of the target group approach tells us (see Chapter 3.3 above). Since the Roma image carries a rather negative value, policymakers may feel expected to create policies that do not directly and openly distribute benefits to them. One possible solution could be if the policy is not targeted solely towards the Roma. But it is important to see that this is a solution for gaining public support (or avoiding public rejection) and not necessarily a solution for supporting Roma inclusion. Let us not forget that governments are practically forced to construct Roma inclusion policies: not dealing with the topic is not an option. The only question that remains is *how* they should do it. Policymakers then end up with options regarding the content of these policies only, with targeting being one of the parameters to be set. This is where Principle 2, which requests that policies do not exclusively target the Roma, is actually beneficial for potential populist (or rather demagogue) political agendas. The price paid, on the other hand, is too high: it may well jeopardise precise targeting and eventually risk the success of policies. We strongly believe that Principle 2 itself is seriously misguided: it does not solve any of the problems that it is designed to solve (which is mainstreaming, we believe, contrary to what it claims), but it ignores the most important problem (discrimination and racism), and lastly, it potentially promotes non desirable political considerations.

5.2 Targeting the excluded

In 2008, a Hungarian pedagogical state institution published a fairy tale written by a prominent Hungarian Roma writer, which had already been published earlier as part of an official textbook

for the country's schools²⁷. In the story, a ladybird is excluded from the community of ladybirds because she has no spots. Feeling hopeless and disappointed, she finds her way to another community, where each and every member suffers from some kind of a physical deficiency. However, the ladybird meets a magician, who is able to put spots on her back. Now looking like her fellow ladybirds, she goes back to her old community, where she is happily greeted and accepted, and is even given an explanation why she was excluded: “how could we accept someone who is not like one of us”? But, fearing she might lose her spots and become excluded once again, the ladybird chooses to go back to the community of animals with physical deficiencies, where she feels home, and lives her life there happily ever after.

Fighting exclusion through targeting the excluded seems to be an automatic popular reaction, but it has an extremely negative consequence: it provides justification for the exclusion. Trying to change certain features of the excluded supposedly causing exclusion equals to acknowledging that the exclusion is not only understandable but fair, justifiable and correct. Unfortunately, this approach is not only found in popular, “instinctive” behaviour, but also in places where the general public may (and indeed is expected to) receive guidance or inspiration. The above fairy tale is one example for that.

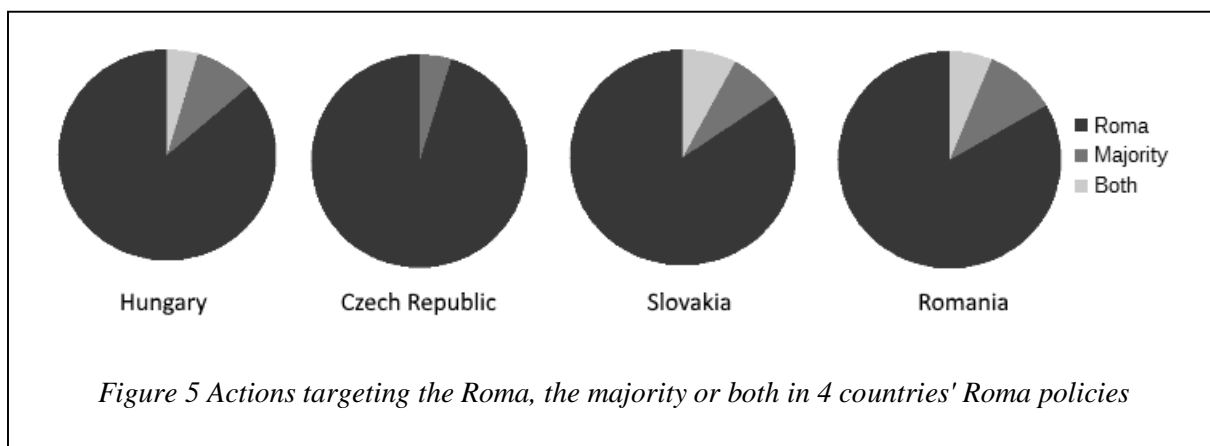
The Ugly Duckling by Andersen is another, globally known fairy tale, which, although less explicitly than the Hungarian fairy tale, also suggests that solving the problems of exclusion lies with the excluded finding a new community where he is not different from the rest of the group: it turns out that the abused and widely hated little duckling is actually a swan, and exclusion only ends when he leaves behind his entire former life and becomes an appreciated member of his own kind, entirely separated from his earlier community, into which he was born, but which excommunicated him because he was different.

What is the morale? Being different appears to be unacceptable and only leads to exclusion and hate. This hatred, it seems from the two stories, is natural and understandable: neither of the stories offer a solution where the majority is targeted, in both of them, the Freytagian dénouement comes when something drastic happens to the excluded himself. In other words: you can only be a full member of a community if you are not different from other members in any way. The solution provided by the Hungarian fairy tale (written with the aim of promoting

²⁷ Szécsi Magda: *A pettyetlen katica* (“The ladybird without spots”). For a comprehensive analysis of the tale from the point of view of Roma equality and inclusion, see BECK (2006). The author, Zoltán Beck was also the one who drew our attention to this fairy tale and its relevance to minority or Roma inclusion.

inclusion!) is to change yourself, even if it takes a magician, and even if your differences come from bodily features (note that the difference is physical in both tales). But even then, it is better to stick to your own kind, because later you might accidentally show your real self, which will cause problems again. Birds of a feather flock together. The majority community is not described in any negative way, there is no blame put on the excluding and hateful community. Even if the reader is expected to be sorry for the excluded member, he is definitely not expected to have negative feelings against the community or feel that the excluding community should behave in a different way. The excluded are in an unfortunate situation, but there is no one to blame, it is no one's fault. *C'est la vie* – we learn.

Roma inclusion policies have a lot in common with the fairy tales above: they mostly target the excluded, and it is a rare exception to find items in the action plans that target the majority population. Like in the fairy tales, there is no description of the excluding societies, let alone holding them responsible for their excluding behaviour. There is, however, a lot of detailed advice on how the excluded, i.e. Roma people, should change for success to arrive. In Figure 5, we have shown the ratio of education policy actions targeting the Roma, the majority or both in four national integration strategies from 2011. The charts show that the vast majority of the actions exclusively target the Roma only. This is far from being an exception, rather, this is the situation that we can find in most of the other action plans. Additionally, Figure 5 only shows the actions in the field of education, but other policy areas show a very similar picture.



Some national policies have a separate group of actions in the field of discrimination, but even in these sections, the majority of actions target the Roma themselves – an absurd situation in itself! One example is the Bulgarian policy, which includes a separate section on the “Rule of law and non-discrimination” (BG-11:23). How the “rule of law” finds its place to this section is surprising already, but the objectives at the beginning of the section make it explicit that, as part of the anti-discrimination strategy, they really want to protect “public order”, which has

especially bad connotations in connection to Roma, the so called “Roma criminality” being one of the most cherished expressions of racist groups and individuals²⁸. The goals, according to the policy paper are these: “Guaranteeing citizen rights, with an emphasis on the rights of women and children, protecting public order, prevention and combating any manifestations of intolerance and hate speech” (BG-11:23). The section lists 10 points, of which there is only one (!) which vaguely targets the majority, with the rather general aim of “Increasing institutional and public sensitivity and intolerance to discrimination and hate speech”. The remaining 9 points are either too vague to decide whether they could target the majority population (too), or they clearly target the Roma themselves, for example in “raising their culture” (*sic*) related to acquiring and keeping legal documents or “to improve parental care” among the Roma and defend the rights of children (supposedly, within the Roma families themselves). How all this is going to help the fight against discrimination and hate speech against Roma remains unclear, but if we compare this approach to the introductory notes about the fairy tales, we might suspect that it is trying to stop discrimination and hate speech through changing the excluded. The wording of these actions clearly blame the Roma themselves for some of the problems, but targeting the Roma is already a clear sign of an approach, where it is the Roma who need to change for results to be achieved. As far as the majority is concerned, they only wish to “increase their sensitivity”. This can also be understood as an attempt to frame the problem, whether intentional or not²⁹.

The Czech Republic strategy (CZ-11:61), on the other hand, sets a good example (at the level of written policy at least) in this respect: the policy document has a separate section dealing with fighting extremism (albeit not racism and discrimination in itself), where most of the actions proposed clearly target the majority population, among them teachers through trainings and students through education materials (this is not included in the pie chart in Figure 5 above, where we only examined education policy recommendations).

Policies also follow in the footsteps of the fairy tales above, when they tend to describe the situation of the excluded in details, focusing on their low level of educational achievements among others, but often fail to describe either the majority, or the majority's relationship to the excluded in much detail. With this approach, policies imply that the focus of action should be

²⁸ The Czech strategy is much clearer about it when it aims to reduce or eliminate crime *within* and *committed by* Roma communities (CZ-11:63). For a more complete discussion, see Chapter 5.4 below.

²⁹ We will see more examples and a more complete analysis of problem framing and problem definitions in the following chapter, as well as for blaming the victim.

the excluded groups rather than the majority.

Why does this create a problem? Let us examine a few examples.

When it comes to special schools, the focus is generally on how many Roma children attend such schools, sometimes comparing it to the ratio of non-Roma children in similar institutions, but they rarely include a complete description of the mechanisms for directing Roma children to special schools, or the reactions and evaluations that majority populations or educational and other institutional leaders give to this situation. With this, policies create an image where the problem is a given, but without reasons and causes described. The furthest that policies go in this matter is blaming the methodology and recommending changes to regulations regarding the mechanisms for evaluating children or redesigning the tests (SK-11:27), but there is no mention of discrimination playing a role, i.e. there is no mention of the responsibility of the majority. Academic research, on the other hand, describes a completely different picture emphasizing widespread discrimination in the educational system as the fundamental cause of the problem. An ERRC report from 2007 states for example that “Slovakia *has developed* a system of segregating Romani children in education the most conspicuous form of which is segregation in schools for children with developmental disabilities” (ERRC 2007b:13 – emphasis added). The Czech policy finds that the diagnostic tools used for directing children to special schools are not discriminative, nor are the specialists using these tools. What needs to be done is carrying out advisory work for the correct *interpretation* of the results (CZ-11:20), which is very similar to the Hungarian approach, which focuses on “procedure and professional requirement” rather than discriminatory practice (HU-11:38). Again, it is the circumstances and some methodological procedures that needs to be targeted, but not institutions or the majority. Other countries do not even mention special schools, although reports about special schools make it very clear that it is abundant at least and mainly in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania. The Hungarian policy mentions segregation several times throughout its strategy, but fails to link it to any kind of discrimination or racism and instead shamelessly claims that it is *caused by poverty* (HU-11:11), an absurdity both logically and empirically. Mentioning discrimination would inevitably create an image where the majority is at fault and thus, policies would need to be targeted at the majority, too. This is avoided through presenting a situation where the problem is simply “given” or caused by some external factors³⁰,

³⁰ For a detailed discussion about discrimination and how it is handled in Roma policies see Chapter 6.5 below.

which makes it possible for them to completely avoid responsibility.

Another field of targeting in Roma education policies is normally left out of policy analyses, but could prove highly important in achieving results: majority parents. Parents play an especially important role in educational processes, and this is something analysts, researchers and policies all realize, but the problem is that all of these actors usually concentrate on Roma parents –the excluded again. Researchers do realize though, that non-Roma parents also play an important role in, for example, decisions about school choice³¹, they have a major influence on children's attitudes both towards school in general and to the different actors in school life including peers and teachers. Some of the inclusion policies have included plans to target parents, but again, it is almost exclusively Roma parents who are targeted, parents of non-Roma children are very rarely in focus – with Romania being one exception, whose action plan for education includes trainings for “non-Roma teachers, non-Roma parents and students in the spirit of the respect for diversity, multiculturalism, prevention and fight against discrimination, knowledge of Roma culture and mentalities” (RO-11C), even though one might feel a little confused and uneasy about the mention of “Roma mentalities”. In the Hungarian strategy, parents are mentioned numerous times (64), but *none* of them target non-Roma parents. It is characteristic to target Roma parents with the aim of *making them interested* in their children's education, and to create “responsible parenting roles” (HU-11:71) or encourage Roma parents to “start enrolling their children in kindergarten” (HU-11:74), which is clearly a framing attempt to blame the Roma again, claiming that Roma parents are not interested in their children's education, they are irresponsible parents or that they do not enrol their children to kindergarten (despite all possibilities available to them). The Czech strategy uses a very similar approach and intends to “work on the attitudes of the parents of disadvantaged children and increase their awareness of the positive impact of their children's attendance in early care on their educational achievement” (CZ-11:19). In summary, a large part of the problem, according to these policy sections, is that Roma parents are not fulfilling their roles as caring and responsible parents. This is of course very different from the conclusion that we can find in any of the academic research results or NGO analyses, which are available for policy developers too. One conclusion that seems plausible is that these approaches prevalent in policies serve the purpose of problem redefinitions and problem framing in a way that is very similar to what far-right

³¹ White flight is one of the most blatant examples of this, for a discussion, see among others EC (2014:35-38)

racist propaganda claims about the Roma³².

No matter what system we are dealing with, where there is a problem in contacts or where there are clashes (mismatches, irregularities or barriers – the term will depend on the system itself) in contacts between parts, it should logically be highly important to examine the nature of the contact itself, and target this “interface” both in the investigation of the problem and in trying to find solutions to it. This is true in the case of social systems as well. In Roma-related issues, it is clearly the case of “interface problems”: there is a segment of society, which is a subset of the whole, but which is not integrated into the whole system. Strictly logically speaking, there are a number of ways to account for this state of affairs, including the subset's unwillingness and the superset's reluctance to accept the connection and the relationship. In both cases, however, we should focus our attention on the relationship between the parties. This is very rarely seen in Roma inclusion policies. In Figure 5 above, this would be covered by actions targeted at Roma *and* the majority population at the same time. The proportion of such actions is very low in all Roma integration policies. In the Romanian strategy, 3 out of 48, in Hungary 1 out of 22, in Slovakia 2 out of 26 actions target both Roma and the majority. Such actions typically include trainings for education specialist (teachers, kindergarten teachers, social workers etc.) with the purpose of making them trained in multicultural approaches to education, or developing teaching materials and providing classes for all students about Roma culture and history.

Targeting the excluded suggests that it is the excluded who should change in order to be accepted, included and integrated. This also means, that what can and should be done is the task of the excluded, suggesting that it is actually the fault of the excluded that they are not accepted in and by the society. But a word of caution must be added here: it is not simply a game of who is at fault and who is to blame. That would be a moralistic question, whether someone is rightly or wrongly blamed for a situation. What is at stake here is the very success of Roma inclusion policies. Since targeting is central to all policies in achieving results, missing the target may well be a lethal mistake.

5.3 Targeting within the educational environment

In the previous point, we looked at targeting in a more general way, from the point of view of

³² More about problem definitions and framing in the next chapter.

target populations, as defined by the theory of social construction of target populations. It is, however, also important to examine how targeting works in the educational environment itself, because it could reveal a number of important points all of which may have a strong influence on the overall success of these policies, now making use of an educational aspect rather than a policy related or social point of view.

The educational environment can be analysed from a number of different perspectives. We will be using a structure which looks at education from an organisational point of view, because this will make it possible for us to examine targeting in policies. In other words, the components of the educational environment described here are the ones that are most likely to appear in educational policies, since they are the ones that are easiest to identify and target through policy actions.

We have constructed the system described here (see Figure 6) with the usual formal school system in mind that is most often found in European countries today. We mainly look at formal education up to secondary levels, but higher education levels easily fit the system too. In this system, the formal educational environment includes three tiers: participants, tools and framework. Participants include receiving parties (students, pupils, trainees etc.), educators or teachers, parents, and local communities. One part is what would be described as the consumer side in a business environment, while the other could be seen as the provider side. Together, they are the actual participants of the system, who are expected to actively take part in the day-to-day activities of the school. The list is not exhaustive. This group may include other participants in some locations, including school mediators or social workers. The second tier is labelled tools, or it could be called the infrastructural setting. This includes material and non-material components, mainly teaching materials, curricula, methodological resources on the one hand, and the actual physical environment on the other hand, from classroom equipment and other school facilities to transport provisions. These together make up the facilities that are designed to support the actual educational activities on both the providing and the receiving side. The third tier is the framework for educational activities, or the institutional setting. This includes local, regional and higher levels of legislation, as well as the country's general legal environment that has an influence on education, but also school regulations, school management solutions and other organisational aspects.

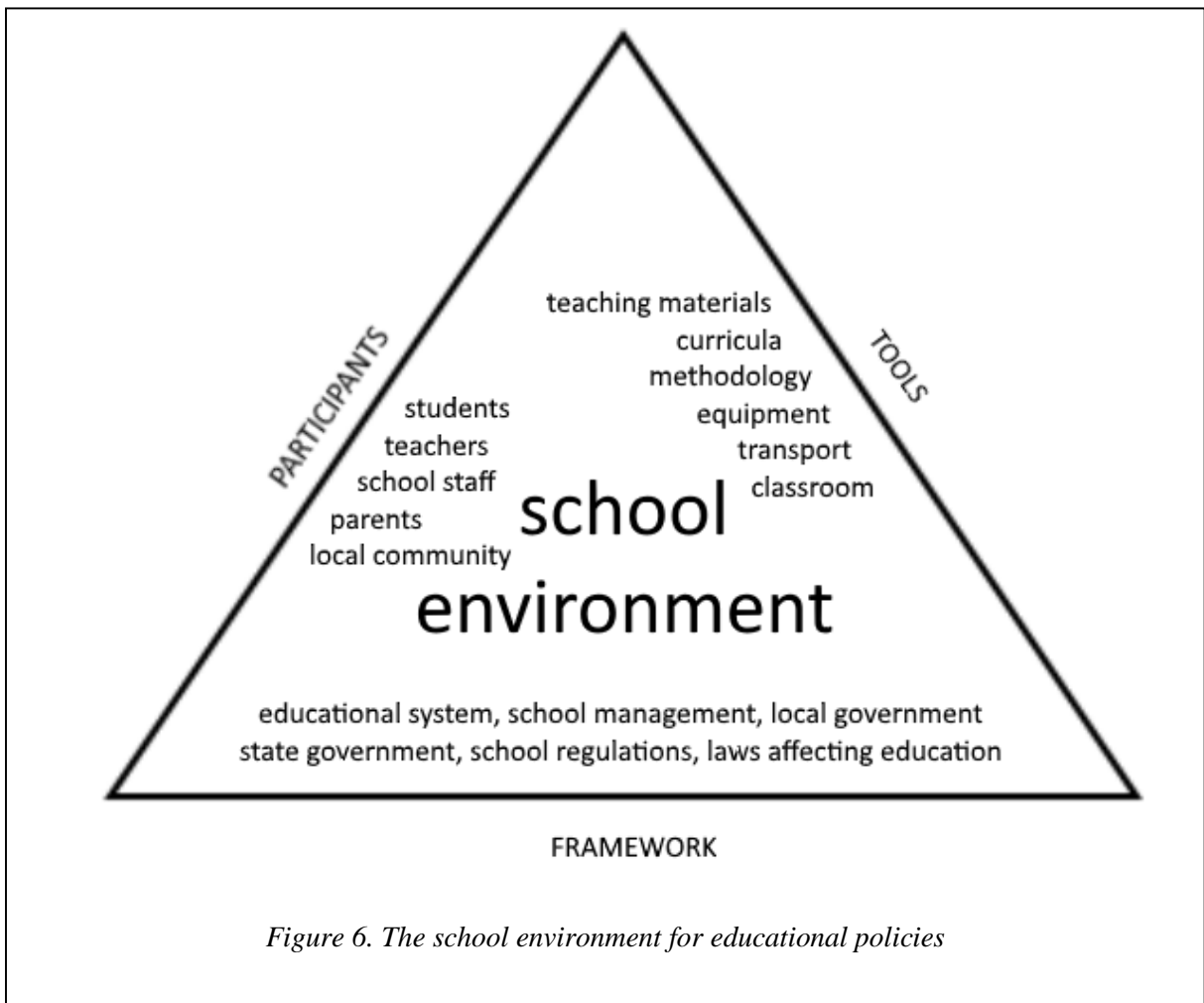


Figure 6. The school environment for educational policies

The educational environment is obviously not a system built up of separate parts, this is what the chart is meant to represent: what is inside the triangle is one, practically indivisible system, albeit with different modules that can be identified. This system is influenced by a number of factors originating from the outside, which may arrive from three angles. But once they become part of the system, they have an effect on the other “modules” and thus the whole system as well.

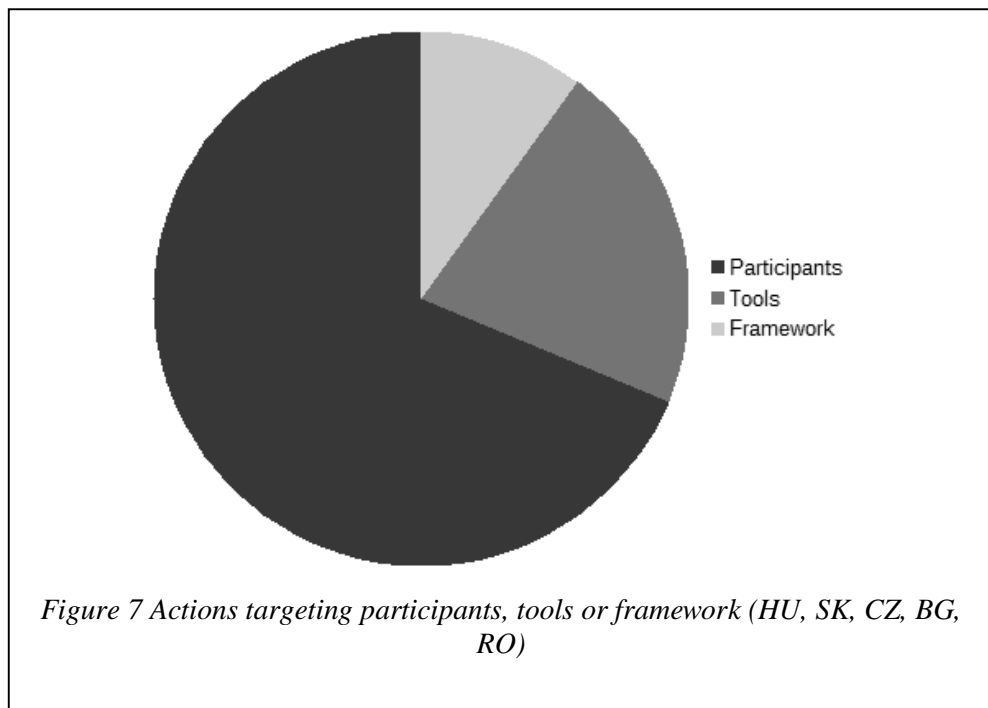
Our system shown in this triangular chart can also be interpreted as a kind of typology, especially when viewed in the frame of policy interventions. The policy tools used for the three different “sides” may differ considerably and require different theoretical, organisational and practical solutions. However, since they are not separate modules, policy interventions in any one of them may, and very often do, require interventions in one or both of the other two. For example, targeting participants seems to be a straightforward matter, but in a comprehensive approach, it cannot be carried out separately from the other two. Students’ school attendance, for example, is most often affected by the tools module, including but not limited to transport facilities. Targeting teachers through in-service trainings needs methodological background,

and possibly some arrangements in the framework module, too. Interventions in the framework module (modifications in the legal background, including the ban on segregation) will need comprehensive interventions on the participant side (teachers, school management, local communities). Consequently, it is expected, that targeting one side only will be an exception rather than the rule, if policies are to achieve tangible results.

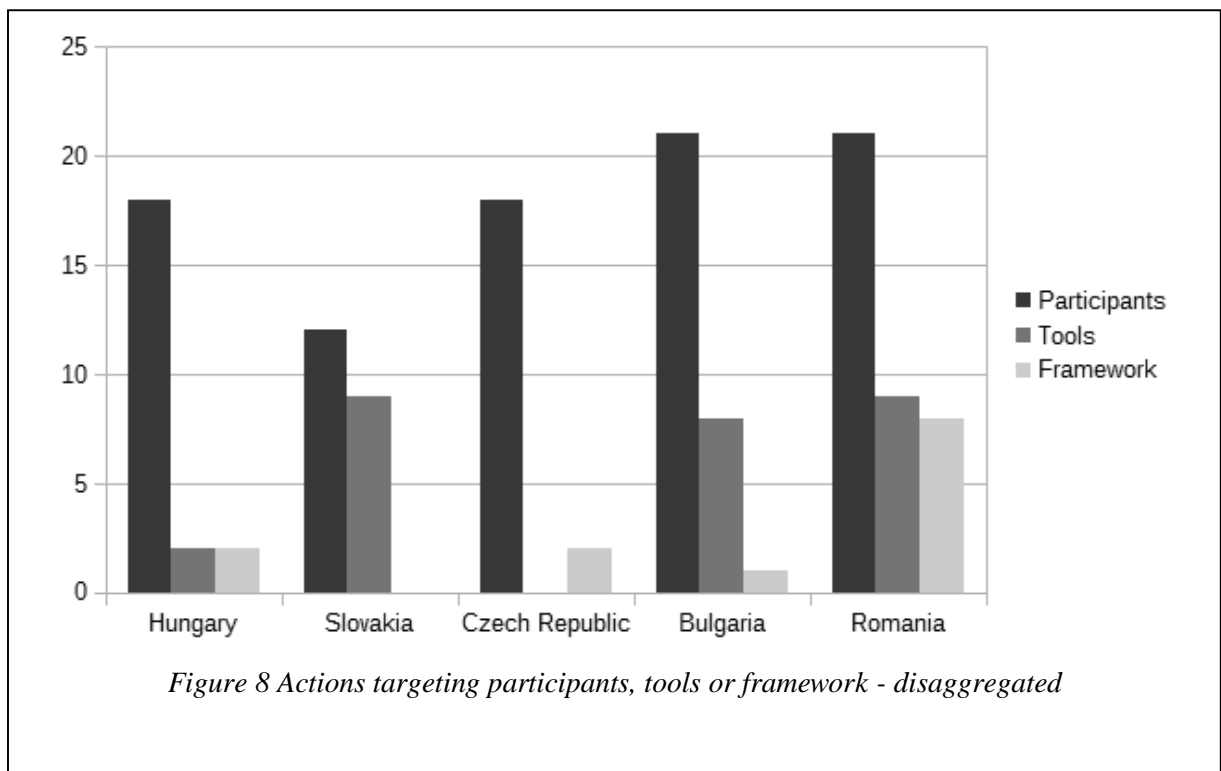
As we have mentioned, targeting one side of the triangle may often have an influence on some elements in other tiers. For example, if a policy intervention targets the curriculum (with, perhaps, including Roma culture), it will certainly have an effect on students and teachers as well, and perhaps other participants too. Such a detailed analysis, however, is not central to our research, since we are mainly interested in policy actions and the educational environment, rather than the inner workings of the system. Such an analysis could be one possible topic of further research in this field.

Policies now have to decide which sides of the triangle they want to focus on. This should depend on where they identify the most acute problems in the system and where they think the most effective influence is expected to come from. Problems in the system are most often complex and it is highly unlikely that targeting one side only will be able to solve them. Let us now examine which sides Roma education policies target. We have examined the action plans of the 2011 inclusion strategies of five countries with the largest Roma populations. Where the action plan was missing, we have used the action plan prepared within the Decade of Roma Inclusion. Figure 7 shows the overall results for five countries (Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Romania). This shows that the vast majority of actions target the participants followed by tools, and only a very small proportion of actions are directed towards the framework. Actions targeting participants typically include second chance programmes, extra-curricular activities, scholarships, mentoring programmes, counselling, on the job trainings for teachers about inclusive education, special places for Roma students at secondary and higher education institutions (positive discrimination), summer schools or Roma language classes. Actions targeting the tools tier include providing school meals, developing (or supporting the development of) Romani language teaching, incorporating information about Roma culture in educational materials, revising tests for school competency, or developing other teaching materials. The Framework tier is targeted by actions such as proposals for school advisory centres in connection with diagnosing children with special needs, revising the contents and requirements of teacher training, developing desegregation plans, training school inspectors and school managements with a focus on inclusive education and desegregation, or

making kindergarten education compulsory.



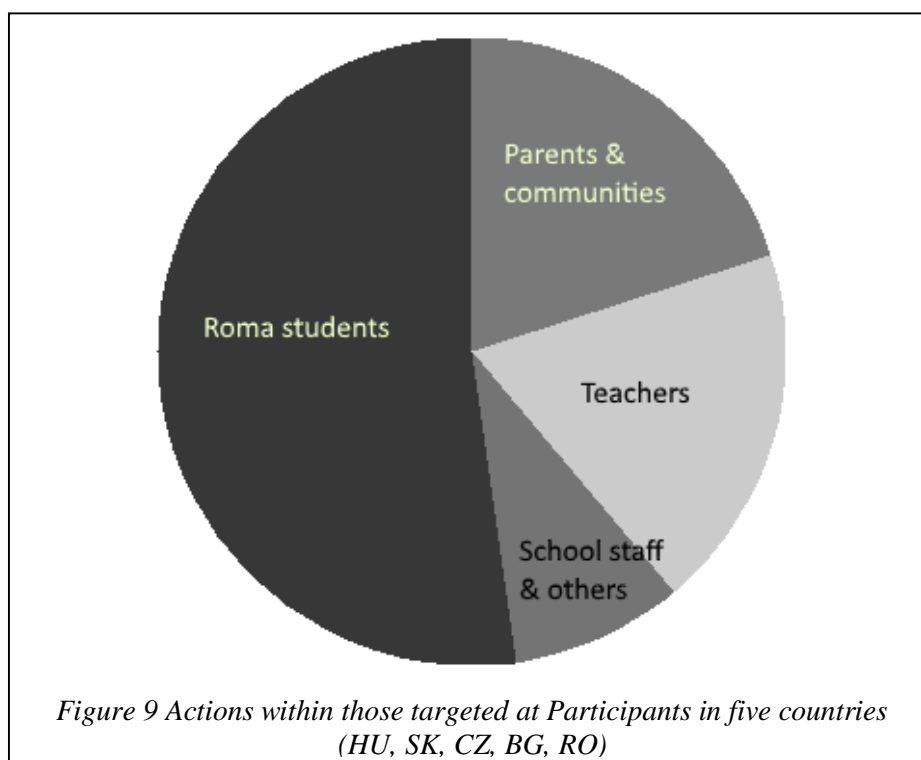
If we look at the detailed diagram, we can see that although there is a slight difference between individual countries, the situation is very similar in all of them.



Although there is a significant difference in the ratio of actions targeted towards tools or

framework, it is true for all Roma inclusion strategies that they focus their attention on participants. This in itself reveals a lot about the policymakers' approach. Since the main focus of intervention is on participants, we must conclude that the cause of the problems will also be found here. Only in the Romanian strategy do we find a noticeable amount of attention to framework. This is the tier that contains legal and organisational aspects. If we look at academic results and professional publications, we find that discrimination, racism and segregation are most often mentioned as the main cause of many other problems in education. This would suggest that policies would need to focus a considerable part of their attention to systemic aspects, which is part of the framework tier in this system. Segregation, one of the most acute problems in Roma education, is not likely to be successfully addressed through targeting the participants, it is part of the framework tier.

There is still a possibility that discrimination (although not segregation) could be addressed this way, for example targeting the majority students, teachers or the majority community on the participants tier. But the results show a different picture again.



In Figure 9 we have only looked at actions that target participants, for all five countries. Out of the 90 actions, 47 or 52% target Roma students themselves, with the ratio approximately the same in each of the country strategies examined. The actions themselves show great variation, ranging from organising contests (Romania) and even sports activities (Hungary) through

scholarships and other financial benefits (Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria) to providing extra classes or extra-curricular activities to Roma students (almost all strategies). What types of interventions or concrete actions are proposed and planned will be of central importance later in Chapter 6 (Defining the Problem). What is more important here is that the vast majority of actions are clearly not appropriate for addressing the most pressing issues that have been identified either in Roma policies themselves or in other, widely available sources, and this can already be seen in the targeting approach of these policies.

For the purposes of the current research, we must emphasize that with this type of targeting, policies are carrying out problem framing and construction. At this point, we haven't looked at what the problem is represented to be, but it is already evident where policies see (or want us to see) the problem – after all, targeting is mainly about the location of intervention. If activities are targeted at Roma students, then consequently the lion's share of the problems originate from Roma students themselves. If we look at the breakdown of data for the remaining 48% of actions, we find that parents (and communities) are also targeted. Almost all of these actions also target Roma³³, rather than majority communities and parents, again suggesting that at least a large part of the problem stems from the Roma themselves. Since, as we have noted, policymakers have easy access to all the academic research that provide hard evidence that the main problem is discrimination, segregation and racism and not Roma people's unwillingness, we are forced to conclude that the policymaker is intentionally choosing to completely change this picture and redefine the problem. We see this as part of the evidence that shows that Roma policies indeed deal with redefinitions, framing and reinterpretations rather than actually trying to address the problems that have long been revealed.

5.4 The Roma image

In 2014, the Royal Spanish Academy published a new edition of the Dictionary of the Spanish Language, the most emblematic publication of its kind all over the world. The entry for *gitano* (gypsy) now includes the synonym *trapacero* (swindler), which triggered a wide ranging protest among Roma organisations in Spain and beyond, prompting online campaigns with videos featuring Roma people announcing “*¡Yo no soy trapacero!*” (I am not a swindler).

³³ One exception could be a point in the Bulgarian strategy „Organizing seminars and other training forms for parents with the aim to overcome negative stereotypes and develop tolerant interrelations”, but it is not clear whether the action is targeting Roma or non-Roma parents or both.

Dictionaries should ideally reflect the actual language use. They are expected to provide authentic information about the use of lexical units of a given language, as used by the native speakers of the language. It is very uncommon to call for either political correctness or indeed, any other considerations when it comes to objective lexicography. It would indeed be similar to trying to kill the messenger. So if the researchers of the Royal Spanish Academy came to the scientific conclusion that the word *gitano* does have this very derogatory meaning in contemporary Spanish usage (we do not have information whether there was such research or not), we would have no reason to blame them for racism or discrimination. However, the dictionary in question is regarded authoritative both by the creators and by the general public, which creates an entirely different situation. Linguistics, like any other scientific discipline, ends where the question goes beyond what there is and starts to discuss questions about what there should be. An authoritative dictionary³⁴, even though we strongly think it is an absurd idea to have one, is necessarily dealing with questions of the latter type. In this respect, such dictionaries can well be compared to public policies: in both cases, the authors lay down recommendations on *what there should be*. Consequently, in both cases, public scrutiny is not only possible but desirable. “*Yo no soy trapacero*” is thus a response which is not only understandable, but necessary. After all, once the RAE dictionary is trying to create a “cultivated standard”, and once it is trying to influence language use, it could have been doing the opposite: deleting any, previously existing negative connotations from the entry for *gitano* (for example “*Que estafa u obra con engaño*”). This could have been interpreted as an attempt to positively shape the image of Roma through language use. They chose to act on the contrary³⁵.

Unlike dictionaries, policies are rather sophisticated systems from this point of view, and it could be much less straightforward to reveal what kind of Roma image they include or whether they try to shape an already existing image in any way. This is the question we will try to answer in this chapter.

Image, as we have seen in Chapter 3.3 above, is highly important in policy framing and

³⁴ The authors of the dictionary explain that language needs a cultivated standard: “Se construye esta obra pensando que una lengua necesita contar con una norma culta”. Source: <http://www.rae.es/recursos/diccionarios/diccionarios-antiores-1726-1996/diccionario-de-autoridades> Last accessed 07 August 2015

³⁵ Meanwhile, the RAE has listened to some of these voices and modified the entry in the online version of the dictionary in late 2015. It added the qualifying note „como ofensivo o discriminatorio” after the item „trapacero”, which didn’t seem to have pleased most of the Roma protesters, who insist that this part of the entry should entirely be deleted.

targeting. Indeed, it is one of the two dimensions that the social construction approach is relying on (the other being power) for analysing and accounting for the policy approach and the ways and patterns of distributing burdens and benefits to target populations. Negatively constructed groups will score low and will get burdens rather than advantages, unless they possess power, which if present, will drive decision makers to distribute benefits to this group in a covert way. Images, however, are not static. There may exist a certain type of image among the public, but there may be attempts to try to change this image. Policies especially have the power to have an influence on image construction. One important question in this respect is whether there is such an attempt in policies to influence the already existing Roma image.

It is one of the most often repeated commonplaces, and one rightly feels that it needs no scientific research to prove, that the Roma have an extremely negative image in public discourses throughout the continent. But for the sake of scientific objectivity, there is a generous amount of research, which does indeed demonstrate the validity of this statement (see e.g. MESSING 2008, OLOMOOFE 2008). Printed and electronic media, TV and radio channels, whether private or public, online communities, websites and various other formal and informal sources abound in what we must call racist statements, approaches and images.

Even today, it is far from being an unusual research practice to select Roma subjects based on the opinion of the local community members: they are simply asked who is and who is not a Roma in their community. The Bulgarian Strategy follows this exact approach saying “the term Roma is used in this document as an umbrella, which includes both Bulgarian citizens in a vulnerable socio-economic condition who identify themselves as Roma, and citizens in a similar situation, *defined by the majority as Roma, regardless of their self-identification*” (BG-11:1, emphasis added). It seems that, in such cases, the Roma are denied even the right to self-identify themselves as Roma. The reason for this may well be understandable (although whether it is also acceptable, is another question not discussed here): some Roma may refuse to identify as Roma due to perceived dangers, and not without reason, as one author points out, by way of accounting for the strange fact that in the Czech Republic, the census number of Roma people drastically fell from more than 88,000 in 1990 to 11,000 in the year 2000 (CAHN 2007:3). Whatever the reason for choosing to identify Roma on the basis of outsiders' opinions, there is a risk that these outsiders may use all the classic prejudices towards Roma. The question of who is Roma is likely to be answered using these stereotypes (c.f. CAHN 2007:6), resulting in the opinion that whoever is not in deep poverty, whoever is not leading a criminal way of life or is educated, is not “really” a Roma already. As OLOMOOFE (2008) quotes, “Roma who do not beg,

steal, read fortunes, dance and have many babies are not real Roma”.

The surprising fact is that, if we examine international or national policy documents, but even reports or case studies prepared by advocacy groups and NGOs, what we get is an image of Roma people which is not very different from what we saw above. The picture that emerges is that the Roma can mainly be characterised by social deprivation, poverty, the lack of even basic education, unemployment and bad health status. Even some of the photographic images that publications use as illustrations carry a rather negative image, showing Roma people in run-down environments, wearing worn-out and sometimes unwashed clothes, very often congregating aimlessly in front of their miserable shelters. Policy documents seldom include positive images of Roma; there is little mention of highly educated Roma people with valuable social capital, respected jobs, or of famous Roma people – the Czech strategy being one exception, where one of the 21 actions proposed in the field of education would set good examples or role models through educated Roma people in Roma communities (CZ-11:25), and a similar action in the field of employment (CZ-11:36).

We know that there are extremely wealthy Roma communities, there are Roma people with university degrees, there are professionals, politicians, famous artists and scientists among them. These are not normally mentioned in policies. The Czech and the Slovakian policies only mention a future Roma elite that needs to be formulated or built (CZ-11:13, SK-11:47), and only the Romanian strategy presupposes the existence of such an elite already (RO-11C:1). If policies wanted to positively influence the Roma image, they could be using some of these positive examples, too. This is unfortunately not the case.

The image described above shows the miserable, poor and uneducated Roma. But in the public image, there is another aspect, too: the Roma are unreliable, they tend to be criminals (some would go as far as connecting this to genetic features), they are unwilling to integrate, they do not respect hygiene, they are unintelligent, unfit for education, and they are undeserving of any help. This latter type of description is obviously hardly ever found in policy documents *explicitly*. But this does not mean that they are missing from them entirely.

The image constructed of Roma people by policy documents can be analysed using two complementary methods. One of them is a rather straightforward way of looking at the explicit descriptions in the introductions, or situation analyses of policy documents, while the other is a more intricate analysis proposed by the WPR approach introduced above. This latter will be an important part of the analysis in Chapter 6, but it is an equally revealing exercise to analyse

the descriptions themselves. Not all policies contain such analyses. The Czech strategy has no such description, while the Hungarian strategy seems reluctant to explicitly target the strategy towards Roma people and is instead talking about “Roma, children and those living in disadvantaged regions”, but nevertheless characterises the Roma as well. It starts the situation analysis with analysing poverty and its causes. It claims that Roma origin is one of the four “dominant social features that are most relevant to poverty” (HU-11:23). However problematic this logical structure is, it is characteristic of the way of thinking about the Roma in general. Besides asserting that being a Roma is a “social feature” (rather than an ethnicity), what it claims is that being Roma in itself leads to poverty – leaving out a number of important steps in the syllogism, most importantly discrimination in education and employment (for a discussion of treating discrimination in policies and its consequences, see Chapter 6.5 below). This approach is shared by most of the Roma policies that we have examined.

One characteristic element in the negative public image of the Roma is claiming that the Roma are responsible for their own problems. Surprising as it may be, this is very often *openly* repeated in policy documents, although not verbatim. This is what the Romanian policy paper says: “Whether it be because of structural *or individually generated barriers*, in these areas Roma do not have the same opportunities when compared with the majority population and often encounter unequal treatment” (RO-11:3, emphasis added). We suppose no-one in academic research has ever heard of “individually generated barriers” as a reason why Roma suffer “unequal treatment”, but the intention of the policymaker is clear: blaming the Roma for the discrimination that they suffer. They also aim to change “the mentality of the members of Roma community” (RO-11:5), which is another piece of evidence for this. The Bulgarian strategy is planning to “improve parental care and defend the rights of children” (BG-11:16), and wants to form “an attitude of *responsibility and diligence* in the Roma people when giving them the right to use real estate” (BG-11:12, emphasis added), as well as “overcoming the traditional practices of the Roma community that violate the rights of women and children” (BG-11:11) and claims that “the behaviour of the girls and women in some Roma subgroups also make them early school leavers” (BG-11:8). These parts of the policies essentially *openly* repeat some of the racist opinions that are very often found in non-formal settings: the Roma generate their own problems, there is a problem with their mentality, they abuse their children, they are irresponsible and lazy, and their traditional practices are causing the problems in education.

Additionally, they do not understand the importance of education (HU-11:37 etc.), they

discriminate against women (HU-11, SK-11, BG-11) and they commit crimes and exhibit various high risk behaviours (CZ-11:63, HU-11:35, 77). Pregnancy at a very young age is common among them, which results in the poor general health and the bad *mental* (!) health of the new-borns (HU-11:27). Their health status is generally very bad, with *typically Roma illnesses* like hepatitis or parasites (BG-11:9). They have a different culture which is not tolerated or understood by the majority population (practically all policies), and which, together with the habits they exhibit, is often a barrier to development (CZ-11:33 etc.).

On top of this, there is the image that surfaces from each and every policy document and action plan, and is described in all external documents, too: they live in unacceptable housing conditions, sometimes with no basic infrastructure and in unacceptable hygienic conditions. They have very low educational levels and many of them are illiterate. They are using social benefits and social housing, while the majority of them are unemployed.

What we have as a result, is an extremely negative and openly racist image constructed by the inclusion policies themselves, which is only slightly different from the racist image that the general public encounters in the media or in public discourse. One conclusion is that most policy documents actually strengthen the negative image of Roma people rather than trying to change it, which would otherwise be expectable from policies whose purpose is to support the integration of the Roma. Another highly important point that we must see is that, according to the social construction of target groups theory introduced above, this will have a consequence on the general approach of the policy itself. A target group that is represented to be as a negatively constructed group will be distributed benefits at most in a non-direct way, but only if they have enough power. If this power does not reach a certain level, distributing policy benefits will not happen.

Why the policymakers are supporting a clearly racist and discriminatory image of the Roma in their integration strategies is at first sight a shockingly incomprehensible matter. After all, wouldn't it be easier to simply avoid constructing Roma policies altogether and say – similarly to the Netherlands or France – that it is not their responsibility. That Roma people should blame themselves for everything and that they will actually be punished rather than helped if *they* do not change in the near future.

We believe it is not very far-fetched to suppose that these policymakers indeed want to put forward exactly such claims, after all, the above analysis has just revealed that. The difference is, that these CEE countries are all required to build a comprehensive Roma strategy and to not

(openly) use a discriminatory approach. In such a situation, they must resort to a less overt (but still clearly understandable) way of redefining the problem and reconstructing the image of the target population. This is what we have seen in the above analysis.

5.5 Roma: an ethnicity or a socio-economically defined group?

Among analysts and advocacy groups, there is an ongoing debate whether policies should employ an ethnic or a socio-economic approach to Roma inclusion policies. Regardless of whether they realise this simple logical consequence or not, this means that they are debating whether they should treat the Roma as an ethnicity or as a socio-economically defined group. After all, they themselves are also talking about *Roma* policies (as opposed to “socio-economically defined group policies” or “poverty policies”) and this is true for almost all policies in question. In this chapter, we are going to examine the question in details, both from a theoretical viewpoint and from the perspective of problem framing and targeting.

The first point that should be made clear is that the very question whether the Roma are an ethnicity or a socio-economically defined group is extremely strange, to say the least. Anyone with the slightest knowledge about the topic will know (and supposedly agree) that the Roma are an ethnic group, whether they are labelled as a national or an ethnic minority or, as the Bulgarian policy paper puts it, an “ethnos”. We have no information about anyone questioning this fact, and would highly be surprised to find such opinions. Neither is it challenged in the least by the confusion regarding the various labels that certain Roma groups use for themselves (Gypsy in various local languages, Kálé, Sinti and the rest³⁶). The Roma themselves are not likely to raise the question, and we (ourselves a Hungarian Gypsy) believe that we do not need representative surveys to prove this extremely obvious point: poverty doesn’t make you a Gypsy, and Gypsiness doesn’t disappear with higher levels of education and financial well-being. The two things simply do not influence each other in any conceivable way³⁷.

This view, however, is not always shared by either international organisations or policymakers,

³⁶ If anything, travellers could be an exception, but they only make up a small fraction of the whole. For a discussion about this, see MARUSHIAKOVA–POPOV (2015)

³⁷ This is very clear for everyone if it is not the Roma that we are talking about. A Hungarian doctor who moves to Stockholm and starts to earn ten times more than Hungarians do, who accepts that fathers go on paternity leave and who stops putting red pepper in every single dish is still regarded Hungarian by everyone including himself. Being Roma is naturally similar to being Hungarian. The fact that it is possible to have both identities does not make a difference. Indeed, a lot of us with these two identities may add a third one: (East) European, and this does not lead to contradictions.

and it certainly isn't shared by the general public. International policy documents, official communications and background materials very often see the basis of Roma-ness as a particular *way of life* and living *circumstances*. Before about 2000, the nomadic way of life was seen as a decisive characteristic feature of Gypsy people by many international organisations including the Council of Europe. Although there was no clear definition, it was obvious in most policy documents that they did not regard the Roma as an ethnicity. This is also proved by the fact that the word "gypsy" itself was never capitalised even in publications by pro-Roma and advocacy NGOs like the Open Society Institute³⁸, and we do not have a reason to suppose that all these highly educated people, many of them native speakers of English, were not familiar with one of the most elementary spelling rules of the English language: capitalize all words derived from proper nouns including names of nationalities and ethnicities.

Much of the argumentation relevant here was already used in Chapter 5.4: the way of life is very often regarded as the fundamental decisive attribute of being Roma. After 2000, the word Roma, now capitalized, started to be used in most policy documents and academic literature, but the interpretation didn't seem to have changed a lot. One author examines how the European Court of Justice deals with Roma identity and the findings are in line with what has been said above. She concludes that "three elements appear to be related to the definition of Roma way of life: a nomadic life, travels and caravans" (FARGET 2012:302). She also examines British domestic law, where – perhaps uniquely so – a definition of "Gypsy" is provided: "Gypsies [are] persons of nomadic habit of life, whatever their race or origin, but does not include members of an organised group of travelling showmen, or of persons engaged in travelling circuses, travelling together as such" (FARGET 2012:308³⁹). Although the word is capitalised, the definition clearly and explicitly excludes any ethnic understanding of the term Gypsy.

We can thus conclude that in most of the international discourse, the Roma, whatever the label and spelling, were not *defined* as an ethnicity. We would like to emphasize that we were looking at explicit or implicit definitions rather than opinions. We have reason to believe that most of the authors of these international documents, if asked, would acknowledge that the Roma are an ethnicity, without hesitation. This, however, doesn't have an effect on the end result: they are treated in policy documents as if they were not. Or, the other possible solution is that they have created a new type of ethnicity concept, which is linked to socio-economic status and a

³⁸ where the author of this dissertation was working with Roma education issues at the time

³⁹ The document referred to in the literature is available at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/8-9/62/section/24#section-24-8>

particular way of life, and consequently it can change with the adoption or the abandoning of these. You can become a gypsy (Gypsy?) and you can cease to be one. However absurd this idea might seem, this is something that we can actually find in popular approaches (see page 65).

In this research, we are mainly interested in the 2011 national strategies. Has anything changed since the 2000s? Do they employ a different, more relevant and less bizarre approach to the question?

The first important point is that almost all strategies explicitly regard themselves as *Roma* strategies⁴⁰. This is of course something that they were requested to do by the EU Commission. But do they look at Roma as an ethnicity or as a socio-economically defined group?

Some of the national strategies of 2011 and the EU Framework itself explicitly refer to the Europe 2020 Strategy, which includes one single word (!), and even that only in brackets, as a reference to the Roma: “At national level, member states will need: To define and implement measures addressing the specific circumstances of groups at particular risk (such as one-parent families, elderly women, minorities, Roma, people with a disability and the homeless)” (EC 2010:19). Though not a definition per se, the Roma are in a list of clearly non-ethnic groups, the common denominator being, according to the document, that they “are at risk”. This risk is not detailed any further in the document, but we can see that it is primarily social and mainly economic in nature, where ethnicity related issues are obviously not an aspect of great importance. It is also important to note that *no other ethnic groups* or nationalities are listed. This is already a clear evidence that the Roma are regarded much more as a socio-economic than an ethnic group.

The Commission's Framework document does provide a definition of Roma as a group, albeit only in a footnote. This is what it says: “The term 'Roma' is used – similarly to other political documents of the European Parliament and the European Council – as an umbrella which includes groups of people *who have more or less similar cultural characteristics*, such as Sinti, Travellers, Kalé, Gens du voyage, etc. whether sedentary or not” (European Commission 2011:2, emphasis added). The EC document regards cultural characteristics the single decisive factor, although we are left with no hint on what exactly should be understood by “cultural characteristics” and what they might mean in practice; whether it should be material culture,

⁴⁰ One exception is the Hungarian strategy which only includes the Roma as one of the target groups. This will be discussed in more details below.

arts, values, traditions, a way of life, beliefs, mother tongue or others – or perhaps all or a combination of these. Including travellers and/or “Gens du voyage” in the list makes it even more complicated. Whether culture is or should be regarded as a decisive element in an ethnic group or nationality is an important question. We believe that giving a positive answer to this question is an extremely bold statement which doesn't seem either logical or theoretically well-founded, especially in the case of an ethnic group which has lived scattered around Europe in dozens of different countries with absolutely no connection with each other for hundreds of years now. Would a definition of other ethnic groups such as the Basques rely solely on a common culture⁴¹?

The EU Commission document is clearly facing a problem with the definition of Roma, just as much as any other attempts to define who the Roma are. At this point, we would like to make it clear that this problem would be present in the definition of any other nationality or ethnic group. The difference is that we never even try to define other ethnicities or nationalities, and rightly so. We strongly believe that it is neither necessary nor possible to do so. It could be possible to provide some partial *description* of national or ethnic groups including residence, habits or physical appearance, but we should see that a description can never replace a definition. We may (and indeed should) be able to define what an ethnic group is, but defining particular groups is another question which is not the task of either officials or academics. The simple and age-old solution is of course well-known to everyone: whoever regards himself a Rusyn is a Rusyn. The French are the people who regard themselves French. Of course, using this simple solution is problematic in some cases, but it is important to see why. There are two highly problematic cases which are widely known to anyone in Europe: the Jews and the Roma. The problem is that self-identification in these cases is unreliable, and we of course know the reason too well: the very reasonable fear of racism and discrimination. Consequently, before addressing racism and discrimination, it will be very hard to change this situation.

Let us have a closer look at national Roma policies and see how they approach the question of ethnic versus socio-economic targeting.

The Romanian strategy bears the following title: “Strategy of the Government of Romania for the inclusion of the Romanian citizens belonging to Roma minority”. Evidently, what the government wants to emphasise is that the target group is Romanian citizens, whatever their

⁴¹ Or language, for that matter – which would be just as problematic as culture. As an example: only about a quarter of the people who regard themselves Basque speak the Basque language today.

ethnicity (the word ethnicity is not used). We can indeed find evidence for a non-ethnic approach, where the document emphasizes that the inclusion policy is aimed at “all vulnerable groups”. Similarly to the European Commission 2010 document cited above, the Romanian strategy lists the Roma among the following: “disabled people, women, street children, 18 years old young people leaving state protection institutions, elderly people”. The common characteristics in the list might be a number of different things such as discrimination (on very different bases!), social exclusion and socio-economic hardships, but definitely not ethnicity. This is in line with the fact that the whole strategy is declared to address social problems. However, the language used throughout the strategy implies that the authors still regard the Roma an ethnic, or sometimes even a national minority, when they compare the Roma to “other national minorities” at one place, and to “other ethnic groups” several other times. This, of course, only strengthens the confusion: what similarities do they find between the Roma and, say, young people leaving state protection institutions? And why don’t they mention them any more during the whole strategy? There is not one single item in the action plan which would target disabled people or the elderly and the others – it is only the Roma! It is clearly a Roma policy then, but with a vastly irrational target group definition. The only rationale that we may come up with is that they are trying to avoid an ethnic approach and implicitly define the Roma as a non-ethnic group.

The Slovakian strategy document lists three groups as targets, where the Roma are called a national minority, and a differentiation is made between the following three subgroups: “Roma as a national minority, Roma communities, and finally marginalised Roma communities”. The primary target group is marginalized Roma communities, which may suggest that, in the largest part, it is again a socio-economic approach rather than an ethnic one, although the strategy clearly states that poverty in the case of Roma is of a special nature, “which is not to be found in the majority population in such marginalized groups”. The reasons behind this, according to the document, is social exclusion. The strategy also differentiates between the ethnic and the social approach, and states that one of the aims is “balancing the policies between three overlapping groups”.

This is the only strategy document which explicitly differentiates between segments of the Roma population, but they do not seem to coherently carry on with this all through the strategy. The document states at the beginning that this strategy “represents an umbrella document for the area of inclusion of all target groups inside the Roma population” (SK-11:3). The key terms that reoccur in the introductory part of the strategy are social exclusion, marginalization and

segregation. The most surprising element is that according to the document, ethnicity does not necessarily play a role in such marginalization. The farthest the strategy goes is adding that “in the case of social exclusion of the Roma population, an *additional* factor is ethnicity, which *could* generate exclusion” (SK-11:6 emphasis added), i.e. the Roma ethnicity itself does not necessarily lead to exclusion, and even when it does, it is only an additional cause. We do not, however, get a clear answer to what is the basic reason for exclusion and segregation in the case of Roma if racism is only an additional factor. What seems logical is that the Slovakian policymaker is trying to downplay the importance of ethnicity, and with this, the importance of racism and discrimination in the problem, which could well be their main goal. Avoiding any responsibility of the majority society could be the principal goal.

In the Foreword, the Hungarian strategy states that the country's “gravest problems today is the gradual deterioration of *individuals* living in poverty, including the Roma population” (HU-11:6, emphasis added). This statement is interesting for two reasons: first, talking about individuals rather than groups, whether social or ethnic, is practically unheard of in the history of Roma (or indeed, social) policies, and this sentence alone suggests that the Hungarian government refuses to deal with issues related to Roma in the context of ethnicity, collective rights or racism. The other notable point is that it puts the main emphasis on poverty. This is confirmed by the very title of the document: “National social inclusion strategy – extreme poverty, child poverty, the Roma⁴²”. This clearly implies that the Hungarian government regards poverty the basic problem, which underlies problems in other areas, including housing, health, education or employment. And indeed, the strategy claims that the *consequence* of increasing poverty is segregation and exclusion, which goes against both the findings of academic research and common sense. Elsewhere in the document we find several statements that suggest that the Hungarian policymaker sees poverty as the main or even the only cause of all other problems – for a detailed discussion see Chapter 6.3. Although the strategy does raise the question whether Roma related issues should be regarded as economic or not, unfortunately, it does so in a highly politicised way. The document states that the Hungarian government “wishes to treat the problems of the Roma as a national affair, rather than as a mere poverty policy issue”, which is an extremely problematic statement: “national” or “poverty” are not exclusive terms and it is doubtful if they can be used in such a dichotomy at all, unless one

⁴² The updated version of the document prepared at the end of 2014 changed the title and deleted „extreme poverty and child poverty” and used „those in need” and „children living in poor families” instead – perhaps the main and only reason for preparing an updated version, since the Hungarian Ministry also responsible for Roma inclusion prepared a list of “banned words and expressions”, and *poverty* was among the blacklisted words.

knows that “national” (“nemzeti” in Hungarian) has been a highly cherished adjective used everywhere, whether appropriate or not, by the ruling nationalist government in Hungary at the time. Contrary to this unreliable statement cited above, the Hungarian strategy is very clear about the economic (or poverty policy) approach they use. There are numerous references to that, including this rather unambiguous one: “the social disadvantages gravely affecting the Roma population are, with the exception of ethnic discrimination, not disadvantages of an ethnic nature; they do not stem from the ethnicity of the individuals concerned but from their social circumstances” (HU-11:9). This opinion is in stark contrast with the fact that in the introductory parts, the strategy identifies discrimination as a major problem in virtually all fields of life in the case of Roma, from housing through healthcare and education to employment, even citing research data collected both by national and international researchers. This is one example where we can see that the policymakers are not hesitant to employ contradictory statements, supposedly with the aim of satisfying both the international requirements and their own discriminatory approach. The Hungarian strategy (beyond the introductory chapters) is generally hesitating to acknowledge what almost all of the international policy documents emphasise: that (at least) a major part of the problems derives from discrimination on ethnic grounds. They only see *some* possibility to target Roma as an ethnic minority: in the case of culture and anti-discrimination as a separate point. The former actually gets almost no attention later, while the latter is not one of the most serious problems according to the document, even though the strategy was written just a short time *after* the racially motivated serial killings of Roma people in Hungary. What we see is again evidence that the policy is not willing to accept the problem definition that they were offered by academic research, and which claims that discrimination and racism is the most acute problem. What the policy is doing is redefining the problem and this is where a poverty approach seems beneficial for them.

Unlike the Hungarian strategy, the Czech strategy specifically targets Roma. The strategy declares its goal as “to improve the situation of Roma in key areas of their lives” (CZ-11:3). The policymaker is also very clear about making a difference between various layers of the Roma society, and they aim to target “socially excluded” or “more vulnerable groups within the Roma population” (op. cit.). This approach is very similar to the one we saw in the Slovakian strategy document above. It is also a very important point, that the strategy declares the Roma a national minority. The document, *in its explicit wording in the introduction*, aims to place a special emphasis on fighting against racism and even discrimination on the basis of language use. The Czech strategy also emphasizes the socio-economic aspect, but is very careful to make it clear that this is not an aspect that defines Roma as such. This is, unfortunately not reflected

at all in the action plan. No action is targeted at fighting against racism and discrimination, and most of the measures planned rather target Roma themselves to help them overcome their own deficiencies, implying that the actual reason for the exclusion is the Roma themselves: is is them who need to change for results to be achieved. Another example for how policies seem to accept the given problem definition on the surface, but refusing it altogether in reality.

The Bulgarian strategy is unique in that it gives a definition for Roma at the very beginning of the document, already cited above, repeated here for convenience: “the term Roma is used in this document as an umbrella, which includes both Bulgarian citizens in a vulnerable socio-economic condition who identify themselves as Roma, and citizens in a similar situation, defined by the majority as Roma, regardless of their self-identification.” What is most important for us in this chapter is that the policymaker sees the “vulnerable socio-economic condition” as a defining characteristic feature of the Roma.

As a side note, it is interesting to see the Bulgarian government’s approach to the question who is Roma. In section II of the document, they acknowledge that the official census figure, according to which 4.9% of all Bulgarian citizens are Roma, must be false and that the figure could be much higher in reality, and the reason they find is this: “part of the people, identified by the general population as Roma or Gipsy [...] identify themselves as Bulgarians, Turks, Romanians, etc. which is possibly due to the fact that the persons participating in the census have the right to define their ethnic background themselves or to refrain from indicating it” (BG-11:4). According to this, the true Roma identity is the one that the “general population” decides. Furthermore, they blame this undesirable situation (i.e. the existence of false data) on the legal possibility that one can self-identify one's national or ethnic background, rather than realizing the well-known phenomenon that a large part of Roma fail to identify themselves as Roma for reasons of fear of institutional or other types of discrimination (CAHN 2007:7). In summary, the Bulgarian strategy also uses a socio-economic, rather than an ethnic definition of Roma, and even that already contains discriminatory parts. In the action plan, there are no measures aiming to fight racism or discrimination, but we find plenty of measures that suggest that the main problem to address is economic or financial, or, as we have seen in other chapters, the attitude of the Roma themselves.

We have examined five country strategies, which, if combined, cover the vast majority of the Roma population of the world. The overall result is that none of the policies use an ethnic approach consistently throughout the document, and even if a policy explicitly declares the Roma an ethnic group, they fail to draw important conclusions from this. The main conclusion

would obviously be that ethnic discrimination plays a central role. To some extent, some of the strategies follow the logical line of reasoning and state that making Roma culture part of the national culture would be an important tool in reducing the social exclusion of the Roma, but systematically fighting racism and discrimination is not part of any of the action plans. Some of the policies such as the Hungarian strategy, openly and categorically refuse to acknowledge that discrimination plays a notable role in the problems that the Roma face. The alternative is socio-economic targeting, which directs attention to poverty in all of the policy fields, declaring poverty and other economic or social issues the main cause of the problems. Regarding Roma problems economic problems is of course a fairly blatant logical fallacy and a contradiction in itself. Once a collection of problems is connected to an ethnic group (and this is what happens the very moment someone is talking about Roma problems or, as it happens, preparing Roma policies, and at the same time acknowledges that the Roma are an ethnic group), he has already claimed that the causes of these problems are basically related to this particular ethnicity in some way or another. Of course we have seen explanations that follow this line of logic and claim that the Roma as such are genetically prone to crime, laziness and all the other sins, and they blame the Roma for their own problems. This is something that even the least human rights respecting and least democratic policymakers will avoid *openly* claiming at all costs, even if it would meet the approval of a vast mass of voters. That's why they opt for claiming very similar ideas *implicitly* in these policy documents.

Addressing problems of discrimination and racism is not one of the goals of governments, mainly because of a fear of losing voting support. Another solution then is undertaking the risk of logical inconsistencies and trying to reframe the problem altogether. As a result, the frame of the problem is that of social standing and financial situation. We must realize that with this, the policymaker simplifies the policy arena, since the ethnic context is given such an extremely low profile that the whole "Roma problem" becomes incorporated into the already existing wider policy area of poverty reduction and perhaps the very broadly interpreted economic inclusion. Governments' attempt to present the Roma problem as that of poverty elegantly fits this picture. From this point of view, it is perfectly understandable why the Hungarian government is not even willing to name its Roma policy a Roma policy.

The final consequence of this framing effort could be the relative elimination of the "Roma problem", and rather than using a targeted policy approach (see Chapter 5.1), a universal technique can be adopted. Unfortunately, this also means that such Roma policies are highly unlikely to reach any substantial results – unless we acknowledge that the intended result is

reframing the problem rather than solving actual problems. Because in this case, these policies have all reached maximum results: they have redefined the problem, and have claimed that it is the Roma themselves who are causing the problem, with their attitudes, with their culture, with their unwillingness, while the majority society and its institutions are completely exempted from any liability.

5.6 A peaceful coexistence?

In a BBC interview in 2013⁴³, Victor Ponta, Romania's Prime Minister at the time, repeatedly distanced the Romanian Roma from the rest of Romanian society ignoring the interviewer's remark that they are Romanian citizens anyway. Viktor Orbán, Hungary's PM compared the Hungarian Roma to refugees during the 2015 refugee crisis several times, including one occasion where he went as far as essentially arguing that just as Hungary does not ask for a distribution of the Roma people living in Hungary among European countries, likewise, he does not approve of distributing refugees coming from Syria, Afghanistan and other countries, among EU states⁴⁴. Robert Fico, Slovakia's PM followed suit and essentially said that Slovakia already had hundreds of thousands of Roma, there is no need for refugees to make the situation worse. These are just a few of the many examples (see STEWART 2012 for more) where leading politicians, including prime ministers and cabinet officials, publicly suggested that the Roma are not part of the communities that make up their countries. Although very few politicians would go to such extremes as the Hungarian PM, who suggested that the Roma may not even have a rightful place in the country, it is exceedingly common to imply that there is a huge difference between the Roma and the rest of society, and that they are not ordinary citizens, but a special kind. There is us, the mainstream society, and there is them, the Roma. This is also a common conception among the general public, where the Roma are regarded as strangers: a group of people who "happen to live within the territory of a given country for some reason or another" (this is literally what Viktor Orbán said), but they are not an integral part of the society (for the Romanian case, see PULAY 2010).

This is in sharp contrast to what policy documents often emphasize *explicitly*, namely that the Roma are not different from any other citizen of the given country. The Bulgarian strategy emphasizes several times that the Roma are Bulgarian citizens. The Czech strategy aims to

⁴³ BBC World Service, Hard Talk: Victor Ponta, 20 March 2013

⁴⁴ See among others: http://index.hu/belfold/2015/09/07/orban_nincs_ellenunkre_a_kvota/ Accessed 07 September 2015

grant the rights to “Roma just like all citizens” (CZ-11:4).

Two extremely contradictory images. So what is the image that Roma policy documents incorporate and support?

If we go deeper than some of the rhetorical lines in policies, we will see the outlines of a completely different approach. The Czech strategy says that the “main aim of the Roma Integration Concept is the achievement of co-existence without conflict between members of Roma communities and the rest of society” (CZ-11:5). This “peaceful coexistence” was a Cold War terminology invented by the Soviets, and which essentially meant that it is possible for socialist and capitalist states to peacefully live side by side, even though there is an antagonistic contradiction between the two systems, and that (perhaps most importantly) the Soviet bloc will not start a war against capitalist regimes unless, of course, it is absolutely necessary. The Czech Republic as a country which used to be part of the Soviet bloc, is obviously very well aware of this. But even without the political-historical background, “coexistence without conflict” can only mean that there is no interaction, not to mention integration involved or even possible, and that there is an antagonistic contradiction between the parties. The Hungarian action plan also literally aims for “a peaceful co-existence of communities” when it wants to draw up “specific property and public security plans” (HU-11A:17). Safeguarding property and ensuring public security is the most cherished expression of the racist far-right in Hungary and elsewhere when it comes to Roma topics, implying that the Roma commit crimes against property and public security. Consequently, besides the unreasonable and damaging usage of the term “peaceful coexistence”, this part also allows for a racist interpretation and could probably satisfy the most hardliner racist far right politicians too.

Talking about parties to the case in itself is already making the situation extremely problematic, since in these discourses, one party is the Roma (as a very loosely defined group), and the other party is either the society itself or the government as its representative body. In both cases, the Roma are logically not part of the society as a whole. To make this point more obvious: equal standing can only be achieved, and parties to a case can only be mentioned, if none of the parties are theoretically inclusive of the other, e.g. Roma and non-Roma populations of the same society. As far as we have dichotomies such as Roma and Hungarians, Roma and Bulgarians etc., we cannot talk about equal standing⁴⁵, and such dichotomies may often suggest that the

⁴⁵ The latest example for this happened at a conference of the Gypsy Lore Society in 2015, where one author was repeatedly talking about „Roma and Romanians”, and neither she, nor most of the audience found it problematic, with the author referring to informal conversations with Romanian

Roma are not part of the society.

To a certain degree, a similar approach can also be seen in the action plans. Most of the policy recommendations contain some kind of special trainings for teachers who work with Roma students. The Czech strategy says such trainings are necessary “To improve the professional competence of teaching staff so that they are able to react to the specific needs of these children” (CZ-11:22). While these “special needs” of Roma students is often mentioned in other analyses and NGO projects too, it should be noted that it has the capacity to distance Roma children from non-Roma children in general. One NGO project funded by the EU Commission aims to train teachers to “improve teachers’ understanding of issues *specific to Roma*” through, for example “engaging in an open and honest dialogue with Roma children and their parents”⁴⁶. But we must realize that this method is a basic tool all teachers are required to use whether they have Roma or non-Roma students. While most Roma students may (and very often do) have specific problems that are less often characteristic of majority students, this should not necessitate a special training for teachers where they are trained to use methods and tools that they are trained to use during their general teacher training as well. The Czech policy document is right in its wording: such trainings could improve the professional competence of these teachers – their *general* professional competence, we should add. Taking into account students’ social, emotional, financial and other circumstances, or the family background in general, is neither a novel educational tool nor a specific method to be used with Roma students. What is certainly special is that most Roma children may turn out to have accumulated a whole range of negative influences and conditions, which already needs special *attention* on the part of the teacher and the educational institution in general. It is important to emphasize that we do not suggest that on-the-job trainings are not necessary. On the contrary, we find such OJTs extremely useful (whether in teaching professions or elsewhere). What we want to show here is that the presentation of such programmes in policy documents and action plans as specific measures may lead to a kind of image construction where the Roma are pictured as a group different from all other segments of the society. This is not the case in reality. Roma children are no different from any other children, there is no, and there should be no separate Roma pedagogy. We do not believe that the policymaker is putting forward this idea based on some methodological or pedagogical considerations, however. We believe that the main and only purpose of this

Roma in which they (the Roma) referred to non-Roma as Romanians. Hungarian Roma also refer to non-Roma people as Hungarians, but this doesn’t stop them from regarding themselves Hungarian, too. Researchers, policy makers and public figures should be more careful with using categories.

⁴⁶ <http://romaterno.eu/index.php/en/12-lifelong-learning/54-creative-teacher-training-for-support-of-cultural-and-social-inclusion-of-roma-children-at-school> Accessed 24 September 2015.

distancing is image construction and problem framing. If the Roma are so different that we even need a different pedagogical methodology to treat them, then it is certainly the Roma where the problems originate. And again, with discussing such special tools, discrimination, racism, segregation and special schools are easily forgotten and their role is easily downplayed. That a separate Roma pedagogical tool or approach is non-existent and not taken seriously even by the policymaker, is obvious if we consider the fact that there is not one concrete mention of such tools in any of the policies or elsewhere. It is only the “need” for such a Roma pedagogy that is mentioned or implied several times.

One instance of such a differentiation may not lead to significant image construction in itself, but policies and action plans contain a whole range of such examples. In later chapters we will examine them more thoroughly, here is a short list of some of the most important ones. Using school mediators is a tool that a number of countries regard as a key to success (including Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Spain). Wherever a mediator or an interpreter is needed, is already a setting where the two parties do not speak each other’s language – in a figurative as well as a literal meaning of the word. Extra-school and extra-curricular projects and activities are another popular group of measures recommended by policies. This, especially if these initiatives are regarded as flagship projects (as the “tanodas” in the Hungarian strategy are), may imply that the Roma students need a special space outside of the regular school activities and even outside of the physical school space. Roma language and culture classes, however well-meaning the purpose looks to the outsider, may also emphasise the separation of Roma students, similarly to all the extra classes (sometimes within the school environment) organised for Roma students lagging behind, especially if, as it most often happens, these classes are organised exclusively for Roma. The Hungarian government’s recent measures⁴⁷ to legalise such segregated all-Roma classes and schools even if it took changing acts and the constitution, shows that such classes are not isolated examples, and that they are considered by the policymaker as an all-important aspect. For the purposes of supporting the discriminatory image and framing, we should add.

If principle II of the Basic Principles examined above (see Chapter 5.1) is to be applied, this context could be the most appropriate place for it: explicitly but not exclusively targeting Roma could be understood that policies should not imply that Roma children (we are focussing on

⁴⁷ It is important to highlight that the government official fighting for the legalisation of segregation (as an ERRC document puts it in <http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/file/hungary-submission-un-upr-september-2015.pdf>), was led by none other than the minister responsible for Roma issues and the Roma policy itself, Mr Zoltán Balog.

education, but elsewhere we could talk about Roma in general) are a special kind and that they need a special methodology or special tools. Indeed, in our own assessment, using special tools and methodologies is one of the main problems, since this special treatment often results in discrimination and segregation as in segregated classes, out-of-school solutions, special schools and classes, to name just a few. We should realize that these instances all perfectly suit the special Roma tools approach that we are criticising now. Special schools and segregated Gypsy classes are not any different from extra classes or tanodas from this point of view. What we see is that exclusive targeting is exactly what is happening. Most of the policy recommendations are likely to emphasise a difference between Roma and non-Roma, also implying that schools and educators do not normally face such challenges with non-Roma children: there are Roma teacher assistants, but not disadvantaged assistants. When it comes to measures and recommended actions, even the poverty-agenda disappears in some of the strategies.

5.7 A place to call home and the dangers of nationhood

In 1993, the Council of Europe published a document in which they call Gypsies “a true European minority”. This particular label has been applauded and much admired by many, although no-one ever truly explained their enthusiasm. This label, on the other hand, should be treated with caution, especially in its context. The document says: “A special place among the minorities is reserved for Gypsies. Living scattered all over Europe, not having a country to call their own, they are a true European minority, but one that does not fit into the definitions of national or linguistic minorities” (CoE 1993). The most controversial part is claiming that the Roma do not have a country to call their own. This supposed state-of-affairs is obviously the reason why the authors of the document came up with the adjectival phrase “true European”, which reminds us of Diogenes the dog, the major difference being that, legally an Athenian, he himself is believed to have decided to call himself a citizen of the World rather than labelled as such by other Athenians. The statement about the Roma having no country to call their own, on the other hand, is clearly and evidently false, degrading, and should be objected to by anyone with a democratic and legal understanding. It overlooks the fact that, with some exceptions⁴⁸, all of the Roma people do have a country to call their home and their own. Not only are they legal citizens of the country where they live or where they were born, with (theoretically or

⁴⁸ The problem of documents, the problem of IDPs and refugees, especially at the time when the document was prepared (cf the Balkan wars) is an existing problem. Still, to project it to the Roma as such, is not permissible.

legally, at least) all the rights and duties that any other citizen of the given country is entitled to, but they certainly feel they share a lot in common with the other residents of the country: they are Roma *and* Hungarian, Roma *and* Romanian and so on. The use of the word “scattered” is another puzzling problem. It implies that the Roma are, or should be regarded as, one coherent group which became fragmented and now suffers from a certain kind of segmentation – it is impossible to interpret “scattered” (= thrown in various random directions) in a different way. We should point out to both the Council of Europe and those welcoming their document that local Roma groups (not to mention individuals) are not, and do not feel scattered at all. Also, we have no reason to believe, let alone evidence to show, that most Roma would be less patriotic than anyone else.

The CoE document goes on with the description of Gypsies like this: “As a non-territorial minority, Gypsies greatly contribute to the cultural diversity of Europe. In different parts of Europe they contribute in different ways, be it by language and music or by their trades and crafts”. The Council of Europe had previously prepared several documents about “nomads” and Gypsies where it is clear that they think of Gypsies as travelling people, so there is a chance, that in 1993, they still had this old image of the Roma, which was largely false even decades earlier, when they first started to deal with the topic. In any way, the document sees Gypsies in a way that is not much dissimilar to the old romanticised image of the wondering Gypsy who plays the violin and has fascinating costumes, trades and crafts like those in the poem written by Pushkin in the 1820s. In this image, the Gypsy culture again seems something that is unifying Gypsies on the one hand, and makes them different from the rest of Europe on the other: “contributing to the diversity” also suggests a concept similar to this.

Thus, what we essentially have is a cohesive group of people who do not belong to any of the countries and are scattered all over the continent, and who have a special culture and language different from the rest of the European populations. What is especially important for our discussion in this chapter is that the Roma are perceived as a group whose members have much more in common with each other, than with the “outside world”, including their own societies and local social groups – a sociological absurdity in itself.

Whatever the reason for this image of the Roma, the idea that the Roma should be regarded as a unified group of people different from everyone else was not a novel approach. What was new is that this time, it was the institutions, groups and individuals who were working *for the benefit* of the Roma, with the stated aim of integrating the Roma into the individual societies, who were promoting this idea, whether intentionally or not.

At the end of the twentieth century already, the Roma started to be called a “transnational” minority more and more frequently. References to this particular CoE document’s phrase, “a true European minority” grew exponentially, and today, it is found in hundreds of various documents, all of them failing to actually interpret the label and merely praising the Council for its “deed”, and not recognizing the damage it can potentially cause.

Gradually, these voices were taking a shape that could also be interpreted as efforts to turn the Roma into a nation. Besides symbolic actions like creating a flag and choosing an anthem, there have also been more significant attempts that showed the signs of this trend. In 2006, Aladár Horváth, a Hungarian NGO leader was already criticising the growing number of “initiatives intended to create a Romani nation” (Horváth 2006), and emphasized that rather than being a nation, the Roma have a dual identity.

But these attempts to create a nation happened outside of policy making. The Council of Europe and other international documents may have had an influence on policy making, but they are still outside of actual policy work. Can we find traces of these nation making attempts or at least the underlying ideas in the policies today?

Language and culture are two things that provide the basis for creating a nation (GELLER 1987:6-29), even if we can obviously only talk about a non-territorial “nation” in this case. As far as language is concerned, there have been attempts to standardise the Romani language, although with various problems on the way, with most professionals eventually acknowledging that it is both impossible and impractical to fully standardize Romani (MATRAS 2005). Language and culture, however, have always played a central role in both national and international policies, and this trend seems to be on the rise even today. The latest example is the initiative to set up the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture⁴⁹, a project that was conceived by George Soros and his Open Society Foundations on the one hand, and the Council of Europe on the other hand, and which has received numerous criticisms from both academia and various NGOs.

Although the attention to Roma culture and language is important and necessary, overemphasizing it may have a negative effect, especially if it is combined with the idea that the Roma are a transnational minority. And overemphasized, it certainly is (see Chapter 6.4 for more details). This will not only accentuate the difference between Roma and non-Roma, but

⁴⁹ <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/press-releases/european-roma-institute-arts-and-culture-endorsed-council-europe>, Accessed 25 September 2015

will also make it look like an easy solution for individual governments to distance themselves from the burden of solving the problem of these “transnationals”, who have a different culture, who speak a different language, and who do not really belong to their country. There is ample evidence outside of policy analysis for this approach from countries such as Hungary, Romania, France, Italy, Slovakia, Bulgaria and others (see Chapter 5.6). In policy documents, this approach is obviously less overt – with the exception of some, such as the Netherlands, who openly refuse any responsibility and are unwilling to do anything about Roma inclusion, saying “integration is not the responsibility of the government but rather of those who decide to settle in the Netherlands” (NL-11:2). This essentially says that the Roma living in the country are strangers and not part of the society. Though other governments are too cautious to openly claim this, some of the policies include at least strong indications of a similar approach. The Romanian strategy underlines several times that the Roma issue is both a national and an international problem, which must be solved at both levels (RO-11:10). At one place, it is especially clear about its view that on the one hand, there is the Roma, and on the other hand, there are the non-Roma, two different sides or two different parties to the problem: “the Roma represent an European minority in dialogue with the national cultures” (RO-11:13). It would already be a highly destructive approach to talk about a dialogue between Roma and non-Roma *within* a society, but this already goes further than that, and is talking about a dialogue where the two parties in this dialogue are the Roma and the rest of Europe. It is important to note that the Romanian strategy is using *culture* as the point of reference: culture is the axis that divides the two parties. The “fact” that the Roma are European logically implies that Romania itself is not the main party responsible for solving this problem. The Slovakian strategy also highlights that the problem needs to be addressed at the EU level, too (SK-11:2), although it doesn’t go into much detail as to how this should be understood. The Slovenian strategy, on the other hand, is more unambiguous in claiming that the Roma – to use our title of this chapter – do not have a place to call home, when they essentially repeat the Council of Europe’s standpoint: “The Roma community is a minority which in all environments is the most frequent victim of social exclusion, discrimination, segregation and poverty. Its special status also derives from the fact that this is a minority which does not have a ‘mother’ state to care for their rights” (SI-11:5), with which they essentially refuse any responsibility to care for the rights of their own citizens who happen to be Roma. Most importantly, they ignore or deny the fact that these Roma in question do have a mother state who is responsible for caring for them: Slovenia!

These are just a few examples of how the idea of a “European minority” can be used or rather abused by individual governments, without acknowledging that it is they themselves who

should be regarded as the legal and natural home of these Roma populations. They are the ones, who should “care for their rights”, and they are responsible for any failures in the field of social integration. Additionally, these are only examples taken from policy documents. We should not forget that in other types of government communication, we can find many more examples which prove that governments often do not regard the Roma “their own”, they are regarded as a problem which is foreign in its origin and that it is – at best – the European Union or international communities who should take the lead in solving this problem. This is a phenomenon that EU bodies, especially the Commission, has also recognised, which can be seen in the numerous written and oral communications that they have made public during the last few years, all of them stressing that solving the problem of Roma exclusion is only possible at the state level, while the European Union should only take a coordinating, evaluating and monitoring role in the process, providing financial, policy and other types of assistance during the process.

The problem of the “Europeanization” of the Roma has been examined from several points of view by different authors. Some have argued that building a Roma nation and emphasizing the transnationality of the Roma has the “danger of constructing Roma identity [...] as a stateless nation because it reinforces the idea that Roma are not constitutive of the dominant nation and are not full citizens of the states in which they reside” and that individual states could feel “relieved of their obligations of protection towards Roma and can instead rely on the international political community” (MCGARRY 2011, also citing other authors). While we entirely agree with these statements, we should note that states (i.e. governments and government officials) do have their own free will and capacity to evaluate circumstances. While it is possible to criticize initiatives that have been trying to strengthen a Roma nationalistic agenda (we indeed join these critical voices ourselves), it cannot be emphasized enough that it is the individual government’s fault and responsibility if they interpret this as a basis for refusing to make real efforts to end the discrimination and the exclusion of the Roma. Criticising the “Roma elite” (whoever might be considered a part of it) who unwittingly supported the idea of a Roma nation or the transnationality of the Roma, would be comparable to criticizing the victims of rape for dressing in a particular way, blaming the fashion designers, blaming the places of entertainment that these women visit, whereby they attract the attention of the rapist. We must deal with the real perpetrator, the rapist in the example above, and the national governments in the case of the Roma.

Nevertheless, we also think that nationalistic approaches towards policy making, and the idea

of nations in general, is one of the main causes of social (and other) problems today. Unfortunately, nationalism is still on the rise especially in the Eastern part of Europe, and it has consequences on how individual countries might view the Roma, among many other ethnic or national minorities. Besides the wording of constitutions, which sometimes clearly state that the country – as one would say – belongs to the given nationality (the Hungarian constitution prepared in 2011 being perhaps the most extreme example), there are other signs that ethnic minorities are regarded as non-constituent parts of the whole community. Phrases like “minorities living on the territory of [insert name of country]” very strongly implies that these minorities are seen – in the best scenario – as guests: they are people who live on someone’s territory. This phrase is also found in some of the Roma policies: “ethnicities residing on the territory of the Slovak Republic” (SK-11:19), “thematic exhibitions reflecting aspects of the life and history of the Roma minority on the Romanian territory” (RO-11:22), “national and ethnic minorities living in the territory of the Republic of Hungary” (HU-11:109). Although in themselves they could as well be regarded as unfortunately selected words, but in light of the whole context that we have just examined, they are rather to be interpreted as the words themselves suggest: distancing these groups of people from the rest of society. Residing on someone else’s territory can only lead to conflict and danger.

In conclusion, it is very often implied or even clearly stated both in general communication and in policy documents that the Roma are not fully regarded as a constituent group that make up the state community. This approach is only reinforced by Roma nationalistic trends or nation making attempts, which already has traces in the Roma policies themselves. Whatever approach tries to emphasize the difference and separation of the Roma will inevitably play a role in strengthening alienation and exclusion, and this is what is happening in most of the Roma policies.

5.8 Conclusions and summary

The social construction of target groups in policies is closely related to political gains. The definition of the target group could also play an important role in image construction. Chapter 4 has shown us several different aspects of the target definition. The first obvious conclusion is that this type of targeting will not be able to serve as the basis for successful policies. The confusion is evident at several levels: the Roma are sometimes seen as an ethnic group, sometimes as a socio-economically defined group, even within the same policy documents. This should have a major influence on the selection of tools of intervention, and thus creates a

risk with its inconsistency. There is a confusion around the universal versus targeted approach too, with policies claiming to be using an “explicit but not exclusive” targeting, while the actual target in action plans is clearly the Roma themselves. As far as targeting within the educational environment is concerned, the main focus is on participants, which is unlikely to have an effect on systemic problems. Targeting the majority society is also very limited, which possibly makes it near-impossible to deal with exclusion and discrimination itself (see 6.5 below). Doubled with the problems identified by external analysts such as the lack of data and even the unwillingness of governments to produce such data, the very definition of who is Roma also leads to targeting complications. These are factors that the conventional policy analysis part of our investigations revealed.

But in the current research, we are mainly interested in social construction and framing, and Chapter 4 has shown us important phenomena in this respect. Going beyond the practical problems of targeting, there are a number of conclusions that we can draw from the above analysis.

In the field of policy making, social construction is in close connection with political gains. If construction happens within a policy, it obviously serves the policy maker’s purposes, among which the number one is re-election. Power and image are the two factors that decisively influence how the group will be regarded and treated in policies (the distribution of burdens and benefits). Power is a factor that seems almost impossible to change in a policy document. And although the actual implementation and its consequences may have some influence on power, too, but we limit ourselves to the policies themselves in our investigation. Consequently, policy makers have but very few tools to influence the overall situation if they need to. One of these tools is shaping the image of the particular target population (the other being framing the problem, which we will deal with in Chapter 6 below). To some extent, policy documents always contain a kind of image construction, but as to the extent of the effort, it will be defined by how controversial the given target group is for the policy maker. A target group can be regarded controversial if it falls within the category of contenders in Schneider and Ingram’s theory (see Table 1), or, in our approach, the nearer a group is to the origin of the coordinate system in Figure 3, the more controversial it is. It is easy to see that in both frameworks, the Roma are clearly a group that is highly controversial for policy makers in Europe today.

Schneider and Ingram also argue that minorities have a special place among possible target populations: “Competing officials champion different constructions of the same groups. Some view minorities as oppressed populations and argue for policies appropriate to dependant

people, whereas others portray minorities as powerful special interests and not deserving of government aid” (SCHNEIDER–INGRAM 1993:336). This, however, may not be entirely true in the case of current Roma policies. Most importantly, it would be hard to find *many* officials who champion a view in which the Roma are oppressed, dependent and deserving, at least at the state level. The dividing line is rather between domestic politicians and officials on the one hand, and European Union and other international organisations and NGOs on the other. It is enough to look at how many times Viviane Reding or Laszlo Andor have criticised member state governments because of their unjust treatment of the Roma, and how many times country level politicians have spoken out *against* the Roma (see above) and portrayed them as rather “undeserving”.

We can certainly expect the same approach to appear in the policies themselves, once they are driven by these same political forces. This is indeed what we saw happen in the policies. We have seen that policies are trying to build up an extremely negative image of the Roma, which implies that they are on the non-deserving side. Besides the negative image, policies also try to distance the Roma from the society, which also supports a view where they are basically non-deserving, or at least, not really entitled to state help, since they are not integral or “natural” parts that make up the given society. Any help then could actually be seen as a deed of the Good Samaritan, who is not *really* obliged to take care of the poor traveller lying on the roadside in a terrible condition. If anything, the altruistic “love thy neighbour” is the only reason for help. In such a context, but only in such a context, the policymaker (the government) should be praised rather than criticised, even if results are far and few between. This is not a literary exaggeration. The vast majority of policy documents start with a list of previous government actions allegedly carried out for the benefit of the Roma. While the appraisal of previous policies and actions does have a place (and an important one) in policy documents, it is clear that these listings do not serve any other purpose than proving the government’s good will, since there is essentially no evaluation of them, not to mention conclusions drawn from possible past failures, in most cases not even a conclusion that would use these previous actions as reference points for further actions.

This approach fits precisely the policymaker’s intention to construct an image of the Roma which absolves them from ultimate responsibility. If the Roma, being a “true European minority”, are not really a constituent part of their society; if the Roma are mainly responsible for their own situation; if the Roma are actually unwilling to integrate into the society, which would basically be their own responsibility anyway; if it is actually in their culture to be what

they are, then governments are not to be blamed for any possible failures. But most importantly: the target population's controversial nature will be somewhat addressed this way. The image that is implied in policies is not entirely different from and does not essentially contradict public opinion about the Roma – and this would be a very dangerous exercise to do anyway. Distributing benefits to a negatively constructed group is always very dangerous from a political perspective. Although Roma policies undoubtedly distribute some benefits to Roma (such as scholarships, money spent on trainings and other inclusion programmes), these do not appear in the spotlight on the one hand, and there are plenty of measures that counterbalance them, and which get much more publicity. Such measures include terminating or radically changing the structure of social benefits that most of the Roma are likely to use, linking social benefits to conditions that the vast majority of Roma will not be able to comply with, fighting *for* the legal acknowledgment of Roma segregation in schools, conniving anti-Roma movements and even criminal acts. These actions and acts get vastly more publicity than the benefits that reach the Roma through Roma policies. Political gain is thought to be earned with Anti-Roma attitudes. If, at the same time, governments are forced to address the “Roma problem” in a way that should regard the Roma as deserving and oppressed and that should distribute benefits rather than burdens to them, this latter activity should be played down as much as possible and should be covert rather than explicit. The target definition in Roma policies seems to be serving this purpose very well. And this, of course, leads to the absolute failure of these policies, besides promoting an anti-Roma image.

6 Defining the Problem

6.1 On problems

Ian Robertson starts his introductory chapter, in which he aims to define what a problem is with giving everyday examples. One of them is this: “you are sitting at home in Manchester and you want to be on the beach at St Tropez” (ROBERTSON 2005:2). In any further analyses, whether by Robertson or by others, whether in psychology or other disciplines, a problem is defined from the point of view of an actor who wants to get from one state to another. This approach, however, does not capture the whole system of dealing with problems. Problems certainly do have “owners”. But as we discussed earlier (see the Introduction), problems do not exist without human evaluations. In this context, the problem is regarded as a problem from the evaluator's point of view, which is already another way of looking at it.

From a theoretical point of view, there might be several actors on the problem scene: (a) the one for whom the state of affairs is deemed unsatisfactory, (b) the one who evaluates the situation as unsatisfactory and in need of change and (c) the one who acts with the aim of changing this situation. In the following, these three roles will be called the bearer, the evaluator and the agent respectively. There are obviously other players and stakeholders who appear in the problem scene and especially in addressing problems, but for our purposes in this analysis, these three will be important.

In everyday life, like in the example given by Robertson, very often, all three roles are played by the same actor: the person sitting at home evaluates this situation as unsatisfactory, he is the one affected by these negative circumstances, and problem solving is also probably going to happen through his own actions (buying a ticket to the Côte d'Azur and actually travelling there). This is however not always the case even in everyday life. In business-related activities for example, there is often an external agent involved. Even our man in Manchester, England may decide to hire a travel agent to organise an all-inclusive trip for him. All this makes it important to examine the situation when different roles are carried out by different participants.

Few would doubt that it is the problem bearer who has the necessary insight essential for defining the problem, analysing the state of affairs and devising tools for a successful remedy, but most of all, they have the incentives that are necessary to act. As far as everyday problems are concerned, external agents can provide assistance in some or even all of the steps, but they will always remain in the background, without responsibility and without the need to make final decisions. Their role might be limited to providing expertise and thus influencing the problem bearer's decisions⁵⁰. This expertise often includes the problem definition itself, in which case the agent must study the owner's circumstances, his goals, the available tools and limitations and the complete setting within which the problem is to be interpreted. Agents are normally hired by the problem bearer, and the whole process starts with the problem bearer's dissatisfaction and desire for change.

Social policy shows a somewhat different picture. It is the rule rather than the exception to have different participants playing the different roles. In most cases, however, the evaluation of the situation is based on the bearer's perception, through various channels. Representatives of certain groups may try to shape public opinion, "bearer" organisations may attempt to elevate

⁵⁰ In which they might be extremely successful, and it may turn out that the decisions were actually made by the agent. But this is already a question of a number of other factors including business, power and influence, and does not change the basic setup.

their issues to the public agenda (and later on even higher to policy agenda), but more powerful attempts including protests may also play a role.

Another important theoretical question is connected to identifying the bearer of the problem. It is perhaps the most controversial of the three. Unlike the role of evaluator and agent, the role of problem bearer is not assumed deliberately by actors in the problem scene. It should be a question of objective analysis, since problem bearers are normally neither selected nor volunteering. At the same time, the identity of the problem bearer is of crucial importance. It will lay down the basis for decisions on some of the most important aspects including who the policy should benefit and how. But since policy making is also about shaping public opinion and finding justification and support for the decision maker's viewpoints, this question can be, and very often is, contested, especially if the policy scene includes groups with a negative image but with some power.

In the usual case, target groups are seen to have a problem and policy is intended to address this problem to make the situation more desirable for them. In this scenario, the group in question is the bearer of the problem. This is not always the case though. There is a well-known distinction in policy studies between population segments who are seen to *have* a problem and groups who *are* seen as a problem (CLARKE-COCHRANE 2005). The latter is typically true for population segments which fall into the deviant category in the social construction of target populations theory (see Chapter 3.3). Examples of such groups may include drug addicts or criminals. These are the groups that carry very negative images in the society and have no significant power. According to the social constructionist theory, these are the groups that will get burdens rather than benefits, which is in line with an approach where they are seen as a problem and not as ones who have a problem. The bearer of the problem in this case is the society itself, with the government acting on behalf of it. There is an obvious connection between the constructed image on the one hand and the role that this groups plays in the problem scene on the other. The more negative the image is, the less likely it is for them to be regarded as bearers of the problem. Instead, they will be left to play a role that we didn't even include in the above analysis, since it is not a genuine role to play: not only is it non-active, but it also puts them in the situation where they are accused of actually causing the problem. They are to be blamed for the non-desirable situation. The solution from here may take different directions, from helping them change through correctional measures to outright and severe punishments. Drug addicts may be fined, forced to undergo rehabilitation treatment or even imprisoned depending on the approach, while criminals will invariably be incarcerated and punished, and

only very rarely be provided systematic and effective assistance in trying to overcome difficulties (e.g. rehabilitation programmes, trainings through employment policies etc.), which would imply that the policy recognizes them as bearers of the problem, besides being the causes of the problems. Even though it should be obvious from a sociological and psychological point of view that these groups do suffer from negative effects, i.e. they are also bearers of the problem, in most public policies none of these groups are seen to have a problem, they are rather portrayed to be the problem themselves.

It should be emphasized that these images of who is a problem and who has a problem entirely depend on social construction and framing. It is far from being “natural” to see drug addicts and even criminals to be the problem rather than to have a problem⁵¹. This is perhaps more obvious in the case of more “controversial” groups like the homeless or refugees. The policy response to the “homeless problem” may change with the image constructed of them, and ranges from providing a helping hand (in this case, the homeless are portrayed to have a problem) to criminalising homelessness itself (in this case, they are the problem themselves). At the time of writing, the refugee crisis is an ongoing problem for the EU. It is very easy to see how successfully government communication can construct an extremely negative image of refugees and thus make the vast majority of the general public accept rejecting and even punitive policies towards them. Constructing negative images of certain groups of people is always easier than the opposite, especially if the group lacks power. But there is a correlation between power, image and whether the group is likely to be portrayed as one having a problem or as one being a problem. We repeat here the graph in Figure 3 above, now with showing this correlation.

⁵¹ Compare this to the policy response to alcoholism and alcoholics. While drug consumption is regarded in most societies as a criminal offence with consumers facing harsh treatment and no sympathy (they are the problems, they have no problems at all), alcohol consumption, although it has been proved far more dangerous than consuming most drugs, is not regarded an offence at all, and alcoholics are regarded to have a problem, with policies providing them treatment and sympathy.

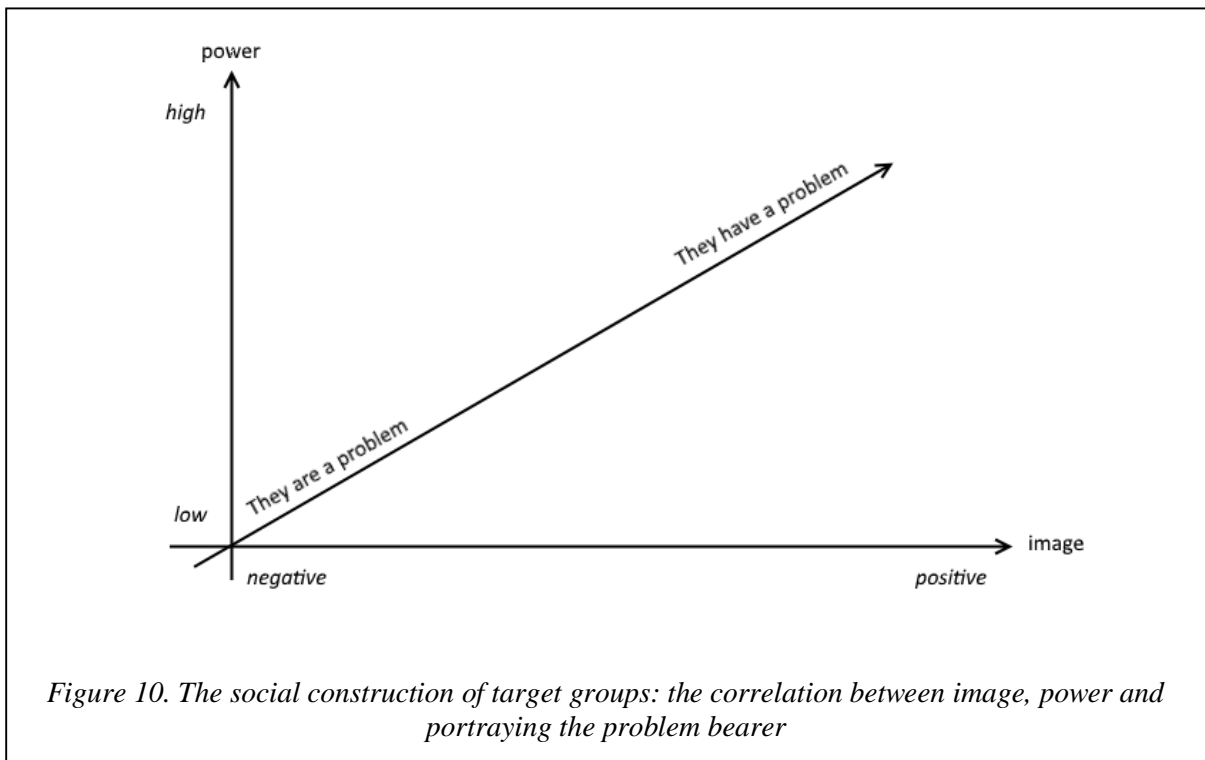


Figure 10 shows the correlation between power and image on the one hand and represents the problem bearer. The higher the power and the more positive the image, the more likely it is that the group will be portrayed as the problem bearer, while groups with low levels of power and negative images will be likely to be portrayed as being a problem rather than the bearers of the problem. Since social constructions depend heavily on a number of non-objective factors which cannot be calculated in a straightforward way, this correlation is not always and not necessarily purely direct, but it still shows the general tendency. It is highly unlikely that a group with a positive image and high power will appear in public policies as one that is causing the problem, and similarly, it is almost certain that groups with negative images and no power will be seen as problems themselves. It may, however happen that a group has a very negative image and at the same time has some power, which results in a certain kind of clash between the basic factors contributing to the final outcome.

This is indeed the situation in which the Roma currently find themselves. What happens with the distribution of roles in the problem scene will be the topic of our next chapter.

6.2 Roles in the problem domain

When state authorities in the 18th century were trying to address the “Roma problem”, the Roma appeared as a group who did not participate in the theoretical framework described above: they

were neither the bearers of the problem, nor evaluators nor agents. The problem bearer was the state itself, feeling endangered by the Roma population; the evaluation came from different public actors, the general public and state authorities; while agents were local authorities and police forces. Central-Eastern European states' attempt to solve the Roma problem is clearly an example where the Roma themselves were the problem, with no other role for them to play in the process. Making them disappear was seen as the only solution, but luckily, assimilation was also seen as a way of reaching this goal. Maria Theresa's decree in 1769 saw the solution in settling down the Gypsies, while her son, Joseph II attempted to make Gypsies simply "dissolve" by forcefully taking their children and giving them to non-Gypsy families and banning them from marrying within the Gypsy community (MEZEY 1986:84-86). Like homosexuals just a few decades ago in Europe (and like those unfortunate animals in the fairy tales quoted in chapter 5.2), they were expected to change what they are before they could be accepted. Due to the lack of a magician, this was a failed attempt in all of these cases, except that of the ladybird.

Fast forward two hundred years from the time of Maria Theresa's decree, and the situation was not very different in terms of problem description, as seen among many others in a Hungarian Communist Party decree from 1961. Here, a large part of the Gypsies are described as a problem, rather than people having a problem. According to the document, they "avoid decent jobs" and they are living as "parasites" off the Hungarian society (MEZEY 1986:240). But at the end of the twentieth century, international European Roma policy was already starting to formulate. They definitely used a different language, first of all acknowledging that the Roma (still called gypsies, with a non-capitalized G) suffer a great deal of discrimination. Although the first major international policy document, prepared by the Council of Europe in 1969 (CoE 1969), defines the fight against discrimination as the main goal of the recommendation, it is clear from later documents that until the mid-2000s, international policy attention towards the Roma was based on a feeling of danger rather than humanitarian considerations. Already after the fall of communism in 1989, but especially with the eastern expansion of the European Union approaching, more and more attention was paid to the Roma issue by intergovernmental organisations. Although these policy documents themselves do not reveal much about it, it is clear from other sources that at least partly, this attention was due to a perceived danger of Roma people migrating from East European states into the European Union countries, which suggests that the Roma were also seen by these initiatives as being a problem rather than having

one. The CSCE (today OSCE⁵²) in a 1993 press statement is rather clear about how they view the migration of the Roma as a potential danger for Western European countries: “Cold War restrictions on mobility are no longer in place, and the relative stability and prosperity of western Europe [...] have prompted sizeable outflows. Higher levels of migration, involving Roma as well, have led to additional problems associated with regulating migration by transit and receiving countries. New measures have been introduced recently to tighten east-to-west migration controls” (CSCE 1993). The same document also mentions that the situation is also a problem for the Roma themselves, but the main focus seems to be on protecting Western governments and the Western region from Roma migration. Other reports were also prepared by official EU bodies and other organisations which dealt with the problems caused by Roma migration, with the attention intensifying as the eastward expansion became closer. The Council of Europe was dealing with this “Roma danger” even as late as 2000, in a motion which was submitted by ten members including the Hungarian, Romanian, Polish, Czech, Slovakian and Bulgarian representatives, even the title of which left no doubt about the true purpose of stopping the dangerous migration of Roma to western states (CoE 2000). It seems clear that the growing amount of policy attention towards the Roma problem was triggered by the growing amount of the perceived danger caused by Roma migration from east to west. Thus, policy advice for the so-called “countries in transition”, i.e. ex-communist states was not actually based on humanitarian or social justice considerations, and although the policies themselves do acknowledge that the problem bearers are the Roma, seen from a wider perspective, they still relied on the idea that the “real” problem bearers are the Western European welfare states. The logic was clear – albeit a little naïve, too – that if the situation of the Roma improved in their home countries in the poorer Central Eastern European states, they would not appear as a burden on the richer western states.

The important question is whether current Roma policies employ a different approach. We will be trying to provide an answer to this crucial question in the following subchapters in Chapter 6. But before going into a detailed analysis, it will be useful to have an overview of the main points and some structural tendencies.

In Table 2 below, we have outlined the distribution of roles in the problem scene among some of the most important actors of the Roma policy process. This image is not what policy documents describe but rather what we can see happening. The Roma, for example, are shown

⁵² Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, previously Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe

to be the bearers of the problems, although this is not necessarily what policies imply in their approaches, but it is certainly what we can conclude as the result of sociological research (and pure logic and common sense). The roles of other stakeholders are also shown according to what we see in their activities. In Table 2, we focused our attention to educational policies. The results shown are based on evaluations on the one hand, and the results of our own analysis of the situation. Some level of subjectivity cannot be excluded here, but the general trend can certainly be seen. The number of ticks shows the intensity of the efforts the stakeholder makes in carrying out the given role. Among the stakeholders, the Roma are a problematical case. When it comes to the bearer of the problem, by Roma, we could mean the whole of the Roma population. But who are the Roma evaluators or agents? Could they be organisations where there are Roma employees? Most of the NGOs that work with the aim of Roma inclusion will have at least a few Roma staff members, but many think this does not make the organisation Roma. This is clearly an intricate question, and at this point, we will not be able to provide an answer. The vast majority of evaluations however point out that Roma involvement in the whole policy process is not satisfactory. This is what we are going to accept in analysing the following table.

	Bearer	Evaluator	Agent
Roma	✓✓✓	×	×
NGOs	×	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
EU bodies	×	✓✓	×
Governments	✓	✓	✓
Academia	×	✓✓✓	×
Educational institutions	✓✓	×	✓✓
Local authorities / communities	✓✓	×	✓

Table 2. Distribution of roles in the problem scene played by stakeholders

What we see is that there is only one stakeholder in the whole system, which may be seen as playing all possible roles: the national government. Yet, the effort it makes is the lowest possible in all three roles. Evaluation is mainly carried out by NGOs and academic researchers, with EU bodies and other international and intergovernmental institutions also playing a role. We see NGOs playing the most intensive role in acting as agents, i.e. working with the aim of making a change. Besides being the initiators of a series of projects that have meanwhile been taken over by states, they also play an important role in government policy action plans: most of the programmes included in policies are in practice left to NGOs, who can apply for financial aid, most often European Union sources. Governments and educational institutions also appear as agents, but mainly as implementers of public policy rather than taking the initiative, which is characteristic of NGOs. One other very important point that can be seen in the table is that the stakeholders that are to be regarded as the primary bearers of the problem – the Roma themselves, educational institutions and local communities – do not normally take part in evaluations, and their role as agents is also limited, and in the case of the Roma themselves, almost non-existent. This poses a potential major risk, since – as we have stated above – problem bearers are precisely the ones who have the insight into the situation which would be essential for defining the problem and selecting tools for addressing them. Consultations with problem bearers is very rare in Roma policy building, as many analysts have noted. Policy evaluations usually point out that the Roma themselves are largely left out of the policy process (OSF 2012, KULLMANN ET AL 2013 etc.), but we should also draw attention to the fact that other problem bearers, particularly educational institutions and local communities, who are obviously also affected by the negative circumstances, are also left out, and they are not even mentioned in recommendations by policy analysts either. A certain part of the policy recommendations and action plans is expected to be implemented by educational institutions, who usually do not have a role in the preparation and evaluation of these policies.

6.3 Poverty: the root of all evil?

One of the central questions regarding the rationale is whether policies use a human rights based approach or not. This question was partly discussed in chapter 5.5 above, but from a targeting point of view. The question, on the other hand, also plays an important role in problem definitions. A human rights approach would mean that policy makers see human rights violations as the cause of the problem. It would suggest that the Roma minority are excluded because of discrimination, and consequently, if discrimination is effectively addressed, it would

have a beneficial effect on the overall situation as well. In other words, human rights violations (discrimination, racism, exclusion, segregation) would need to be dealt with in the first place, the other problems (poverty, educational, health and employment related problems) should be regarded as symptoms and should be dealt with accordingly. This is indeed what most academic research suggests.

Roma inclusion strategies follow an entirely different path. The major problem they highlight is poverty. Even if there is some variation, most of them are very clear about it, with some strategies categorically denying anything else (particularly racism and discrimination) as the main cause of the problems.

The Hungarian policy repeatedly and obsessively, claims that the main problem is poverty. In the introduction, it even refuses to talk about (social) groups let alone ethnic minorities, and instead, talks about “individuals” living in poverty. It does mention segregation and exclusion, but it ascribes them to poverty again: “One of Hungary’s gravest problems today is the gradual deterioration of the situation of individuals living in poverty, including the Roma population. A consequence of this process are segregation, exclusion from the opportunities offered by life in the fields of education, employment and health care, and deterioration in living conditions” (HU-11:6). That is, the strategy claims that all the main problem areas mentioned in the EU Framework document (employment, education, health, housing and the horizontal aspect of discrimination and racism) are caused by one single problem: poverty. What poverty itself might be caused by, is unfortunately left unanswered by the Hungarian strategy paper, but ironically, the Hungarian government has been criticised several times precisely because of its anti-poor approach. Additionally, there has been actual government communication in which governing party members were claiming that it is the individual’s responsibility and fault if they are poor. What we are left with then, is a situation, where certain individuals become poor as a result of their own mistakes.

The Slovakian strategy is less open about this approach, but a closer analysis can reveal more: “The Slovak Government acknowledges that the quality of life of Roma communities has been backsliding from the situation in 1989 due to various reasons, and that without external involvement, the situation of Roma communities cannot improve in the foreseeable future” (SK-11:3). The “various reasons” are unfortunately not detailed any further, but it is clear that external involvement only appears at this later stage, where solution is necessary. The problem is a “given”, with no detailed causes, but the burden of solving this problem is now on the society. As far as the main underlying cause is concerned, the Slovakian strategy also claims

that it is indeed, yet again, poverty (SK-11:5). It also links *exclusion* itself to poverty, although, unlike the Hungarian government, they do not claim that exclusion is the direct and only result of poverty. Fighting exclusion seems to mean fighting poverty then.

Poverty and exclusion are somehow linked together in most other Roma policies, too, whether CEE countries or others are concerned, and most of them mention *poverty* as one of the most fundamental problems, which means that even if they are not very clear about it, the cause-and-effect chain they suggest is this: poverty causes exclusion. This is extremely problematic from several points of view. Poverty is clearly not an initial state from this respect: being poor does not logically and necessarily lead to social exclusion. While it obviously has an important role to play in education-related problems, we have abundant sociological evidence that changing this parameter alone will not lead to a major change in educational outcomes (see Chapter 7 below).

While poverty is certainly the most evident problem individual people will experience in an excluded social situation, from a theoretical point of view, it cannot be regarded as the main area of targeting in addressing the problem in public policies. Poverty should be regarded as a *consequence* of exclusion, not as a cause. Policies should aim to eliminate causes, not symptoms. Symptoms are expected to disappear if the causes are eradicated, and diminish if the causes are reduced.

If we look at the most pressing problems in the field of Roma education, the situation is even more evident. Roma children are put to segregated Roma classes, and not to segregated poor classes. There are Roma-only ghettoized schools in all of the CEE countries – these are not poor-only schools, these are Roma-only schools. We know only too well the phenomenon of white-flight, which is never called rich-flight, and for a reason. In the myriad of surveys available about racism and discrimination, parents would refuse to send their children to schools with a Roma majority, and not to a school with poor majority. The list could go on.

While there are poverty-related problems in education, they are again symptoms, and not causes. We know of frequent cases where Roma families are not able to send their children to school because of financial reasons. In some instances, the child is expected to help the family in seasonal work, in other cases, the family do not have enough money to buy the necessary school equipment or even proper clothing and footwear. But it would be too naïve to assume that the educational problems – especially on a larger scale – would be solved or even greatly reduced, if there were no financial barriers. After all, in a large number of cases (the ratio is

unknown), Roma families *can* afford to send their children to school, but this does not have a noticeable effect on the educational situation of the Roma community concerned: they still face the problem of segregation and discrimination and, as a result, produce a very poor educational result.

To avoid misunderstandings: we do not suggest that alleviating acute problems should not take place. They are certainly necessary, like painkillers for a toothache (see Chapter 7.2). But policies are expected to address social problems, and they are expected to produce lasting and systematic changes. Targeting poverty will not reach such results, if the root of the problem is not poverty.

In this research, we are focusing on educational policy. But let us not forget, that the policies we are examining are (supposedly⁵³) Roma policies expected to target a number of other policy fields from employment to housing. In fields not related to education, the situation is similar. In the Czech Republic, it was the Roma, who were separated by walls from the majority society and not the poor. In Hungary, it was the Roma who were targeted and murdered by serial killers and not the poor. In every country, it is the Roma who are often denied jobs, housing or proper health care services and not the poor. It was Roma people who the two French PMs expelled from France and not poor people. Even if we suppose that policies will be successful in raising the material standards of the Roma population (which is a very brave hypothesis), it is questionable whether this would result in an overall improvement of the situation. Without a robust policy that targets discrimination in all fields, especially employment and education, it is highly unlikely that the economic situation of Roma people could markedly increase.

Putting poverty in the focus of policies inescapably has a framing effect. One important consequence is that the problem can become individualized, in which case it is no longer a problem of a minority. Acknowledging that discrimination is a fundamental reason resulting in other problems would automatically mean that society at large is also (or even primarily) responsible for the problem. It will not simply be a social problem, it will be a problem of society. This, in turn, would widen the scope of both the policy and the problem. Discrimination is by definition a one way route, and it is always the discriminator who is at fault. Poverty, on the other hand, can also be interpreted as an individual problem, even if it affects a large number of people. If policies deal with individual problems, the answers to a number of key questions

⁵³ With the exception of Hungary, where they refused to prepare a Roma policy and instead, prepared a poverty-cum-Roma policy, which is reflected in the very title of the document.

will be essentially different. Responsibility is one of them. Whose fault is it that certain individuals live in poverty? The Slovakian strategy only mentions “various reasons” without any concrete examples, in other words, they simply do not care about the reasons. Other policy documents link the low level of education to the low level of employment (certainly rightly so, even if there are other reasons for employment problems), with the Bulgarian strategy clearly stating that “raising the skills levels will contribute to alleviating the poverty of the employed and their families” (BG-11:16). The next question must be what causes the low educational attainment of Roma people. Here, we are left without an explicitly worded, straightforward answer in all of the strategies examined, even though the answer is easily found in academic and NGO research: it is discrimination, racism and segregation. These are the words that policies seem to be frightened of and which they try to avoid at all costs.

The Framework Strategy’s four key areas (education, employment, health and housing) do not include poverty, and poverty is not even mentioned in the horizontal aspects. It does, however, include references to poverty several times, and uses “exclusion and poverty” almost as a terminology unit, which we think could serve as a possible basis of a misguided approach.

One last note is in place here, even if this goes beyond our focus of education. Although poverty is regarded as the main problem, the action plans do not normally contain elements that would effectively address the problem of poverty. In the first place, they do not contain an analysis of the reasons for poverty, without which it is obviously almost hopeless to plan appropriate actions. Employment policies might be expected to address the problem of poverty, but – as evidence shows – they are rather unsuccessful in this. The living standard of Roma populations all over Europe has been falling, the ratio of unemployed Roma, though already extremely high, is still on the rise today. What could one expect from these policies in other fields, if they are unable to show results in the field that they regard the most important and the basis of everything else?

6.4 Roma culture, mentality and motivation

In Roma policies, language and culture make up the lion’s share in the policy attention that we can see both in the 2011 Roma inclusion strategies and in international policy documents alike. A simple look at the frequency with which various topics are mentioned in policy documents⁵⁴

⁵⁴ We have included 49 documents in the analysis (Council of Europe, European Union institutions, OSCE, CoE and national integration strategies from 2011).

shows that language and culture are two of the most frequently mentioned topics.

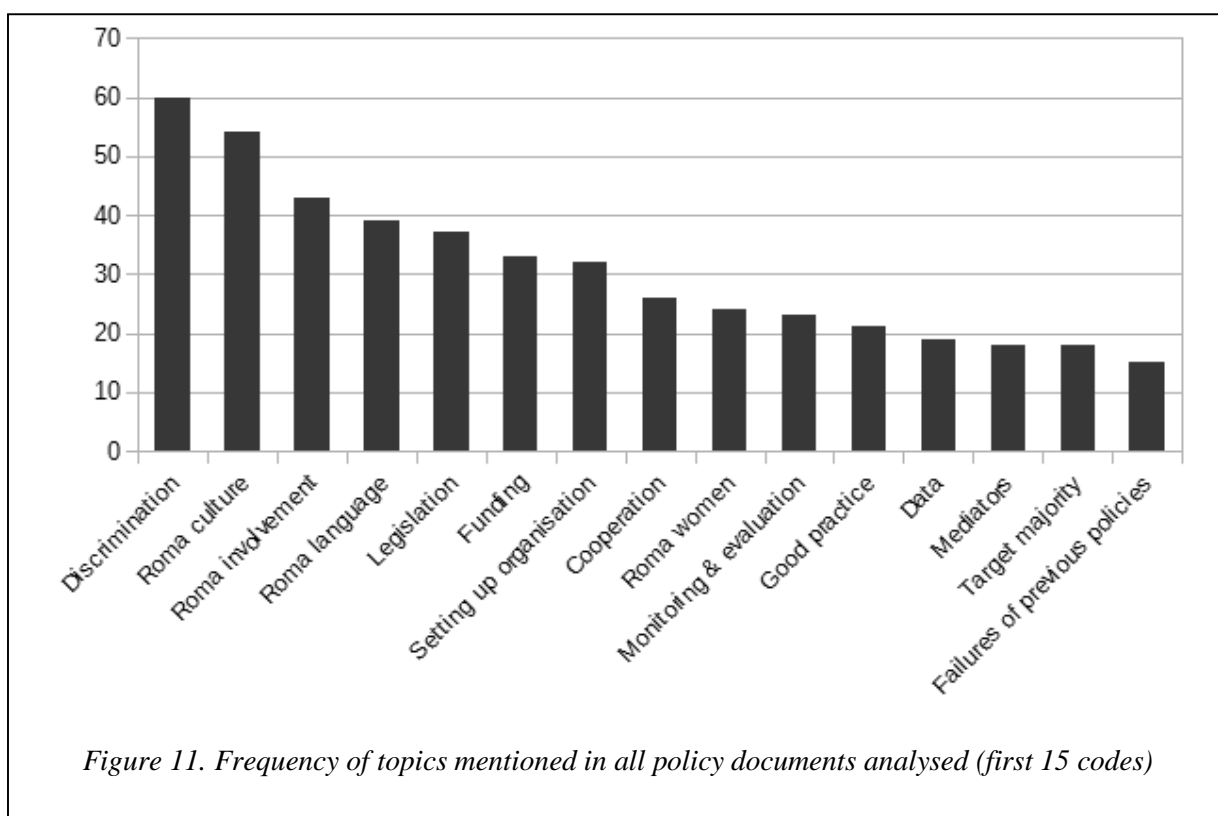
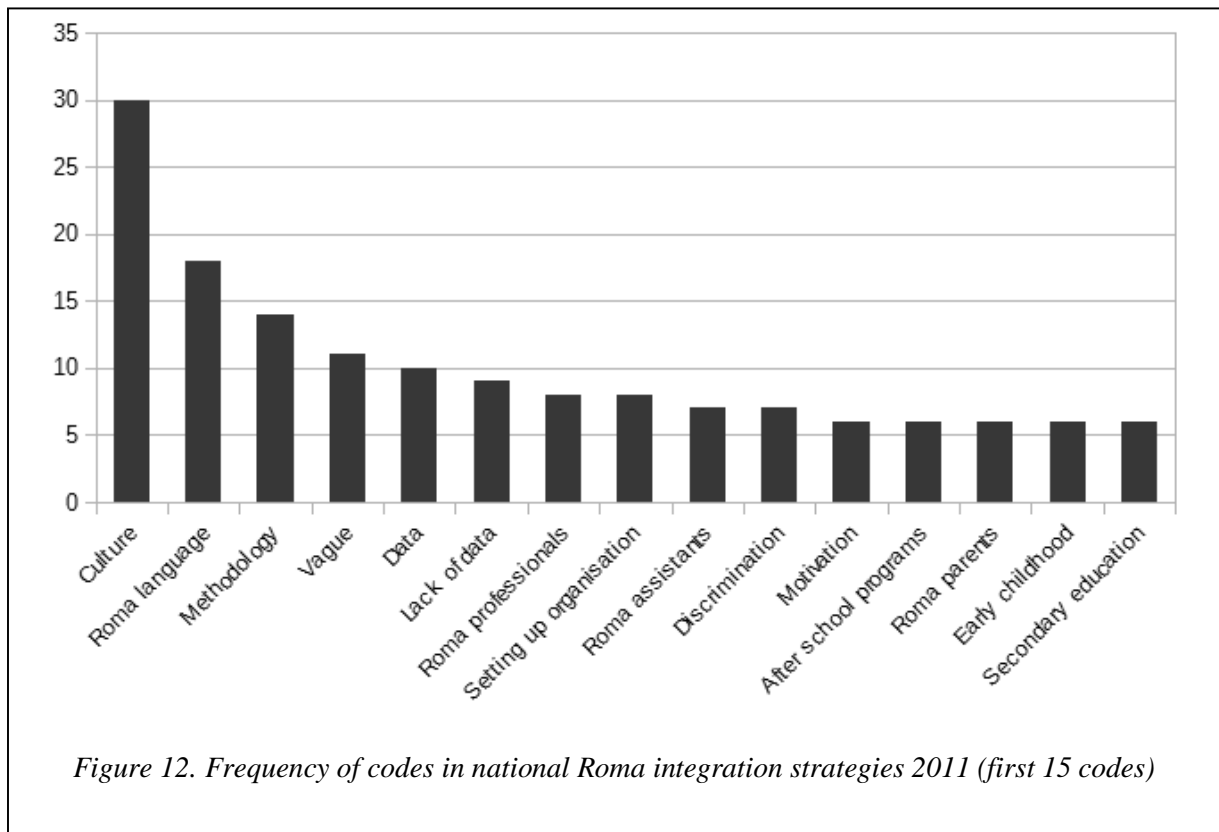


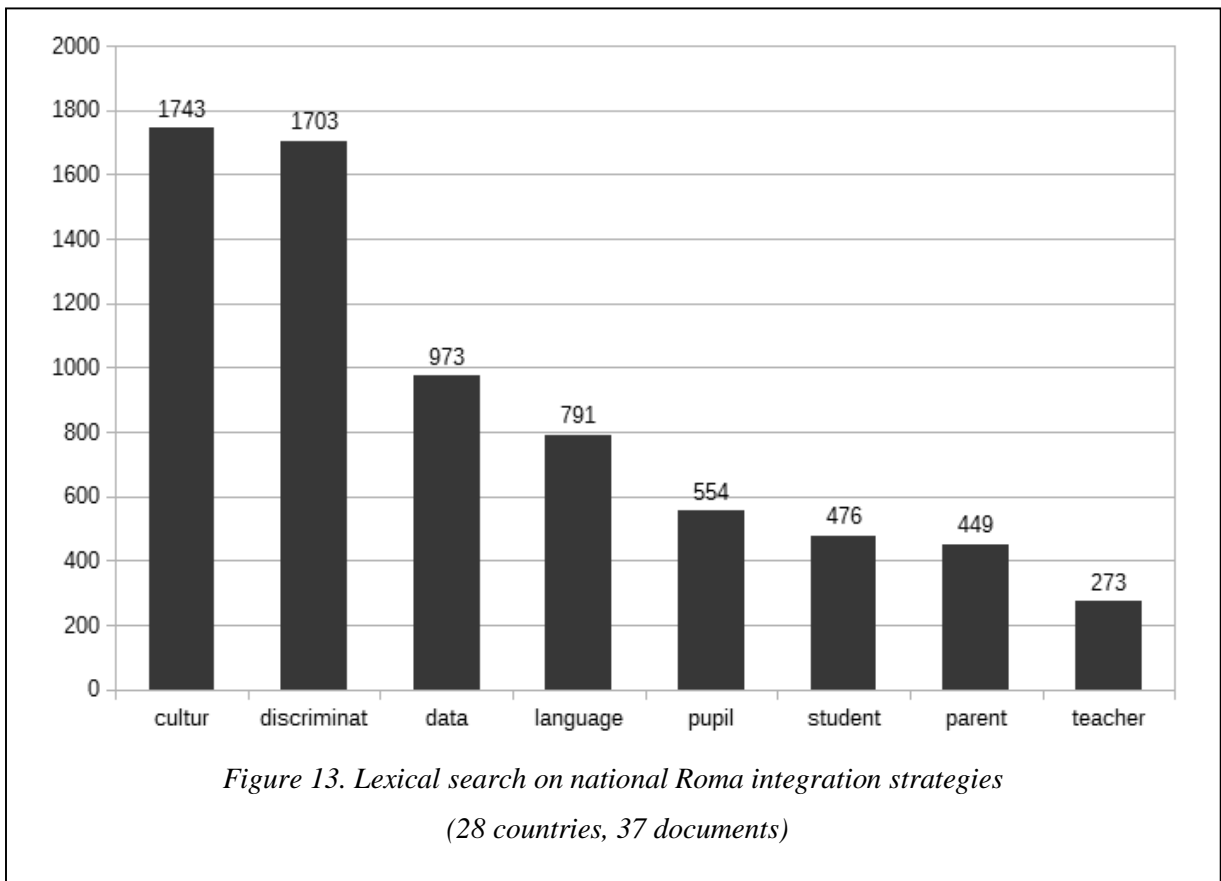
Figure 11 shows the result of all the documents that we have included in the coding, which explains why discrimination is the most frequently mentioned topic: international policy documents and analyses place it at the top of the list of problems. Roma involvement is another topic most policy recommendations prepared by international institutions will emphasize. If we account for these two topics, what we have is that language and culture are the most often mentioned topics in all of the policy-related documents.

If we limit the scope of analysis to only include national Roma policies, the situation becomes even more interesting (see Figure 12).



Roma culture and language are already at the top of the list, with culture mentioned more than twice as often as the next topic, methodology, which itself is something that we should find strange in such a prominent role in national Roma integration strategies. The material examined includes both the policy documents and the action plans, but this is no explanation for the strange fact that culture and language are mentioned many times more than the topic of discrimination, which is at the top of the list in the overall analysis, even if that includes these national policy documents as well. The situation is even more problematic if we consider that culture is dealt with almost six times more often than some of the educational topics like early childhood education or secondary education.

In the above analysis, we used the coding technique (parts of the text where the actual topic is what the code identifies). A simple lexical search may also be revealing, especially because that way, we can include documents not covered by the coding analysis. Figure 13 below shows the results of a lexical search run on all the documents submitted to the European Commission in 2011 or later, including the annexes (37 documents submitted by 28 member states including Croatia, not a member state in 2011, but submitting the policy document in 2012, and also including Malta's two-page letter in lieu of a strategy paper).



What is surprising is that “cultur” (culture, cultural⁵⁵) is used more often than “discrimination” and related words and many times more than some of the words expected to be highly important like student or teacher⁵⁶.

“Culture” is thus an expression that is extensively used, and we know that this is also the case beyond policy documents including academia and NGO communication. One would expect that such a central term would get defined at least in policy documents, but this is not the case: none of the policies we have looked at try to describe what they mean by culture. What is at stake is much more than mere philosophical speculation about the meaning of a word. This word is obviously used as one of the central technical terms in policy papers and strategies. What exactly is it that some of the policies aim to protect? What is it that some of the policies regard as central to the acceptance of Roma by the majority society? Culture is very often used in everyday conversations and non-professional contexts, in which case it hardly goes beyond

⁵⁵ In the lexical search, we have used chunks of words to find all occurrences of derived words, e.g. „cultur” for both “culture” and “cultural”, “discriminat” for “discrimination, discriminatory, discriminating”.

⁵⁶ Obviously, we did not include some of the most frequently used words, but it could be interesting for a comparison. The word „Roma” is used 15300 times in the 37 documents, while „educat” (education, educating, educator etc) is used 4178 times. The word „school” is used 2457 times, less than one and a half times more than culture.

artefacts, music, dances, folk costumes and works of literature and other arts. But do habits concerning the role of genders, or customs related to marriage form part of the culture, and if so, are these customs and traditions to be protected according to policies? Do policymakers still regard an itinerant lifestyle as part of the Roma culture?

In the following we will try to discover how Roma policies look at Roma culture and what role they assign to it. Along the way, it will be useful (and practically inevitable, if we want to use a solid theoretical approach rather than popular wisdom and personal impressions) to deal with the question of the definition of culture itself.

In academic research, although culture is regarded an important factor, it is far from being the most important element in Roma inclusion. Educational underachievement, employment problems and the resulting poverty are mentioned in the first places in most analyses, with discrimination based on ethnicity identified as one of the main causes of all these problems. Cultural rights, including the right to use one's own mother tongue, is an important goal, but is not generally regarded a key factor in solving the exclusion problems of the Roma populations, although opinions vary on this issue regarding minorities in general. Almost ten years ago, a report prepared for the European Commission found that national Roma policies had not put enough emphasis on culture and language. This was certainly true in several national action plans (such as Slovakia), but some others (including Hungary) had already mentioned culture among the recommended actions several times. One of the criticisms formulated in the report was that "a strong link between culture/the cultural sector and social exclusion is not made" (MALLOY – GAZZOLA 2006:10). Although today, this strong link is obviously present in most of the Roma inclusion strategies, this hasn't improved the success of these policies at all. It is important to note that the report is not coherent in identifying the most important issues: the main problem even in their own conclusions, is not the lack of emphasis on culture, but the overall quality of the strategies, with evaluations such as "goals but not targets are set" or "even where [policies] state goals, these are vague and not well defined" (*op. cit.*).

Is there a strong link between culture and the exclusion of the Roma, then? How does it serve the purposes of inclusion if these two are linked in Roma policies? The argument for or against such a link depends on a number of important factors, but first and foremost, on the definition of culture.

In the lay usage of the term, culture primarily, and sometimes exclusively refers to artefacts such as works of art and intangible heritage including songs and dances, with the meaning very

often extended to *some* traditions, first and foremost celebrations and commemorations such as weddings and funerals, or even the types of food consumed at various special occasions. This view is so naïve that it is not even listed in the overview of definitions of culture in encyclopaedic works. BOLAFFI ET AL (2002) collects definitions starting with Francis Bacon all through to the twenty-first century, including emblematic and influential scientists like Lévi-Strauss, Geertz or Weber. There are a few elements common to all of the definitions, one of the most important ones being that culture is closely linked to, or sometimes equal to, *social behaviour*.

The social element and especially behaviour, is also emphasised in the definition of culture provided by BALLARD (2002:12): “a set of ideas, values and understandings which people deploy within a specific network of social relationships as a means of ordering their interpersonal interactions”. In this interpretation, culture is already very far from the widespread popular interpretation. In this respect, culture is much more than traditions and celebrations. Culture is much nearer to what we usually see as the result of the socialisation process, but at a different level. BALLARD (2002) differentiates between culture and behaviour and compares it to the Saussurean distinction of *langue* and *parole* in linguistics. Culture includes rules and conventions that help organise and interpret behaviour, and in this respect, the acquisition of these rules and conventions, i.e. culture is very much the result of the socialisation process. Traditions, celebrations, songs and dances are but a small and not even the most important parts of culture, which is in stark contrast to what we see in most of the literature on Roma culture. They are merely the results of certain types of ‘cultural behaviour’; ones that are very rarely used compared to the everyday behavioural codes that need to be encoded and decoded continuously by all members of the cultural community. These codes help make it possible for the members of the community to interact with each other in a meaningful way. These are the codes that define practically every moment of the everyday life from rules of greeting people through conducting various types of conversations to the rules that define how to behave in the myriads of situations with various levels of formality one commonly encounters.

To provide an answer to the question raised above, whether habits concerning the role of genders or marriage are integral parts of a culture or not: the answer is a very definite yes. But it includes much more than that. The way the community looks at reading and written materials in general may obviously also be part of the culture. The way children are expected to spend their free time or the way they are expected or required to communicate (in any language that may happen to be their mother tongue) is also an important part of their culture: using restricted

code as opposed to elaborated code for example is a highly important part of their culture⁵⁷.

How shall we understand it then, when policies claim that they aim to protect the Roma culture? Some warn⁵⁸ that misconceptions are not rare even in academic works about Roma culture, and that there is a risk of identifying Roma with some of the habits and lifestyles that may arise from living conditions and other necessities rather than from culture (see also DRÁL 2008). We argue that the dividing line is the “value” part of the definition cited above: culture cannot contain anything that is not valued by the community, anything that arise out of necessity, anything that the community sees as actions that are in the best interest of the individual or the group⁵⁹, rather than actions that are seen as the proper way of acting, behaving and getting things done. Thus, for example, the way children actually spend their free time in a community and the way they are expected to do it, may be very different in some cases. In other words: culture is not what you do and how you behave; it is what you are expected to do and how you are expected to behave, by your cultural community.

In policy documents, however, culture is understood in an entirely different way. Policy documents are essentially targeting hand-picked parts of cultural heritage rather than culture itself. The Romanian strategy lists the cultural goals as follows: “preserving the minority language / languages, preserving / developing the ethnic written culture and media, preserving their material heritage (museum and ethnographic collections), preserving their intangible patrimony (performing arts, traditional crafts, living human treasures, holidays, festivals)” (RO-11:9). This goal is obviously to be welcomed, although there might be a debate over whether language forms part of a culture per the above definition or not, and preserving traditional crafts may also raise serious questions that must be answered. But later on, the Romanian strategy does not only aim to preserve Roma dances and music. It does actually include an interpretation of culture which is nearer to the scientific definitions examined above, and includes values. The strategy claims that Roma culture is basically oral, which is the result of a lack of training. Roma culture, the policy says, is “low-literature folk culture” as opposed to the Romanian “modern culture”, which can be characterised by “contemporary values” – and by logical consequence, Roma culture does not contain such contemporary values. What “contemporary values” might mean, is unfortunately not explained, but it is clear that this type of values is

⁵⁷ More about the role of language and how language related problems are treated in policies see Chapter 7.3.

⁵⁸ See for example Elena Marushiakova and Veselin Popov’s article at <http://romafacts.uni-graz.at/index.php/culture/introduction/roma-culture> (last accessed 30 September 2015).

⁵⁹ This also raises the question of the culture of poverty, an idea largely abandoned by most researchers, one of whose central tenets can be refuted by this approach.

more desirable than those found in Roma culture. Consequently, after all, not all parts of Roma culture are to be protected, according to the Romanian strategy, and it is indeed very clear in the document: “a reconstruction of values is urgently needed, by promoting measures to fight against the social and *cultural gap between the Roma culture and the Romanian culture*” (RO-11:13, emphasis added). One problem with the Romanian strategy is that it stops at this point, and we are left without any explanation of what particular values are to be “urgently reconstructed”. This, on the other hand, would be essential, since simply talking about “values” is not convincing enough, especially if the strategy clearly disregards any scientific definition of culture, where values do indeed play a central role. We may perhaps interpret the Romanian strategy’s standpoint as something that is nearer to the idea of “the culture of poverty”, rather than classical socialisation issues. If this “urgent need for change” refers to making changes in some of the aspects that sociological and pedagogical research has revealed as factors that have a major influence on (in our case) the educational success of students, and which are not integral parts of Roma culture, we would be ready to agree with the strategy’s aim, but with this fundamentally important change: it is not the culture that needs to be targeted, but factors affecting the socialisation process. Let us take a closer look at just one example. A number of researchers convincingly argue (see MELEG 2009) that time orientations may have a decisive influence on educational attainment. Whether a particular type of time orientation is indeed part of Roma culture or not, is a question that has not been researched extensively. As Meleg and others have shown, time-orientation partly depends on a number of circumstances which could be called social setting, economic well-being and even material aspects, and most importantly: it can change as a result of changes in circumstances. If so, a policy approach that utilizes the results of social science research should be expected to deal with the circumstances and not the values themselves. Targeting values themselves is likely to be unachievable both theoretically and practically. It also follows from the definition of culture itself. The goal should rather be changing the *conditions* for socialization, which presupposes changing a whole series of other parameters, such as improving living conditions, which in turn necessitates other changes in employment conditions and elsewhere.

Attempting to change “Roma values” or behaviours in themselves seems to be the standard aim in most of the Roma policies. Making parents understand the importance of education, making women understand health and reproduction related issues are just some of the most surprising examples. Even if we accept that Roma parents do not understand the importance of education and that Roma women are unaware of gynaecological matters (which can of course be debated), targeting individual instances of habits and behaviours will hardly be successful. (Additionally,

there are other, more fundamental problems with this approach, most importantly that they ignore the more basic problem of discrimination in either health or education, see Chapter 6.5.).

This approach does not imply an evidence based holistic approach, but it has a framing effect. It doesn't go much further than claiming that there is a problem with Roma values. It does not describe these harmful values, it doesn't explain why they are harmful, it doesn't set goals, and doesn't go into any details about how it aims to change these values. But they do not need to, since it is not what they want to achieve with this. The sole purpose, we believe, is image construction and framing. These policies essentially construct an image where the Roma are responsible for at least some of the problems that they face. Values, interpreted outside of a theoretical framework like it is in the policy context cited above, have much more to do with (either personal or group) intentions, which depend on the particular person's or group's choices. It may strengthen the view that the Roma lack certain traits that would be necessary to reach results in inclusion. One often implied statement is that they are not motivated and unwilling to integrate or they lack the basic understanding needed for the successful integration. We have seen a number of examples for this in Chapter 6.3. In the area of education, similarly to other fields, it is quite easy to classify certain negative conditions and tendencies as traits that are inherent in the culture of a group, even if it is not explicitly stated in the policy documents. One such sign could be when the policy is talking about attitudes or *mentality*, as it very often happens. The use of such expressions implies that this behaviour is characteristic of the given group, and not something that arises from other factors or circumstances. The Hungarian strategy aims to “encourage the parents of children with multiple disadvantages to start enrolling their children in kindergarten” (HU-11:74), mentioning the possible lack of financial resources as a possible reason but forgetting about the fact, which is obvious from research results (LABODÁNE LAKATOS 2006), that discrimination plays at least an equally important part. The Hungarian strategy also uses the aforementioned “mentality” card several times throughout the strategy, claiming for example, that there is a need to “induce a parent mentality that places the learning of their children in the focus” (HU-11:77), with which it clearly claims that these parents do not regard their children's education as something highly important on the one hand, and that the problem is to be found in their mentality on the other hand. The Romanian strategy also claims that there is a need to change the mentality of the Roma (RO-11:5), although it adds that the mentality of the majority also needs to be changed. The focus, however, is placed on the Roma mentality, and it seems that with this, the policy is trying to counterbalance the responsibility of the majority society in the exclusion of the Roma.

Talking about the “culture of poverty” or even “the subculture of criminals”, however unexpected, is also part of some policies. The Hungarian Strategy includes this: “Due to abject poverty, hopelessness and the lack of contact with people in a higher social status, these individuals more frequently reject the goals and means of the middle classes and are therefore unable to take part either in production or in the creation of social values. They follow the specific *values and goals of the sub-culture of the poor* which the public opinion associates with the *sub-culture of criminals*” (HU-11:101). This is also the part where the Hungarian government claims that criminal behaviour is characteristic of Roma communities and that avoiding employment and work is in their culture (see more in Chapter 6.6), a clearly racist opinion that perfectly fits the publicly held image of the Roma. We should add, that the Hungarian strategy’s purpose with claiming that a large number of Roma are unable to work or create values is entirely inexplicable, since it does not take the logic of the policy any further – unless, of course, we realize that the real purpose of such sentences is image building.

Talking about the attitudes, mentality or behaviour of the Roma as the cause of some of the problems can be tracked down in most of the Roma inclusion strategies prepared in 2011. However, in most of the cases, they try to be careful to not very openly blame Roma culture for the failures. One policy paper, on the other hand, leaves absolutely no doubt.

The Croatian strategy talks very openly about what is only suggested or implied in other strategy papers. Since it is actually expressing, or practically summarising, a lot of what we have been analysing above, we will quote the entire three paragraphs of the strategy paper talking about Roma culture and how it is to be regarded, according to the Croatian policy:

“The cultural marginalization of the Roma is apparent at the level of value systems and way of life. This marginalization comes down to the fact that Roma customs, behaviour and attitudes appear as an obstacle to the greater participation of the Roma in the dominant culture of society, because they are qualified as deviant, or the entire culture is viewed as having lesser value in comparison to the general culture in society. The cultural traits of the Roma reflect a specific way of life, and its manifestation in outside appearances, everyday conduct and institutions and interpersonal relations. The Roma originated in a cultural/civilisational sphere that is fundamentally different from that of Europe. They brought numerous customs and attitudes with them from their original homeland which did not fit into the way of life of the European population. They also brought with them a different system of values in which Western materialism was not a supreme value, which dictated their attitude toward employment and work. By

accepting the value orientation of the societies in which they live, the Roma were condemned to live in an anomalous situation and thus forced to exploit “informal” ways to exercise generally accepted values”

“The differences between the Roma and the majority population are also great in the areas of family and education. Some Roma marry early, leading to pregnancy among minors, which is also one of the causes for their absence from the educational process. Thus, most of the Roma population experiences an abbreviated adolescence and youth and does not participate in the adolescent sub-culture which plays an essential role as a transition period prior to assuming social roles.”

“The differences in ways of life and value systems between the Roma and the remaining population result in the emergence of stereotypes, a lack of trust and an unwillingness to get closer and engender an understanding between the two groups, thus deepening the rift between them, while the cultural marginalization of the Roma remains a fixture” (HR-11:33-34).

The Government of Croatia is so shockingly unambiguous about its devastating opinion about Roma culture and how it is the obstacle for any integration, that we think there is no need to add any interpretative comments. Any possible comments on the content may only regard the innumerable errors of the policymaker regarding Roma culture and its role in integration, from the opinion that Roma culture is foreign to Europe through claiming that it is fundamentally different, to talking about the role of material values in Roma culture.

Our present research, however, is not primarily concerned with debating what policies claim. Our aim is to show how policies *frame* the problem, how they construct an image of the Roma and how they intend to place the whole question of Roma inclusion in a different perspective – different from the usual social inclusion framework. By placing Roma culture at the centre of attention, policies are able to create a context where framing and social construction will fit perfectly and smoothly. If culture is understood in the usual wrong way (“whatever they do is in their culture” as opposed to real values), then it is very easy for policies to put the blame on Roma culture for the failures: they may suggest that the Roma as such are not motivated in a number of important aspects in integrating: they do not send their children to kindergarten or school, they do not even regard their children’s education as greatly important, they marry young or they avoid employment because social benefits will satisfactory enough for them, and they basically want to live a parasitic life. Policies may also imply (or even openly claim) that

Roma culture is a culture of poverty and a culture of crime. In cases where these are not openly claimed, the choice of words may well imply this. Whichever the case, the final result is not much different from our perspective: problem framing will be carried out either way. There seems to be a “who is to blame” game going on (more on this in Chapter 6.6), and in all of the cases, it is the Roma themselves who should change, it is their final responsibility to act in order to reach results.

This is the way how emphasising the topic of culture in Roma policies can be so extremely advantageous for problem framing and image construction. In both cases, in a way that will make it completely impossible to reach inclusion and integration results: “We wash our hands,” Roma policies say, “it is in their culture”⁶⁰.

6.5 Treating discrimination

The Roma policies that we are dealing with are integration policies. This is reflected even in the names of most of the 2011 strategies prepared by individual governments, but a more important and decisive argument is that they were prepared and submitted on the request of the EU Commission, which specifically requested Roma integration policies to be prepared or revised. Consequently, the major problem to be addressed in them should be the exclusion of Roma populations. That the initial problem is exclusion is not even debated in academic thinking and research. The next question to ask is: what causes this exclusion. Academic research, NGO publications, professionals and international policy documents and other publications all agree on the answer: the exclusion of the Roma is caused by discrimination. It is hard to find a single policy paper, recommendation or other document prepared by different EU bodies (the Commission, the Council, the Parliament, FRA etc), the Council of Europe, the World Bank, the OSCE, or analyses prepared by various NGOs including the OSF, the ERRC, the Roma Education Fund and others, which would not start with listing prejudice, intolerance, discrimination, segregation, exclusion and racism as the main problems that the Roma face in any field. Indeed, there is so much and so strong a consensus about it, that if anyone wanted to try to challenge the standpoint that discrimination is the basis of all other problems for the Roma, they would need to refute the results of decades of scientific research and effectively go against the opinion of every single advocacy group and other organisations working in the field.

⁶⁰ Other research also suggests a similar approach on the part of the policymaker, see among others BALATONYI ET AL (2014)

Whether this discrimination is based on racism or not, is a question that hasn't been examined extensively, but the options for the possible answers are limited. Some call it ethnic discrimination, while others call it racism, but it would be highly unexpected to find other possibilities. In any case, we can safely conclude that there is discrimination against the Roma as such, irrespective of whether one finds it more scientific to call the Roma an ethnic group, a race or even a nationality.

Fighting discrimination, on the other hand, might be a delicate matter for some. In the first place, it would mean acknowledging the existence of discrimination, which in turn, would make it impossible to distance "ourselves" (i.e. the majority society and the government) from the "Roma problem". Indeed, it would cease to be a Roma problem only and would need to be addressed in a much wider perspective.

Discrimination or racism is a basically one-way force, comparable to a vector with one direction only. It cannot even be compared to a conflict or a clash. There is an agent who discriminates against the object of discrimination. Discrimination is, by virtue of definition, an unjust, unacceptable and unreasonable treatment of certain groups of people. If one wants to address the problem of discrimination, the most logical way is to deal with the discriminator, whether through legislative measures or informative-educational tools, or, as is most often the case, using penal law. Targeting the discriminated is another, supplementary, way of addressing the problem of discrimination, most often with the aim of supporting the group suffering discrimination, via strengthening their chances and equipping them with "survival tools". This is what happens in a simple classroom situation where teachers need to deal with bullying and ostracism, but also in a society where, for the sake of an example, African Americans are suffering from exclusion and racism. Obviously, only or mainly targeting the child who is bullied and ostracised does not lead to a solution, however sophisticated the tools are that the teacher might use in dealing with the child who suffers from bullying.

What we should expect from Roma inclusion policies then, is focusing on discrimination and dealing with the problem in an appropriate way, whereby targeting the majority society should receive a lot of policy attention, evidently besides targeting the excluded themselves with measures that will enable them to manage the situation more efficiently.

It is important to note that we are not trying to simplify the question of Roma integration or say that dealing with discrimination and racism *alone* will solve all the problems. We think it will not, mainly because solving the problem of discrimination is not going to happen overnight, if

at all. “Managing”, i.e. keeping a tight rein on discrimination at the state level on the other hand, should be both possible and indispensable. At the same time, the numerous disadvantages that the Roma have obviously need to be dealt with, and that requires a great amount of policy work. Here, however, we are examining how policies are dealing with discrimination on the one hand, and all other problems on the other hand. Hence, this division of the problems into these two groups is useful for our purposes here.

In the following, we will examine how Roma strategies of individual countries treat discrimination and racism. Specifically, we will examine how the topic of discrimination appears in the descriptive parts of strategies, before having a closer look at the actions recommended in the policies of the action plans.

There are three different approaches that surface in the problem descriptions or the introductory parts of policy documents prepared by member state governments. One of these basically denies the importance of discrimination among the problems that the Roma face. The most extreme example for this approach is the Hungarian strategy, which identifies poverty as the main (or perhaps the only) problem that needs to be addressed. This is reflected even in the title of the document: “National Social Inclusion Strategy – Extreme Poverty, Child Poverty, the Roma”. The strategy goes as far as claiming that exclusion and segregation is the consequence of poverty (for a more detailed discussion of this see Chapter 6.3). This is an extremely strange suggestion in itself, but it doesn’t stop there. The document also claims that “segregation and discrimination are simultaneously the cause and consequence of” poverty, low educational attainment and unemployment (HU-11:25). In other words, the Roma are discriminated against because they are poor, and they are poor because they are discriminated against. This seems like the Catch-22, there is no way out. A rather implausible idea, to put it mildly. Although discrimination is mentioned several times in the document, the context makes it clear that the government does not regard it an important problem. They are recommending a policy approach which “keeps track of, *if necessary*, via special, anti-discrimination programmes, the development of the situation of the Roma” (HU-11:6, emphasis ours). In other words: anti-discrimination programmes are possibly not even necessary in connection with the situation of the Roma, and if, for some strange reason, they are required, they will be special.

Another approach, found among others in the Slovakian strategy, is clearly claiming that fighting discrimination is one of the main goals of the strategy, but then taking an entirely different turn. The Slovakian government talks about “tensions between the majority population and the Roma” (SK-11:3,17), noticeably blaming the Roma too for the “conflict”.

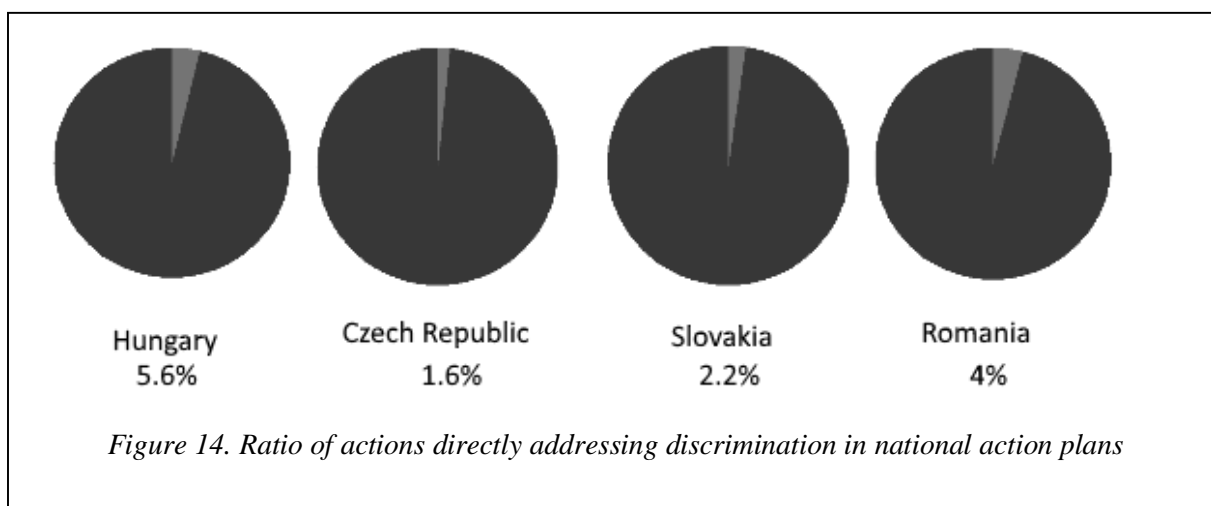
Discrimination is not a tension between two parties, even if “tensions” may arise, when the groups that are discriminated against start to protest. Such protests did happen in Slovakia, but they were too sporadic and too weak to be the focus of a national policy. The other possibility for interpretation is that the Slovakian policy is indeed talking about the discrimination of the Roma when it mentions tensions. Although the policy aims to target the majority population as well, it would only do that in order to make the majority accept these measures as “mutually beneficial”. There is no mention of targeting the majority in the context of discrimination or racism. Talking about “tensions” rather than the discriminatory practice and racist actions on the part of state authorities, local authorities, schools and other institutions, the police and various groups of non-Roma Slovakian people is not merely downplaying the significance of the situation and being cynical, but also creates a particular image of the Roma and has the capacity of problem framing too.

A different approach could be what we find in the Romanian strategy, which acknowledges that there is racism and discrimination against the Roma, but it claims that the situation has improved considerably, while not denying that it is still causing problems. Segregation is regarded as discrimination, but the document suggests that the problem has been successfully addressed via a ministerial order banning school segregation, which resulted in a decrease in the number of cases reported (RO-11:6). The seriousness of this argument is rather questionable, of course. A ministerial decree is hardly an appropriate tool for ending segregation, and the number of cases reported can hardly be understood as the true indicator. Besides, we have evidence from independent research (cited above several times) that segregation and discrimination has hardly decreased in Romania either. Contrary to this, the document is trying to prove the success of legislative work in Romania several times throughout the document, suggesting that discrimination and segregation is declining significantly.

Although policy documents employ different approaches towards discrimination, action plans reveal a much more uniform treatment of discrimination. If discrimination and racism is to be addressed successfully, targeting the majority population, i.e. the discriminator, should be an important part of action plans. In Chapter 5.2 we have already examined action plans from this point of view and found that the vast majority of actions in most of the countries target the Roma themselves, and only a very small fraction of them are directed towards the majority. This implies that targeting discrimination and racism is not in the focus of policies, and this does not depend on the approach found in the descriptive parts of the strategies.

It is worth looking at the concrete actions in more details and see how many of the actions

proposed deal with or directly target discrimination or racism. In the field of education, there is hardly any attention paid to discrimination in most of the national strategies, with Slovakia an exception, where *one* of the actions deals with discrimination in the diagnosis of children in connection with special schools. No other national policy includes actions with the goal of fighting racism or discrimination directly. For this reason, we have included all other actions proposed in action plans in four national strategies. The results are strikingly uniform in all four countries examined, although the number of actions proposed varies widely, from 51 actions in the case of Hungary to 129 actions in the case of Slovakia. Despite this variety, we find that the ratio of actions addressing discrimination is not much different from country to country, with the Hungarian strategy at the top of the list with 5.6% of the actions, but even that only means that there are two actions proposed which deal with the question of discrimination. In the Czech action plan, the proportion is less than 2% (see Figure 14).



Some of the action plans contain bits and pieces as separate actions, such as ensuring the visibility of a certain website in the Romanian action plan, where the website itself cannot be regarded as a major action either, but even if we account for these instances, the ratio would not go much higher than 5% in any of the countries examined. In some of the action plans, fighting discrimination and racism is explicitly included in the labels of major points. The Romanian action plan for education lays down two main goals before listing the actions. One of these is “preventing and eliminating segregation and fighting against discrimination based on ethnicity, social status, disabilities or other criteria affecting children the young people [*sic*] from disadvantaged groups, including Roma” (RO-11E:1). Point 6 in the plan is specifically intended to address discrimination, however, the actual measures planned include analysing training methodologies, finding resource persons or setting up committees or distributing publications (RO-11E:10). We have decided not to include these and similar points in the “actions addressing

discrimination” group in the results. It is not a subjective decision: we have not evaluated the expected success of the measures, neither did we take it into consideration whether the planned action is in place or not. We have looked at the actual target of the action, and in these cases, it is clearly not fighting against discrimination, but either setting up groups or organisations or practical matters such as books for libraries. In other cases, such as in the Slovakian action plan, the title of the main point would again suggest that the aim of the actions will be the “prevention of all forms of discrimination, racism, xenophobia, homophobia, anti-Semitism and other expressions of intolerance” (SK-11A:14), but the actions themselves are vague to an extent that it is impossible to classify them as actions fighting discrimination. Among them, we find (full!) items like “educational projects” or “supporting hobbies and leisure time activities”, with the most complete item perhaps being “Increasing the public awareness in the area of preventing of all forms of discrimination, racism, xenophobia, homophobia, anti-Semitism and other expressions of intolerance”. Exactly how the policy is going to increase public awareness is entirely left unexplained. Nevertheless, we have included this and similar points in the list if at least they contained specific, albeit very vague actions that may address discrimination after all (again: we are not evaluating the usefulness or the value of the actions). This may eventually mean that the actual ratio of actions addressing discrimination is even overvalued in Figure 14.

What makes governments follow this approach to discrimination? This clearly makes policies possibly miss the target as far as fighting discrimination and racism is concerned, consequently, the overall success of policy work will be put at risk. We should also remember that with ignoring discrimination and racism, policymakers are going against all possible research results and recommendations from every source possible. This, we argue, is not accidental. On the contrary, we have good reason to believe that these policies serve the policymaker’s purposes in what we have been investigating throughout this research: problem framing and image construction. If true, this would imply that treating discrimination as a secondary or minor topic (or ignoring it altogether) results in some kind of advantage for policymakers or politicians. Examining the political setting and the public sentiment about the Roma, we can conclude that it indeed does. To be more precise: placing in the centre of policies and actually implementing effective measures to fight the discrimination of the Roma would be hazardous for them, at least so the reasoning may go. Fighting discrimination, as we have argued above, will inevitably mean that policies need to target the majority population and in some cases, even use harsh methods against their racist or discriminatory practice. This, on the other hand, would risk losing popularity and eventually losing votes in an election. Additionally, we must not forget that anti-Roma or outright racist attitudes among leading politicians is not rare either, which

means that we might not even need to suppose that these same politicians would basically like to fight discrimination and racism, but what stops them from doing so is only ensuring electoral success. It may well be the case that they are acting out of conviction – but this remark is already beyond the scope of our investigations, we are only dealing with written words.

Whatever the case, how do we account for the existence of the topic of discrimination in these policies, if after all, it is treated as an insignificant issue in the actions? What is at play here is what Schneider and Ingram call the power of the target population. In the case of the Roma, it is definitely coming from outside government politics and policy, mainly from international and supranational organisations, most importantly the EU, but NGOs, especially the ones with an extensive and powerful network. The Decade of Roma Inclusion project was readily joined by countries who were just steps away from the entrance to the European Union. The EU Commission hasn't stopped paying attention to the plight of the Roma ever since. Member states thus seem to have no options to choose from if they want to avoid serious clashes with EU bodies and other international organisations. At the same time, they are walking a fine line between meeting external requirements and acting in their own domestic interests of re-election (and possibly their own conviction, too). The solution seems to be a sophisticated combination of apparently following guidelines but at the same time, and more emphatically, redefining the problem, redistributing roles in the problem domain and reconstructing the image of the target group itself.

We can find examples for this approach and solution outside Roma policies too. In Hungary, the new criminal code of 2011 makes it possible to impose stricter sentences on the perpetrator in the case of violence against members of a community. The legal possibility has only been used against Roma people, who supposedly committed violence against members of the Hungarian community⁶¹, while crimes against minorities and especially Roma, are systematically downplayed by authorities, according to NGOs like TASZ (Hungarian Civil Liberties Union) or ERRC. If parts of the criminal code are not guarantees enough that they will be used for what they are originally meant to, it is very easy to see that parts of a policy document are even less of a guarantee for that.

⁶¹ <http://tasz.hu/comment/10767> In one of the cases, after local Roma people were threatened by racist uniformed groups in a village, a group of these Roma attacked a car which belonged to the racist group. The judge found that it was a racist attack against Hungarians carried out by the Roma.

6.6 Blaming the victim

Some things never change. William Ryan originally wrote his famous “Blaming the victim” in the 1960s. This is the work where the phrase itself was coined, and since then, it has been used ever more increasingly by a number of disciplines from psychology to political science, in addition to common parlance. Although Ryan’s attention was directed mainly towards Black communities in the United States, what he wrote forty-five years ago in that context, is astonishingly valid for what we see in Roma policies in Europe today: “in education, we have programs of «compensatory education» to build up the skills and attitudes of the ghetto child, rather than structural changes in the schools. In race relations, we have social engineers who think up ways of «strengthening» the Negro family, rather than methods eradicating racism. In health care, we develop new programs to provide health information (to correct the supposed ignorance of the poor) and to reach out and discover cases of untreated illness and disability (to compensate for their supposed unwillingness to seek treatment). Meanwhile, the gross inequalities of our medical care delivery systems are left completely unchanged” (RYAN 1976:8). This is precisely what is currently happening in Roma policies. Extra-curricular activities and “compensatory education” is what most policies recommend as the solution for educational problems, without targeting the school or the educational system (Chapter 7.4). Racism and discrimination plays almost no role in action plans (Chapter 6.5), but “race relations” do play a role (Chapter 5.6). What happens in health care for Black people in Ryan’s analysis, is also *exactly* the same as what happens in health care policies for the Roma (see below).

The similarity is so striking that it cannot be accidental and we must account for it. Although there are possibly a number of similarities between the situation of Blacks in the USA and that of Gypsies in Europe, what is most important in our enquiry here is that in both cases, racism plays a central decisive role. One of the factors that we see as common between the two policy situations is none other than the central topic of Ryan’s research: blaming the victim. Ryan calls blaming the victim an ideological process, “a set of ideas and concepts deriving from systematically motivated but *unintended*, distortions of reality” (Ryan 1976:11, emphasis in the original). Whether intentionality in this distortion of reality plays an important role in the final result is questionable, and consequently, we think this may not need to be part of the definition itself, but nonetheless we agree that a systematic motivation is what lies at the core of it. Ryan claims that a central component and prerequisite of blaming the victim is that the victim should be identified as strange and different. He compares this to the approach that the ancient Greeks

used in classifying everyone who did not speak their language as a barbarian, a savage. Barbarians were only partly human, they were really similar to animals in the eyes of the Greeks. “We don’t and possibly can’t understand them” was a central idea behind the approach, but the conclusion was even more important: “they are less valuable and eventually less human than us”. These are points that Ryan himself emphasises. What we can add is that it is not simply ‘difference’ that plays a role in this approach – after all, difference could both theoretically and practically be regarded as positive from the evaluator’s point of view. An essential element is that this difference should be regarded as negative, or deviant.

Linking Roma to deviance and listing them among problem groups is something we can find in most Roma strategies. One blatant example is including “the fight against crime” in Roma policies, which happens in most policies examined. And contrary to expectations, with this, policy makers and governments are never aiming to fight right wing militant groups who march the streets in Roma localities and throw petrol bombs on Roma homes, very often killing them. In fact, these crimes get hardly ever mentioned in government strategies, and if so, their importance is downplayed: the Hungarian strategy talks about the serial killings of Roma in a way that is non comprehensible for someone who knows that it included the murder of several Roma families including children, in their own homes, over a period of more than a year: “conflicts and violent acts related to the Roma, which [...] have, in some instances, taken a tragic turn” (HU-11:7). It is important to see that these serial murder cases against the Roma are called “violent acts” and even “conflicts” by the Hungarian government, ones that are “related to the Roma”, and only in “some instances” has it “taken a tragic turn”. Please note, that for someone unfamiliar with what happened, this description could well describe a situation where the Roma people were the perpetrators and not the victims. Calling these terrible serial killings triggered by racial hatred simply “conflicts” is in itself a terrifying act, and only the most determined racist propaganda could go to such extremes – but this is the Hungarian government’s official Roma policy intended to help the integration of the Roma. Since there is no description of these “conflicts and violent acts” in the policy, the reader is left with no clues about who did what in these “conflicts and violent acts”. But in a society where the Roma are most often associated with criminal behaviour, certain conclusions are more probable than others. The result: even in a situation, where unsuspecting, innocent Roma people are murdered in their own homes by complete strangers, practically in their sleep, the policymaker is able to create a description where it is the Roma themselves who can be suspected of having committed some crimes.

Besides malicious hints and sophisticatedly distorted descriptions, Roma policies are sometimes surprisingly obvious about connecting criminal behaviour to the Roma. “Crime” itself is a term that we should be surprised to find in social inclusion policies in large quantities. A lexical search reveals that in the 28 national Roma inclusion strategies, the word “crime” and its suffixed forms are used 307 times. The Czech Republic strategy alone uses the word 51 times, with Hungary taking the second place with 41 occurrences. Most of the instances describe the situation of Roma communities and locations, where “Crime and ethnic conflicts are particularly rife” (HU-11:25). It is sometimes shocking to see how some of the policy documents openly blame the Roma for even the most blatant crimes that are targeted *against* them. The Hungarian strategy, for example, claims that “paramilitary organisations against Roma” and the spread of “uniformed crime” against Roma was partly due to and a response to “crimes committed by Roma perpetrators with a presumably ethnic motivation that intensified the existing conflicts” (HU-11:29). This is also an example for how policymakers can turn the tables on human rights advocacy groups, international and supranational bodies and a long list of human rights treaties and declarations to which they are signatories, and using it against the Roma themselves rather than for protecting them. It is not only a theory: judiciary systems have shown how the Roma themselves can be charged with and sentenced for racist or ethnically based crimes.

According to policies, crime is prevalent in Roma communities and this is what causes a large part of the problems, and so it needs to be dealt with in their policies, too. The Hungarian strategy claims that the strategy cannot be successful without crime prevention and ensuring public security. Let us make no mistake: the crime, according to the policy, is committed and the insecurity is caused by the Roma. The Hungarian strategy admits that the “the Roma, do not only emerge as crime perpetrators but, *by virtue of their social situation and specific socio-cultural features*, also constitute the most endangered victim group” (HU-11:101, emphasis added). That is, the Roma are mainly the perpetrators, but if and when they happen to be the victims, it is caused by their social situations and their culture, which is called the “culture of poverty” and compared to the “culture of criminals” (HU-11:101, cited before). The Czech strategy also claims that the Roma live in “an environment where crime and other high-risk forms of behaviour become the norm” and that this is “dangerous from the viewpoint of the upbringing and integration of children and young people from excluded Roma localities who can adopt and apply these behavioural models in their own life in future” (CZ-11:63, *sic*). This is exactly the same approach that policies used in the 19th century and before, when Gypsy children were often separated from their families on the basis of the very same reasoning. The

argument is repeated several times throughout the strategy, claiming that excluded Roma environments are home to criminal behaviour drug abuse and other crimes, which is not appropriate for children. This logically would mean that the Roma environment itself plays a major role in problems for Roma children including, obviously, the low educational achievement. The Bulgarian strategy blames the “traditional practices of the Roma community that violate the rights of women and children” (BG-11:11), which, similarly to the Czech policy, claims that Roma themselves act against Roma children. Talking about “traditional practices” suggests that this is what they are used to, it is in their culture (see above in Chapter 6.4).

Even when a strategy acknowledges that the Roma are the victims of racially motivated crimes, there is usually an important note according to which the Roma themselves are, at least partially, also at fault. The Slovakian strategy states that “surveys show a high extent of Roma discrimination on one hand, and a low level of awareness of their rights and defense mechanisms, accompanied by low trust in institutions and the police as a public interest service on the other” (SK-11:42, *sic*). That the Roma are not aware of their rights (in any field, including education) is a very often cited point in many of the integration strategies. However accurate the fact might be, the wording and the context still strongly imply that there is something wrong with the Roma themselves. After all, *they* do not know something that they are expected to know.

Claiming that the Roma are not aware of something as one of the main reasons for failures (in any field) is capable of framing the problem in a very powerful way even if there is mention of other reasons, too. This is especially true if action plans contain items which are supposed to inform, teach or educate them about the things that they do not know, but which, as is clear from the actions proposed, they are expected to know. One of the most obvious examples is the Slovakian action plan. Placing children in so-called “special schools” (i.e. most often extremely low standard schools providing sub-par services, theoretically designed for children with learning, behavioural, mental and other disorders but lacking specifically trained teachers and tools), is one of the most severe problems in Slovakia, due to, as all research testifies, discrimination and racism against Roma in Slovakia. A REF study for example, calls the entry testing used in the process to send vast numbers of Roma children to these schools “a pretext for segregation” (REF 2012). In 2015, the European Commission initiated infringement proceedings against Slovakia for breaching anti-discrimination legislation because of the issue. In academic research or in professional analyses, there is practically no dispute over the question whether Slovakian authorities use discrimination when they direct most Romani

children to special schools. Yet, what we find in the Slovakian action plan, is a perfect example of reframing the problem and rather than dealing with discrimination, what happens is blaming the victims. It aims to educate Roma parents about the consequences of placing the child in a special school, and with this, they are suggesting that it is the parent's fault that they gave their consent and with this, they are letting this happen. The government wish

“to elaborate an exact methodology of parents' informed consent for placing a child in a special school (information for the parent that if he/she does not agree with the recommendation to place a child in a special school or a special class, he/she is not violating any legal regulation, and contrary, if he/she wishes to place his/her child to a special school in spite of an absence of an obvious mental disorder, he/she may bear legal consequences for that)” (SK-11A:17).

This latter point is already reaching the heights (or depths) of Kafkaesque absurdity and cynicism. The Slovakian policymakers are not only blaming Roma parents for the situation where their children are denied quality education on the basis of racial discrimination, but also suggesting that they, the Roma parents, might face legal consequences for this.

The Slovakian approach is not an exception. It is repeated in the Polish strategy, where they blame parent's decisions again:

“It should also be mentioned that most Roma students of special schools hold certificates of mild degree of disability, which entitles their parents to enrol them to general public schools instead of special schools. It seems that the financial support provided by the social care system to students who hold medical certificates of disability is the primary reason why Roma parents prefer to enrol their children to special schools” (PL-03:2).

What the Polish strategy claims is that it is the Roma parents themselves who “prefer to enrol” their children in special schools, thus blaming *them* for the situation, rather than the system which misleadingly encourages them to give their consent. Some analyses and policy documents refer to research results that are thought to confirm the responsibility of parents, but a simple verification shows otherwise. One particular ERRC report is often referenced with this aim (i.e. to show that it is really the Roma parents' decision, and consequently, they are responsible for the situation), but here is what the report actually says:

“When the time to decide where to send the child for first grade comes, the authorities

at the remedial special school often suggest that the child should stay. Uninformed Romani parents, who see their child in a comfortable environment, and know of the hostility against Roma in many «normal» schools, often consent to what seems a natural process. On many occasions, Romani parents and educationalists described to the ERRC situations which indicate that Romani children were routed to the remedial special schools as a result of conscious efforts by teachers and psychologists to keep the Romani children out of the mainstream schools” (ERRC 2005:40).

As we can see, the ERRC report is very far from suggesting the responsibility of Roma parents. Although it does say that at times, Roma parents agree with the decision because they are uninformed or rather misinformed, but the report places the emphasis on the responsibility of the institutions. The responsibility of the teachers and psychologists mentioned in the report is never included in policy documents, and if tests get any attention, the responsibility of the users of these tests is basically ignored. The Slovakian strategy aims to look at methodologies of testing, methodological training for specialists, but discriminative practice or racism gets no attention.

We have already looked at the topic of poverty in Chapter 6.3 and have shown how concentrating on it is useful for problem framing and image construction. We find further evidence in Ryan’s work for this. Again, it is rather shocking to read Ryan’s words from forty years ago and see how they could be written about today’s Roma policies. Ryan finds that poverty is often a central issue in the process and practice of blaming the victim. “Adherents to blaming the victim” often refer to the cycle of poverty and claim that these people are caught in this cycle in a way that they are “trained to be poor by their culture” (RYAN 1976:7). Ryan claims that the modern approach of blaming the victim does not use direct and straightforward racist and discriminative words and characterisations. Instead, it refers to environmental causation. “The new ideology attributes defect and inadequacy to the malignant nature of poverty, injustice, slum life, and racial difficulties,” (*op. cit.*) writes Ryan. With this, we can add, it avoids having to talk about racism and discrimination on the part of the members of the majority society, authorities and the system. With the help of this approach, it all becomes an environmental problem. No agents need to be mentioned. At least this is what seems to be the situation at first sight. It is very different from a purely racist approach, which would ascribe the defects and inadequacies to the race itself. Instead, it ascribes them to environmental factors. This is “a stigma of social, rather than genetic, origin. But the stigma, the defect, the fatal difference [...] is still located within the victim, inside his skin” (*op. cit.*).

Although Roma policies almost never go into details about the causes of poverty, at least not in an analytical way, we can find numerous hints that suggest an approach where the Roma themselves are responsible for their own poverty. Talking about a cycle of poverty or a culture of poverty is one of these. As we have seen in Chapter 6.4, culture itself is often blamed for this situation. The Hungarian strategy is trying to explain why the government reduced the amount of social benefits with the following argument: “In the interest of reducing benefits and *encouraging people to engage in work*, the wage payable for public employment will be higher than the social benefit (HUF 48,000)” (HU-11:45, emphasis added), or “People should live off work, rather than benefits. People are encouraged to participate in work – a socialisation function” (*op.cit.*). In other words, Roma people are reluctant to undertake employment, they need “encouragement” in the form of reducing social benefits and socialisation to learn this. Later in the strategy, they also claim that social benefits “play a major role in the high level of their inactivity” (HU-111:81), which again implies that the Roma are workshy at best, or parasitic at worst. Poverty, in other words, is due to a lack of willingness and motivation of Roma people to find work and undertake employment.

A deeper analysis of action plans can reveal more about the approach to poverty and unemployment that policies employ. Most of the actions in employment target Roma people themselves. This alone makes it clear that the problem lies within the Roma communities or the individuals. They don’t have the necessary qualifications, they lack something that would be necessary for their employments. The most usual actions proposed will be retraining courses, trainings, methodology and related activities. The Czech strategy is talking about “difficult-to-place inhabitants of socially excluded Roma localities” (CZ-11:31), the Romanian strategy aims to provide professional counselling to “persons in difficulty including the members of the Roma minority”. This translates into an image of the Roma, who lack certain tools or knowledge that would be required for their employment. As a result, they need further trainings, they need to be educated about their possibilities or need other advice so that they could find employment. A 2007 report on the other hand, found an entirely different cause of Roma unemployment: “Research carried out by the ERRC in 2005 in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, demonstrates that employment discrimination against Roma is endemic and blatant – job vacancies are not open to Roma. In many cases, prospective employers even tell Roma that they are not being hired because they are Gypsies” (ERRC 2007a:9). The research confirms that “low levels of education and/or to out-of-date work skills and detachment from the labour market” on the part of the Roma do contribute to mass unemployment of the Roma, but draws attention to the fact that racism and discrimination is causing *the lion’s share* of the

barriers. In spite of the fact that such researches and reports have been easily available for decades now, and they are well-known for virtually anyone working in most fields of Roma related issues (hopefully including the policymakers themselves), the Roma policies prepared in 2011 do not include employment related discrimination and racism as major points, and some even fail to mention them among the *possible* reasons. This is perfectly logical if viewed from a framing perspective. Blaming the victim and acknowledging that unemployment is, mainly or for a large part, caused by discrimination and racism are mutually exclusive. Blaming the Roma could not be entirely successful with racism acknowledged.

In the field of education, Roma policies follow the same route of blaming the Roma themselves for failures. Employment is naturally connected to educational success and training. In the most usual scenario, policies identify the lack of appropriate training and qualifications as one of the main reasons for unemployment, while, as we have seen above, also blaming the Roma attitude towards work and employment.

Education related actions normally target the Roma themselves, as we have seen in Chapters 5.3 and 6.5. This alone is evidence enough that policies view the Roma themselves as the ones who need to change if results are to be reached. It is also important to examine the kind of actions proposed in action plans and see what the implications are from this point of view. Most of the measures imply that the Roma need extra help, which should not normally be part of the educational work and process. After all, non-Roma children or parents do not require such assistance. One obvious sign of this approach is that several action plans include the provision of extra financial remuneration for teachers or other school staff who work with Roma children (Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic) implying that the work they carry out may not be part of their normal course of duties.

Extra help is also very often provided outside of the school environment, again with the implication that it is not an integral part of the education process. Extra classes, second chance programmes and after-school programmes are commonly included in practically all of the Roma strategies, with the Hungarian strategy regarding their after school support programmes called “tanodas” as a flagship project. Such extra-curricular activities, however useful they might prove to be⁶², are strengthening the view that it is these Roma children themselves who

⁶² The success is sporadic and local at most. Such programmes are not able to change anything in the system, they are not able to target any of the main causes like segregation, discrimination and racism, so they are basically not something that a country strategy should regard as flagship projects.

need to work for change. Who is at fault then? Who is to blame?

Even when action plans include programmes targeting teachers and other school staff, the approach remains the same. A typical measure targeting teachers is extra training provided for teachers working with Roma children: children who are a special kind and thus requiring further, special training that would otherwise be unnecessary. (Some exceptions also appear: the Czech action plan includes recommendations for teacher training institutions to make inclusive education an integral part of the normal training.)

One, too often found element in action plans in education is targeting the attitude of the Roma towards education. The problem identified is that Roma students and parents lack motivation. It is again, a very clear example of blaming the victim. It claims that it is not discrimination that stops these people from finishing primary and secondary schooling or start higher education. What stops them from doing so is their own attitude, they claim. However applauded scholarships might be, also by NGOs and advocacy groups or even academic researchers, putting too much emphasis on scholarships also strengthens the view that the problem is outside of the system (see chapter 7). Scholarships, like tanodas (after-school clubs or programmes for Roma children) are not able to change anything in the discriminatory systems.

Besides education and employment, we find blaming the victim in all other areas in Roma policies. In health care, strategies aim to educate Roma people about the importance of health, they aim to teach Roma women about women's health and reproduction, they aim to cure "typically Roma diseases" in Roma localities (parasites, of course, would fall into this category). The Slovakian strategy is planning to use community workers in hospitals to meet Roma patients "for acquiring and keeping hygiene standards" (SK-11A:32), a frightening prospect of degrading and possibly racist treatment in itself, in the name of Roma integration. The Romanian strategy is planning campaigns to make Roma people acquainted with basic health information including the importance of vaccinations. The Bulgarian strategy describe "hepatitis, gastrointestinal diseases and other diseases caused by parasites" typically Roma problems, and health problems are described in the policy document exclusively in terms of listing various illnesses that, according to the Bulgarian government, most often occur in Roma localities. This is to say, that it is the Roma themselves who are uneducated in this field, too, they are unaware of basic health issues and consequently, they are the ones who can be blamed for this situation. Even if some part of these accusations might have a basis in some cases, blaming the victim is what clearly happens here, since nothing else is mentioned as a cause, and the mention of discrimination is again avoided at all costs. Besides problem framing, this

approach also functions as image production. A group of people described in this way will not usually deserve sympathy: they are unwilling, unmotivated, uneducated and dirty. On top of that, they are unwilling to find employment or send their children to school and all they want is use social benefits instead, like parasites. As we have seen, this is a description that surfaces from the analysis of Roma integration strategies alone, and, surprisingly, not from some websites or flyers of some obscure and illegal extreme-right wing racist groups.

6.7 Definitions for specific problems in education

In the previous subchapters of Chapter 6, we have examined problem definition from several points of view. In this subchapter, we are going to look at specific, individual problem definitions related to education.

First of all, we need to point out that when talking about problem definitions in policies, we are dealing with two separate issues, which might at times be very different from each other. On the one hand, there is the descriptive part of policy documents, and on the other hand, they all have action plans, either as part of the same document or package, or prepared separately. There might be considerable differences between the two. In the most typical case, the discrepancies are related to the varying qualities of action plans. While the descriptive parts of policy papers tell a lot about the given government's approach to the question of Roma inclusion (albeit a robust content analysis is most often indispensable for interpreting them), action plans are very often similar to the first results of a brainstorming session, without a strong link, let alone a logical relationship between the policy paper and the action plan. The inclusion of actions such as supporting sports activities, setting up minor websites and updating them regularly and the like, are clear signs of this. Our research goals do not include assessing the usefulness, appropriateness or feasibility of actions recommended⁶³, but very often, there is no need for extensive analytical work to see that a large number of actions are either so extremely vague that they simply cannot be taken seriously (for example, "Enrolment of Roma pupils of both genders in secondary schools"), or they are so miscellaneous that calling them bric-a-brac would not be an exaggeration ("Support of hobbies and use of leisure time"), or both ("To use social work graduates in particular activities⁶⁴").

⁶³ This has been carried out numerous times by others. See more about the question in Chapter 7.

⁶⁴ The actions quoted here are full items in action plans, with a separate heading number, with no further information on the content of the action.

The remaining parts of action plans, however, are appropriate for an analysis which aims to examine how problems are viewed (more precisely: what problems are constructed) in the policies and where the emphasis falls in actual implementation plans. This is especially so, if we are looking at a collection of policies rather than individual cases, where we are trying to discover a trend rather than particular characteristics. We have already discovered several indicators that point to this trend, namely that Roma policies try to frame the problem in a way where Roma themselves are responsible for most, if not all of the problems in general. We have no reason to expect a different picture in the field of education either. On the contrary, since education is regarded one of the most prominent fields of policies, we expect that this approach will be especially central in handling education related issues.

We will begin with an overview of what policies generally regard as the most pressing issues in education. The Croatian strategy is one of the very few policy documents that explicitly summarise what they see as the most persistent problems in education:

“With reference to the primary school education of the Roma, the biggest problems are the irregularity of attendance, the low rate of completion of primary education, i.e., dropping out of school prior to reaching the age of 15, inadequate monitoring of the share of Roma children being educated under special needs programmes, inadequate planning and irregular financing of extended board programmes, the absence of continued and targeted support for teaching staff working with Roma children, and the non-enforcement of measures to prevent segregation” (HR-11:44).

Most of these points are regarded the most critical in other policies as well, as far as primary education is concerned. A typical listing of problems that would include other education related issues will be similar to the following: non-attendance, drop-out, lack of parental support, poor school results, lack of appropriate home environments, lack of pre-primary education, starting but not finishing secondary school, an extremely low number of Roma university graduates. Most, though not all, strategies would add further elements in the list such as illiteracy, inability to speak the majority language, the lack of documents and thus no registration in schools, lack of financial resources for schooling, attending exclusively or mainly Roma classes or schools.

This list, though non-exhaustive, includes most of the problems mentioned in policy documents. And for the first sight, some may agree that these are indeed the most pressing problems (though excluding racism and discrimination is extremely alarming, but let us leave that aside for now – for a discussion of that, see Chapter 6.5). There is, however, a fundamental problem with this

list, which is in connection with framing the problem. Almost all of these items can naturally be paraphrased into a sentence whose subject is the Roma student or the Roma parent or the Roma community. Who is it that does something undesirable? Who is it that fails to do something desirable? The Roma student drops out of school, the Roma student does not reach good results at school, the Roma student does not speak the majority language. It is the Roma parents who do not send their children to school, it is the Roma parents who cannot provide assistance and it is them who do not encourage their children to attend school. Even in places where the policy is talking about segregation into special schools, Roma parents are sometimes blamed, quite a bizarre idea in itself (see Chapter 6.6). If and when Roma parents are not blamed for placing their own children to special schools, the problem identified may be the non-appropriate use or the inappropriate methodology of placement tests (SK-11A:4) and not discrimination.

Some policy documents are more open about this approach than others. The Czech strategy claims that “The crucial causes of the school failure of Roma pupils at elementary schools include [...] inadequate involvement of the parents of children from socioculturally disadvantaged backgrounds in the education process” (CZ-11:17). The Croatian strategy mentions that some of the biggest problems are that “they [the Roma] repeat grades and leave schools early” (HR-11:44). It also highlights “parent neglect”, i.e. that Roma parents do not send their children to school. The solution, according to the Croatian government, is legal action against Roma parents and monetary fine (HR-11:45), but it notes that “this often has no effect due to the inefficiency of the courts” (ibid). As we have seen already in other chapters, most policies find that a basic problem is the attitude and mentality of Roma parents, since they do not understand the “positive impact of their children's attendance in early care or their educational achievement” (CZ-11:19).

The Bulgarian strategy also finds that the reason why Roma children start with a disadvantage is due to their faults and their failure to prepare for school: “part of the Roma children do not speak the official Bulgarian language well enough when enrolled in school, neither have they acquired the basic knowledge and skills needed to cope with the learning process” (BG-11:8). Note the explanation-like mention that Bulgarian is, after all, the official language of the country. So whose fault is it then? The wording is always highly important for framing: it is the Roma children who have not acquired basic knowledge, which means they are supposed to do so, and they have failed in this. It is especially important to note that the policy looks at the school as not a provider but as an authority, and the students are required to have acquired the

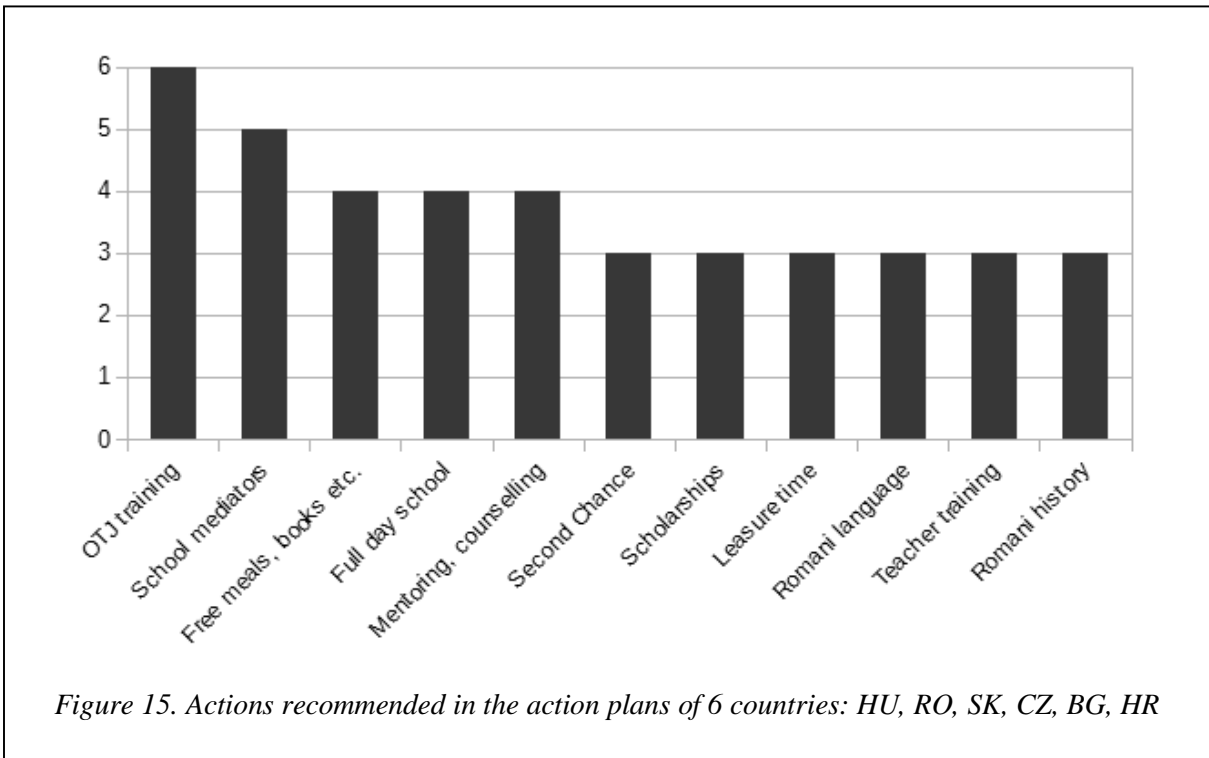
skills necessary for starting school. The school's responsibility to provide anything let alone skills, is never even mentioned. Thus the strategy goes on to blame Roma communities which haven't prepared their children for starting school. The Bulgarian policymaker's explanation for dropping out of school is similarly surprising: "The patriarchal norms of excessive control of the behaviour of the girls and women in some Roma subgroups also make them early school leavers" (ibid). The case is clear: Roma people have only themselves to blame for the failures, their culture is at fault, says the Bulgarian government.

We could go on with literally hundreds of more examples like these, but we believe that the reader should already see the mechanism and the main directions of problem framing in education issues. The most important aim of this framing process is that it should be able to identify the Roma themselves as the source of the problems. The source, in a sense that the cause of the problem is what Roma people do or fail to do on the one hand, and what they are and what they fail to be on the other hand. Consequently, it is then the Roma themselves who are required to take action and to change. The role of the state and the majority society in this setting can be limited to providing external assistance, but the responsibility is obviously that of the Roma. This assistance is often regarded as an extra burden, for which, of course, the Roma can be made responsible, and which cannot be expected naturally from either institutions (schools, colleges or professional bodies) or staff. One example for this is the often mentioned extra wages for teachers working with Roma children too, which, however the recommendation for such extra pay is phrased, can only be compared to hazard pay or danger money. The Croatian strategy is again perhaps the most open about their approach, when they are trying to be sympathetic towards teachers of segregated Roma classes rather than direct attention to the unacceptable nature of this segregation: "teachers and instructors in the «Roma classes» are confronted with trying work conditions and limited funds and opportunities for implementing additional support programmes required by Roma children. Besides often having very limited materials at their disposal, there is also no way to adequately compensate their additional work with children" (HR-11:46). In other words, the strategy is emphasizing the hardships that the teachers face rather than the hardships that the students need to go through. It is important to see that the strategy views additional programmes as burdens, which are only required because of Roma children, and that is what makes the work of teachers more demanding and thus requiring additional remuneration. They clearly blame Roma children for the situation, and suggest that teachers deserve compensation for this extra burden, rather than viewing the school and the teacher as the ones who fail to do their job.

Although on-the-job trainings for teaching staff in connection with Roma is usually regarded positive and necessary, seen from this point of view, they may also appear as a factor that strengthens the view that the Roma are a special type, and obviously a burden on the teacher once she has to undergo extra trainings to deal with them. The approach of the strategy might be slightly different if it emphasizes the general use and advantages of these trainings rather than making it appear as a “special Roma training for teachers”. We are dealing with framing, social constructions and image creation: it could result in huge differences whether teachers are requested to attend courses where they are expected to learn about the Roma (their living conditions, their family background, the community where they live), or they are requested to do this as part of their jobs, whether the student is Roma or not⁶⁵. The result might well be that the Roma are seen as a burden on the educational system and the teachers themselves: the problem has been framed as the Roma themselves, rather than the inability of the educational system (and certainly the individual teacher, too) to integrate these children in the system. On-the-job trainings are part of every single action plan that we have examined in this respect (Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Croatia). Another reason for this might be that they are easy to include and implementation is not a challenge either: using EU funding for tenders is always an easy option.

It is also revealing to examine the popularity of certain types of programs and projects recommended in action plans. Figure 15. shows the number of countries out of the six that include the given type of actions. We have only included the ones that are included in at least three, or half of the action plans.

⁶⁵ As a side note: the content of such courses is also of great importance. What teachers actually hear and learn during these courses may make a difference. If the authors of the course materials use an approach similar to the one expressed by the authors of national Roma integration policies in these documents, we have good reason to worry that they might do more harm than good.



We have already talked about on-the-job trainings, which is the most popular, included in all of the strategies. Most of the remaining actions will be examined in details in Chapter 7 below. Here we are only interested in their general capabilities of framing the problem. Almost all of these actions target the Roma children themselves, logically suggesting that the problem is related to that domain. School mediators are necessary to successfully communicate with Roma children, providing free meals and free books suggests they lack something necessary, as does providing other assistance that they lack, from second chance projects through scholarships to even providing free time programmes for them. All of these help to frame the problem as one pertaining to the Roma themselves.

Second chance type and mentoring programmes also clearly suggest that the problem is the Roma children’s inability to reach results, rather the school’s inability to reach results. Roma children receive extra classes, mentoring and scholarships. If the policymaker expects these actions to help improve results, then it means that the children themselves are expected to do more. The reason for underachievement is defined in terms of the children’s abilities and talents. Mentorship frames the problem in terms of motivation, too, since Roma children are expected to reach better results with the extra help and extra time, which again logically implies their lower levels of talents and abilities.

There is one action only, which could theoretically suggest that there is a problem with the

educational system or the school: teacher training. It is, however, ambivalent in most cases, since the concrete actions contain only plans to prepare recommendations or even less. The Romanian strategy aims to “set up a working group for defining the structures and content of teachers’ master”, but it doesn’t go into any more details. In the Czech Republic, they are proposing to “develop recommendations” for universities to include the topic of disadvantaged children in teacher training, and also to “amend the current study and training programmes for teachers and school advisory centre workers”, which actually means, as it is made clear later, that it would target professionals who use diagnostic tools for directing children to special schools, so that they could “distinguish effects of minor mental disability from those arising from socio-culturally disadvantaged backgrounds”.

Some of the policies even view parts of the problems as something that requires legal solutions. The Slovakian action plan aims to “introduce obligatory courses, at least 3 hours a week for recipients of social benefits, where [...] courses would be organized focused on reading, writing, counting, with a possibility to add computer courses, or according to attendants' interest” (SK-11A:6). There are two obvious implications in this recommendation. One is that social benefits provided to the Roma are something extraordinary, for which the state could and should expect something in return. This is an idea that is not without precedents in other countries either, albeit not necessarily built into the national Roma inclusion strategies. Making social benefits dependent on the regularity of school attendance of the child, or even the behaviour and the cleanliness of Roma homes is common practice in Hungary, too. Linking ordinary (i.e. not specially Roma) social benefits to the condition that parents must have regular employment is another practice, which most often naturally excludes Roma families from receiving these benefits. The framing side is clear: Roma people must be deserving of these benefits, they must do something in return, similarly to normal commercial or business transactions, where, as the saying goes, there is no such thing as a free lunch. Besides, Roma people are also very often made to look unreliable: both in Hungary and in Slovakia, there have been plans (and also implementations) to introduce e-cards for social benefits to Roma, so that they can only use the money for purchasing certain types of goods in certain types of shops, lest they should spend the money on something that political leaders regard useless or worse. The other implication of the Slovakian plan is that these Roma children do not attend classes because they do not desire to do so (shall we say, they are lazy). This is the only explanation left, should we accept that the solution is if they are forced to attend these classes, like they are in the action plan. As we have seen above, the Croatian action plan also includes legal action against Roma parents who “do not send” their children to school.

All this is in line with the racist and discriminatory image that is prevalent in the general public in

these countries about the Roma. The Roma are lazy and workshy, so if they are to receive any benefit from the state, they should work for it and do something in return.

6.8 Conclusions and summary

William Ryan calls the phenomenon of blaming the victim “a perverse form of social action designed to change, not society, as one might expect, but rather society’s victim” (RYAN 1976:8). This is actually one possible way of summarising what we have revealed in Chapter 6 above.

There is a very strong trend to frame the problem in a way where the Roma can be presented as being responsible for the problems. In certain cases, it is very clear and explicitly worded, in other cases, it can be seen in how policies shape the context both in terms of content and in language use. In the most typical case, policies concentrate on the deficiencies of Roma children, parents and communities and almost completely leave unnoticed other actors either in the educational system and process or in other fields. In addition, the items in action plans can also be regarded as further evidence for this approach. The target of actions is almost exclusively the Roma themselves.

Blaming the Roma for the problems is also helped by emphasizing some of the topics that are generally regarded important for outsiders as well. This may explain why very few analysts realize that what actually happens is very often manipulating these topics for the purposes of image construction and problem framing. A typical example is culture, which is often used in policies for such purposes. Focusing on culture has dual-purpose: it serves the purposes of constructing a negative image of the Roma on the one hand, and it leads to distancing the problem from society on the other hand. The bearer of the problem is of central importance in problem solving. As far as Roma policies are concerned, the one who is responsible for acting, the one who needs to change, is hardly ever identified as the society in question. It is either the Roma group or the entire continent. This latter idea is very often supported by laying an emphasis on the assumption that the Roma form a “European minority” with its distinctive culture, which is fundamentally different from the society where they live. If so, suggest some of the policies, it is the task of Europe (once it is the place that they are home to) to deal with the question of Roma integration (for a relevant discussion see VERMEERSCH 2012).

The distinction of whether the target group *has* a problem or whether it *is* a problem also

becomes highly relevant in problem definitions. As can be expected, the Roma are seen as a problem by practically all integration policies. It is supported by the fact that policies aim to change their attitude, their awareness and generally, their characteristics. This, as we have seen, is not only true in the case of education, but in the overall strategy as well.

Policies are mostly, action plans are entirely silent about discrimination and racism, even if it goes against all possible academic research and other analyses. Instead, they concentrate on poverty as an overarching problem that characterizes Roma communities in general. Poverty, on the other hand is interpreted to be caused by factors that are due to circumstances and situations that either the Roma themselves are responsible for (low levels of education, lack of qualifications or even laziness), or there might be objective outside circumstances including the economic crisis.

In summary, the Roma are presented by policies as an undeserving group who can be blamed for all the problems they face. In a situation like this, it is logically the Roma themselves who need to change and need to act if they want to change their own situation.

7 What action plans reveal

7.1 Introduction

Actions speak louder than words – or so the saying goes. This might not be necessarily true for action plans though, themselves being none other than words, similarly to other parts of the strategies. What still makes them special is that they are expected to list actual, concrete actions rather than guidelines and principles, so in a sense, they really should speak louder. This is an approach that might also explain why external evaluations of these strategies place a noticeably stronger emphasis on action plans than other parts of the policy. For us, however, action plans serve just as good a basis for analysis as descriptive parts, since we are trying to discover possible problem framing and image constructions made by the policymaker.

We have underlined before, but we believe it is especially important in this chapter to draw the reader's attention to it again, that our research is not aiming to evaluate policy actions from a practitioner's point of view, because such an analysis would fall beyond our research questions and the overall goal of this work. Yet, if and when we are dealing with such concrete actions, it is inevitable that we go into at least some discussion about practical aspects, too, but only as

much as it is necessary for supporting arguments that we will put forward in connection with framing and image construction.

We have selected only a limited number of commonly recommended (types of) actions from the field of education with the aim of putting them under scrutiny and examining whether they may serve the purposes of image construction, problem definition or framing. If we accept Carol Bacchi's theory (see Chapter 3.4), which we do, a very strong hypothesis should be that they will indeed have such a role, whether intended or not.

7.2 Painkillers for educational problems

Toothache is a problem that cannot be left unnoticed, and everyone agrees that something must be done about it. The first (and for some, the only) idea as a solution will be to use some kind of a painkiller. Conventional wisdom is also trying to be helpful. It may come up with different types of pain relievers, sometimes going to extremes. A simple internet search reveals advice such as using salt and pepper, garlic, onion, and of course, various types of hard drinks. Luckily, most of the websites offering home remedies, also mention that it is best to visit a dentist. The dentist may find various causes for the toothache itself, and recommend treatment accordingly. But that is still treating the problem that is likely to have occurred as a symptom of a more serious problem like inflammation or tooth decay. Some of these might be prevented by good oral hygiene. And although we know that appropriate oral hygiene does not prevent all dental problems, it would be best to advise the patient that they should implement changes in their daily habits concerning oral hygiene.

The "Roma problem" is something that practically everyone agrees is a problem that cannot be left unnoticed and that it needs to be dealt with. Unlike the toothache, however, there is not one professional whose expertise everyone should trust in this matter. As far as the problem is concerned, it varies depending on the definer of the problem, and perhaps even on the place and context of the definition. It ranges from "Roma criminality" through a parasitic way of life to poverty, and of course, there is what academic research suggests: discrimination and racism. Whatever the definition of the problem, the solutions recommended are as various as those for treating the toothache. In the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Romania, there have been several cases where authorities, with police assistance, built actual physical walls around Roma communities as (part of) a solution to the problem. Some political parties call for harsher punishments that would deter Roma people from committing crimes. More moderate voices

suggest that society should force Roma people to undertake employment and send their children to school (also found in official government policies, as we have seen above). Most of these are, evidently, the responses that cannot be regarded either civilized or democratic, and as such, serious analyses do not even deal with them, except for the purpose of analysing public attitude and the image created by society or certain groups – an exercise we are doing right now.

As far as government Roma policies are concerned, one of the main problems identified, as we have seen in the previous chapters, is poverty. Poverty is indeed a serious problem, but we must realise that it is something that we should call the toothache of the Roma problem. Some of the policies concentrate on some kind of poverty alleviation, and do not go beyond. In education, poverty also appears as one of the main causes of the problems. Providing free books and free meals to students are commonly found in action plans (see Figure 15), with some others also including free transportation or other types of benefits. Free meals are of course not only welcome but, many times, unquestionably necessary. But should policies overemphasize such measures, they may also suggest that this is at least one way how the problem could be solved. This is obviously not the case. Giving children books and other teaching materials free of charge and providing them with one free meal a day (the emphasis is not on the number) has never solved the problem of either absenteeism or dropouts or the extremely low attainment. The possibility of a framing effect is undoubtedly present, and when coupled with the fact that poverty in some of the country strategies is viewed as the main reason for other problems (see Hungary), or at least one of the main problems (all other countries), then this possibility may well become reality: alleviating poverty is presented as the key to Roma inclusion in education. But isn't it just like the painkiller for a tooth problem?

Scholarships are another tool which is commonly used in many of the policies and action plans. These are more complex than providing free meals, but action plans still lack concrete proposals for them. It would, for example, make a difference whether they are planning to offer need-based or merit-based scholarships, or if these scholarships will be ethnically-based or not. Like free meals, scholarships are also more than welcome and they might be just what some of the Roma undergraduates need to continue and successfully finish their studies. But does this target the heart of the matter? What is the reason why there are so few Roma in higher education (at most approaching 1%, but most often the number is undetectably low)? In most of the cases, for a Roma student to be able to use these opportunities, they are expected to have already reached a certain level in their education, which only a very small percentage of them have. These are very similar to non-governmental projects such as Romaversitas, the Roma Education

Fund or Soros Foundations operating in a number of countries in CEE, but also local initiatives such as Romaster in Hungary. They are usually merit-based scholarships offered to highly achieving Roma students. There are fewer opportunities for secondary school Roma students, some of these also include mentoring programmes besides the financial aid, and most of them are a mixture of need-based and merit-based scholarships/aids (given on the basis of financial situation but with a minimum requirement regarding achievement/grades), with some of them partly ethnically based, such as the Hungarian MACIKA-Útravaló, which aims to include at least 50% Roma beneficiaries. Scholarships and aids, as expected, either want to provide financial assistance to students who would otherwise be unable to continue their studies (need-based) or want to act as incentives (merit-based) or a combination of the two. Consequently, the problem that scholarships are able to (and in most cases are designed to) address is the lack of financial resources and/or incentives on the part of the beneficiaries. Using Carol Bacchi's WPR approach, we can thus conclude that financial barriers and the lack of incentives are made to appear the biggest causes of the problem.

This is not what academic research, or indeed common sense, suggests. Most of the Roma policies themselves refer to figures that show that the secondary school level is the dividing line in most countries. Let us look at some of the latest survey results.

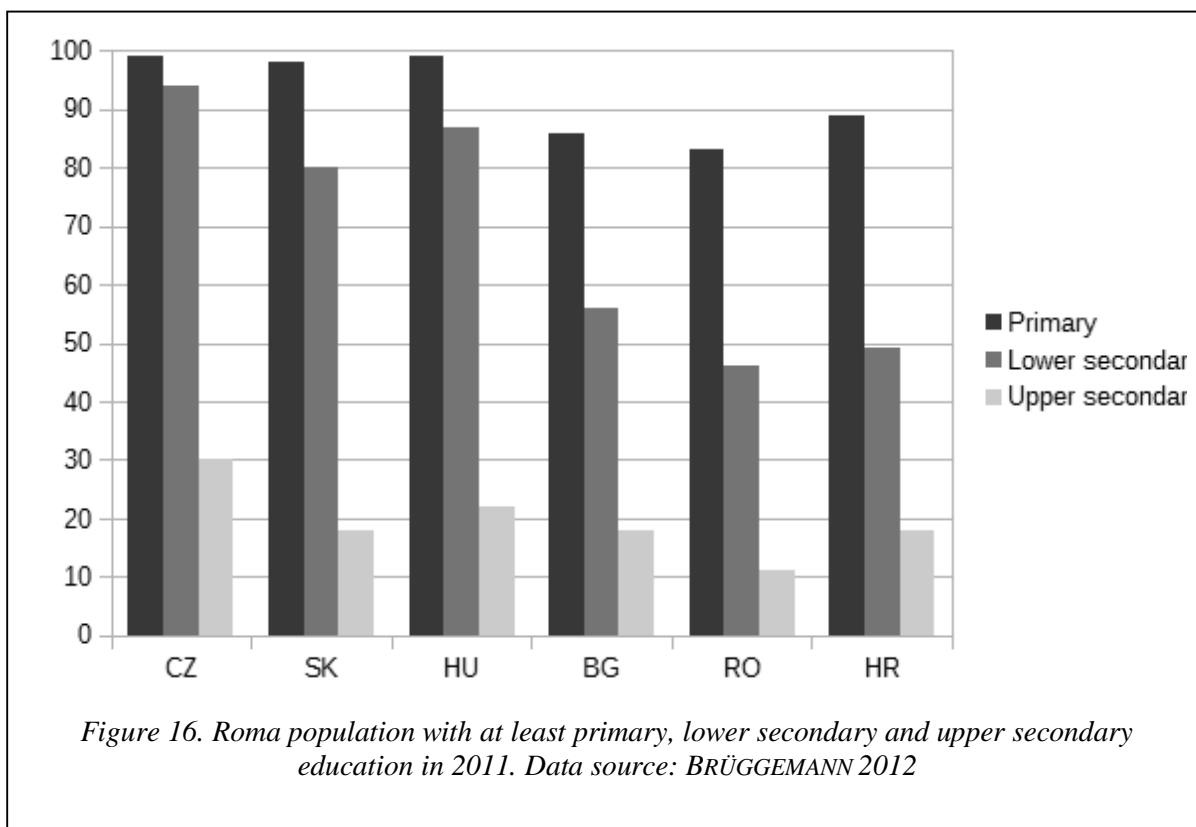


Figure 16 shows that technically completing primary education shows good results in some countries such as Hungary, and showing hopeful prospects in most other countries⁶⁶. The European Commission, in its Framework Strategy, sets out as a recommended main goal in education, to “ensure that all Roma children complete at least primary education”. This is obviously not enough, especially in the EU countries. Even in the case of lower secondary education, the figures are approaching high levels in some of the countries such as the Czech Republic or Hungary. This is usually the level which corresponds to compulsory education, but which is not enough for either starting college education or to achieve well in the labour market⁶⁷, as is testified by the situation in these very countries, where indicators are not considerably better than in most other countries with considerably lower figures. As we can see, the dividing line is at the upper secondary level, where the figures drastically drop. This is the level that is required in CEE countries for higher education or for a better position in the job market, and this is precisely what Roma people lack. Consequently, we would expect evidence based policies to focus most of the attention at this level. There is neither research evidence nor logical considerations which could justify the exceptional attention paid to scholarships or to free meals and school materials: we cannot expect the situation to substantially improve due to such measures. There is also research evidence that supports the view put forward by our analysis. The Soros Foundations were among the very first who started programmes providing mentoring and scholarships to secondary and higher education students. An evaluation of the programmes prepared in 2000 says that

“these projects providing direct services did not aim to, and they were not able to, change the educational environment that Roma children face in the state schools of Central Eastern Europe. Improving Roma children’s participation in the educational process is precisely hindered by this inadequate educational environment”⁶⁸.

In other words, the Soros Foundations and the Open Society Institute were fully aware that scholarships and mentoring – and actually all projects “providing direct services” could only be seen as urgency measures, or in our terminology, ways or remedies to treat the symptoms,

⁶⁶ The original research included other countries not covered in our research, such as Albania and Montenegro, where the situation is far worse than in other countries, with figures as low as 63% in both countries for primary education, and 3 and 7 per cent respectively for upper secondary education.

⁶⁷ This is one reason why the Hungarian government’s recent decision to lower the age of compulsory education provoked very harsh criticism among academics, NGOs and policy analysts alike.

⁶⁸ Available at

<http://www.kka.hu/soros/dokument.nsf/329cd37724344b06c12568a9006c35fd/51df1edb5ccc4e9cc1256c6a00431a52?OpenDocument>, last Accessed 24 October 2015.

but definitely not as cures for the illness. They are the painkillers for educational problems.

There are other opinions, according to which scholarships may have increased the proportion of Roma graduates. One of these is Brüggemann, who examines the problem of survey methodology in connection with the results that the ratio of Roma graduates is below 1% in all of the countries. He says that the particular survey he was using looked at Roma localities (a household survey), and that Roma graduates are likely to move from these communities and they are from better positioned communities in the first place, so the research underrepresents the number of Roma graduates. This is one argument which can at least be challenged, since household surveys do include family members who no longer physically live in the neighbourhood. But Brüggemann's other argument is more relevant for our discussion here. Based on the increasing number of Roma beneficiaries of higher education scholarships (REF and Romaversitas) he comes to the conclusion that the number of Roma university graduates has also increased (BRÜGGEMANN 2012:24). This, however, may also be a wrong conclusion: the other, and we believe much more probable, explanation for the increase in the number of scholarships is simply the fact that scholarship providing organisations, be it NGOs like the ones Brüggemann looked at, or state agencies, have been able to reach out to more of the already existing number of Roma university students, either by better management and promotion, or the better availability of funds. We do not know which of these two explanations is correct, and that is precisely what we want to point out: we do not have evidence for either. The results are almost uniform, whichever survey we look at: the number of Roma graduates has not increased *considerably* during the last decades.

It can be seen from the data in Figure 16, that most of the dropping out happens after the lower secondary level. The next step should be to discover why this is so, and based on the results, policy attention should be directed to those areas. The problem of dropouts is included in practically all of the Roma policies. But this is again a phenomenon that could be regarded as a symptom of a deeper, more fundamental problem. The policy response, however, does not seem to intend to discover these reasons. Most often, they directly target the surface with projects such as extra classes, extra-curricular activities and out-of-school programmes. There is no explanation in Roma policies why these measures are expected to improve the situation. In any way, they could alleviate the pain, but they are not likely to solve the problem – and we have decades of experience to prove that they are indeed unable to solve any problem in themselves. Most analyses recommend the implementation of better monitoring and evaluation procedures, making data available, a better planning, more concerted actions, or other *technical*

measures, sometimes even recommending “good practices” that clearly haven’t brought tangible results in the countries where they have been in use for a longer time, such as Roma school mediators or positive discrimination. We believe that the lion’s share of the failures is not caused by technical or implementation-related problems. Introducing elements that are deemed “good practice” but which have had no obvious results in other countries, will not help much. We believe that the most serious problem is that these projects are targeting the surface, they are trying to treat the symptoms rather than eliminate the cause. It is time to understand what painkillers are capable of doing and what they are not.

7.3 Language and culture

Language and culture are the two sacred cows of Roma inclusion issues. From practitioners through NGOs to policymakers, these two topics are beyond criticism when it comes to Roma inclusion, and everyone with a voice seems to agree that they are cornerstones of Roma integration. Reasons are rarely given, and when they are, they are not very convincing. Authors hardly ever mention concrete examples, but instead use general statements which sometimes seem personal impressions and speculations rather than arguments, without much supporting evidence. One of the authors claims that “Roma may be reluctant to send their children to state schools because of fear of losing their cultural identity” (RINGOLD 2005:12), but she fails to give either references to sources or arguments for this extremely strange and serious claim⁶⁹. We have already examined the context of culture in policy documents (see Chapter 6.4) from the point of view of image construction. Based on the wording and the context in action plans, it seems clear that by “culture”, action plans usually mean what “cultural heritage” usually covers, such as songs and music, arts, celebrations and festivals. Are they in danger? Do they play such a central role in the exclusion/inclusion of the Roma as it can be concluded from their weight in policies? This research is unable to provide an answer to these essential questions, but what we want to point out is that neither do policies or the background materials for these policies. It seems at this stage, that culture gets such a large amount of attention for no obvious reason.

The importance of language is regarded perhaps even more unquestionable, but again, with no traces of logical arguments in the treatment of the topic. In the vast majority of the cases, by

⁶⁹ This particular work, on the other hand, may already serve as reference for later works that may repeat the claim. This is one way how common mistakes can spread in academia.

“language”, they mean Romani. By contrast, in the problem descriptions, we can only find descriptions where the problem is that some of the Roma children do not speak the language of the school (i.e. the majority language) very well, which acts as a barrier to school success. What are the options for helping this situation? Strictly logically speaking, there are two direct ways of helping to eliminate this barrier: either making Romani a language of the school, or teaching the students the majority language. We are not going to evaluate either of these options now, but neither of them are recommended or even get mentioned in most policy documents⁷⁰. Instead, there is a great deal of emphasis on teaching the Romani language to Romani students in most of the action plans, complemented by plans to support research, the availability of Romani training at higher education institutions or the use of Romani at other places. These actions, however, are not linked to any part of the problem descriptions. Neither do independent researches give any indication that the lack of Romani (especially the possibility to learn it at educational institutions) would play a major role (or *any* role, for that matter) in the exclusion or the inclusion of the Roma. There is research, however, which indicates that language socialisation (in the mother tongue of the Roma child, be it Romani or any other language) does play an important role in school success (see FEJES 2005 and works referenced by him). We can just repeat ourselves: it seems at this stage, that the Romani language gets such a large amount of attention for no obvious reason.

Some of the strategies provide explanation for the focus on culture itself (whereby they supposedly include language as well). This is what we find in the Czech strategy:

“The Czech government has as its goal support for scientific and cultural activities aimed at preserving the cultural heritage of Roma and sees the development and protection of the Roma national identity as the natural right of the Roma national minority. The loss of Roma identity, reduced standing for Roma culture and linguistic assimilation should not be the prerequisite for Roma integration. The government's approach comes first and foremost from the conviction that with the consolidation of Roma identity there will also be a growth in their interest managing their own affairs and active promotion of their own interests within society and responsibility for these. Consolidation of the cultural identity of Roma requires a change in attitudes and the openness of Czech society towards the Roma national minority such that Roma feel

⁷⁰ With the exception of the Czech strategy, which includes one point dealing with Roma students who are non-native speakers of Czech, and Romania where the action plans includes the possibility of setting up bilingual classes in kindergartens with at least 15 requests.

that they are fully fledged members of society in spite of their cultural difference. (CZ-11:11).

What it basically says is this: firstly, including culture in the policy is a question of human rights. The Roma have the right to keep and maintain their culture. This in itself doesn't explain why the policy should pay exceptional attention to culture and language (see Figure 11 through Figure 13 above). Second: the expected result of this emphasis is that the Roma will be made interested, motivated and responsible – from which it logically follows that according to the strategy, the Roma are not interested, motivated or responsible at present, at least not enough (the strategy uses the word 'growth'). It is important to note that the strategy is talking about "their own affairs", which are, as it follows from the sentence, not managed by the Roma themselves. The last part of the quotation is equally important: the Roma should feel that they are full members of the society, *in spite of* their cultural differences. That is, these cultural differences normally and expectedly act as a barrier to being a full member of society.

Culture thus becomes a policy tool for emphasizing differences between the Roma and the society at large. We have already seen that under the auspices of culture, policies mostly blame the Roma for most of the problems in many policy fields including education. Emphasizing differences is another result and consequence that can be observed. As far as Romani language teaching is concerned, however benevolent it may seem, and however desirable the aim to cultivate Romani, it should be noted that it also has the potential to accentuate differences, especially if we consider the actual state of the implementation of Romani classes at schools. It is highly unlikely that non-Roma pupils or students will take part in any of these extra classes. Not to mention the problems with (the lack of) teaching materials and professional teaching staff (see ORSÓS 2015, PÁLMAINÉ ORSÓS 2008). Financial resources would certainly be available for intensive projects for creating teaching materials, developing teaching methodologies and related programs (through tenders, as usual in almost any other fields) and even for setting up university trainings for teachers of Romani. Such programmes are usually neither recommended nor implemented. At the time of writing, there is still no official Romani teacher's degree acquirable in any of the countries, which sometimes makes it necessary for governments to come up with exceptional regulations for Romani teachers (cf. ORSÓS 2015). Teaching materials are few and far between, and sometimes, their quality is also questionable. It seems that these plans are not taking the matter too seriously. After all, officially introducing the teaching of a language into the educational system (even if it is a language that needs some sort of standardization), is much less of a challenge than fully integrating into society an ethnic

group which has been discriminated against for centuries. Despite of this, the “success”, or rather the failure, is comparable in the two fields.

Success is rarely seen in the field of supporting the Roma cultural heritage either, although this goal is also explicitly stated in some policies, including the Hungarian strategy. As a concrete measure, the Hungarian government pledged to set up “a Roma Cultural Centre to the highest European standards” (HU-11:98). Indeed, they prepared the concrete plans and attempted to set it up, but local governments all refused to accept and implement the plans due to openly, and even admittedly, racist protests by political (parliamentary) parties and local citizens alike. The plans were offered to several cities around Hungary, all refusing it, and today, the government seems to have abandoned its plans altogether. There are Roma museums in Belgrade in Serbia and in Brno in the Czech Republic, and Roma sections in ethnographic museums in a few other places, but the number does not reflect the often mentioned claim that the Roma are the largest ethnic minority in Europe, and even less the fact that preserving Roma culture is *the most often mentioned* goals of Roma policies. The only Roma radio, Rádió C in Hungary stopped operation in 2011 due to financial reasons. There are short programmes on TV and radio channels in some countries including Hungary and Romania, but that again doesn’t reflect the fact the Roma make up as much as ten per cent of some of the CEE countries.

We believe that if governments were really determined about protecting and even developing and spreading Roma culture (i.e. cultural heritage), they would easily have the means and the capacity to do much more to change this situation. However, if the situation remains like what we have outlined above, we are left with only the other possible explanation for emphasizing Roma culture and language so much in policies: the purpose of image construction, making the problem socially and ethnically localized and emphasizing differences. Additionally, culture and language are two topics that can excellently be used for such purposes, too. Even if we suppose that this trend is not intentional, it has little effect on the outcome itself: the emphasis on language and culture has only resulted in highlighting differences and distancing the problem from the majority society, besides the image construction and problem framing that we have examined in previous chapters.

7.4 Outside or inside? - Extracurricular activities

Extracurricular activities include a range of programmes, the common feature being that they are not part of the normal course of the educational process. They may focus on talent

development in various fields, or they may simply provide free time activities to students. Something that is necessary, not to mention essential, for the successful accomplishment of school tasks should always be included within the frames of the normal school activities. After-school activities are sometimes handled separately in educational literature, but for the ease of use and clarity, we will treat them combined.

A large proportion of the programmes in action plans are extracurricular, most of them after-school programmes. These include extra classes, mentoring activities, after school clubs or programmes during the school holidays – all of these specifically and *exclusively* organised and provided for Roma children.

Hungary places a special focus on Sure Start child houses, tanodas and “specialized Roma colleges” (not a higher education institution) and mentoring programmes. Romania has “school after school” programmes and second chance programmes in focus, while in the Czech Republic, we find tutoring programmes or special preparatory programmes for Roma students preparing for higher education. Whichever country’s strategy we look at, the provision of “extra help” to Roma children will be the most prominent feature of action plans. This approach frames the problem in a way which makes it clear that the policymaker sees the cause of the problem in Roma children themselves: after all, it is them who need assistance, which in turn means that they need to change something that acts as a barrier for their educational development. This is perfectly in line with what William Ryan concludes in connection with the approach used for blaming the victim, when he says that a logical consequence of this approach is that policymakers try to change the victim rather than society: “In education, we have programmes of «compensatory education» to build up the skills and attitudes of the ghetto child, rather than structural changes in the schools” (Ryan 1976:8). Extracurricular and after school activities are unable target structural aspects of education. These programmes are in fact compensatory, as Ryan put it: we offer programmes and actions that are meant to compensate for *Roma children’s inability* to achieve better results at school. Problem framing is again at work: what these programmes very strongly imply is that it is not the school that needs extra attention, but Roma children.

Of course it would result in a completely different picture if Roma policies also included a large amount of actions which target the school itself, including teachers and other staff, and extracurricular programmes were seen as complementary to them. This is, unfortunately, not the case. We cannot find plans that target the educational system, or the school structure. There are a few items which deal with methodological issues in some of the action plans (especially

in the Czech Republic), but not much in the field of approach or structure. Even this is only found in some of the action plans, but policy papers and strategies themselves (especially the 2011 strategies) are most often completely silent about the need to target the school's approach, the structure or the educational process and the system.

We presuppose that the reader will agree that Roma educational (and most other Roma related) problems are caused by systemic and systematic reasons. If so, any action that falls outside of the usual system can only be interpreted as immediate “emergency” help. This is actually what most NGOs working in the field do, and this is understandable and welcome. The vast majority of actions implemented by pro-Roma NGOs provide such compensatory extra help. Some of them are even able to show considerable results, through which they are able to “prove” school management, local authorities and local governments and even country level policymakers that change is possible. Yet, they are still unable to bring change in the system. Emergency actions may provide temporary assistance in individual circumstances and locations, but it is highly questionable if they will ever be able to have a measurable effect on the system.

7.5 Summary and conclusions

In Chapter 7 we have examined action plans with the purpose of gaining a better understanding of how problem framing and social constructions operate in Roma education policies. It was also our aim to test one of our hypotheses based on Carol Bacchi's WPR approach, namely that problem definitions will also be observable in the concrete actions recommended in policies or to put it in a different perspective that action plans do contain problem framing. In previous parts of this work, we have already seen that there is a tendency in all of the Roma policies studied, whereby the policymakers try to distance themselves and thus the majority society, from “the Roma problem” in a sense that the problem is portrayed to be limited within Roma communities rather than outside. Blaming the victim is also an important part of this approach, the most important consequence of which is that policies are trying to target the Roma rather than the society, they are expecting the Roma to change rather than the school or the educational system. We have found evidence for this last point in action plans in that most of them target Roma children and suggest that the problem is their inability to achieve. Providing them extra assistance in the form of extracurricular activities mean that policies are trying to find solutions outside of the regular school system. Although on-the-job training for teachers is also normally part of action plans, besides this, we cannot see any other actions that would expect changes in the educational environment or the educational system.

We have argued that there is a general trend to target symptoms rather than causes, and this makes Roma education policies extremely weak. The real causes, as we have mentioned several times throughout the current work, is discrimination and racism, which also leads to segregation in education. We called all other problems the symptoms of these, including dropping out, low attendance and low achievement levels. Policies are not trying to find the underlying reasons for these symptoms.

With this approach, policymakers are successfully framing the problem as one that can be solved by changing the Roma themselves. In other words, blaming the victim is also observable in action plans. Practically no actions are trying to address discrimination and racism in any of the country policies. Segregation and the issue of special schools is mentioned, but even then, it is the Roma themselves who are portrayed to be at fault.

Language and culture get “more than a fair share” of policy attention, but there is no evidence at all that they could solve major problems in the field of Roma education. However, they do have the capacity to emphasize differences and with this, locating the problem within the Roma communities again. Scholarships and other forms of financial aids are also among the most usual items in action plans. However useful they might seem, we have seen that they are unable to reach tangible, let alone sustainable results, but they are able to strengthen problem framing and image construction of the Roma.

As a final note, we would like to emphasize again that we were not looking at the practical use of the actions examined. It is our experience that in professional discussions, some may raise the question of what we would recommend instead of all these action plan items mentioned here and what is wrong with them after all. The question itself is wrongly formulated, since we were not criticising the form or characteristic details of any of these programmes. On the contrary, we believe that Romani language classes are useful and necessary, although we have extremely serious problems with the implementation as discussed above. We think scholarships are also necessary and countries should increase their efforts in this field. Extra-curricular activities certainly also help, just like mentoring activities, and there is no doubt that free meals, free textbooks or bus tickets are a boon to many Roma families and children. Governments should carry on providing all these services as long as they are needed. The problem is that *there is not much else* that can we find in action plans. From a theoretical and systemic perspective, these are not simply insufficient, but they do not even start to deal with the real problems. These actions are typically the kind that NGOs are expected to deal with. NGOs do not have either the capacity or the possibility to target systemic aspects, so they usually deal

with complementary actions. If and when governments are doing the same, they are acting like they were just another NGO. And we are still not talking about practical matters, which means that we cannot, and we do not wish to, answer the question what actions policies should include. We are dealing with problem framing and social constructions. In this context, if most of the actions in policies are like the ones that have examined above, then problem framing and image construction capability of the whole will increase. Additionally, it is not only a question of numbers, but also prioritizing, which is normally entirely missing from action plans. The already cited action of “supporting free time activities” or “organising contests” have exactly the same weight in action plans, as for example, “Programmes and scholarship programmes promoting the educational success of disadvantaged young people, including Roma”. As an overarching problem, which must be addressed by all policies, is what we highlighted above: the lack of targeting the real cause, discrimination.

Governments, it seems, do not even try to address the most important issues. And that is, we believe, because their goal with these Roma inclusion strategies is entirely different: problem redefinitions, framing and interpretations.

8 Conclusions

8.1 The main findings in context

The title of our research contains the word “intentions”. Intentions are, to put it simply, mental states, the measuring of which could hardly be carried out, and this was certainly not one of our goals in this research. And although intentions may leave their mark both on texts and on actions, the use of this word was rather for want of a better term that could possibly include all the policy making techniques that we actually aimed to examine: image construction, problem framing, problem definitions, interpretations and other manipulations that policy researchers usually examine within the frame of social construction. This is one way of explaining the main title: Paved with Intentions. But there is another one. In the research, we have used a review prepared by the Open Society Foundations, which says “good intentions need to be bolstered by concrete targets and timelines, allocated budgets, the kind of data that allows for ‘robust monitoring’ of progress, and a recognition that national integration strategies cannot succeed without resolute and unequivocal action to combat racism and discrimination” (OSF 2012:1). We cannot completely agree with what this sentence implies. For it is certainly true that there

are some kind of intentions in these policies. But whether they could really be called *good*, we have very strong reservations. After all, calling a very often racist and discriminatory image-building about the Roma “good intentions” would seem far-fetched, to say the least. Hence the title of this thesis.

But for the issues identified in the OSF review, we believe we have found an explanation for them. From evaluations, including the one we quoted from above, it seems as though *nothing* is working in Roma integration strategies. Let us make it very clear: it is not the case that *some* strategies show *some* weaknesses in *some* fields. It is not the case that they lack a couple of components, which, if rectified, the strategy would work. Analysts are not recommending improvements of certain parts of the strategies, but they are unsatisfied with almost all of them. The reality is that all of the strategies lack most, if not all, the basic elements that would make a policy worth even considering. The OSF review, similarly to most other evaluations, lists the very basic elements that are missing from national strategies: these are the components without which we simply cannot call something a policy that has reached the decision agenda.

We examined the strategies prepared in 2011. As we have already mentioned, it makes the situation even more incomprehensible that this is far from being the first attempts of governments to build a Roma policy, and external evaluations have unanimously kept repeating the same criticisms over a very long period of time.

Policymakers have not listened.

Our research results suggest that with the setup and approach that we have revealed, they are not likely to listen any time soon: it would simply be irrational or inconsistent on their part. It is also important to point out that these policies are actually quite successful in what they are really trying to achieve: reframing the problem. Let us see why.

Although some Roma policies have existed throughout the twentieth century in almost all of the Soviet Bloc countries⁷¹, it was not before the fall of Communism that international policy attention started to considerably intensify, while the expansion of the European Union practically made the topic of Roma inclusion one of the most prominent issues in accession negotiations. There were at least two waves which drew increased attention to Roma issues:

⁷¹ Most of them were the type of policies that could not be allowed today, for example because they aimed for assimilation, trying to suppress any kind of Roma cultural and language related programmes, and most importantly, because they were at times outright racist even in their explicit language use, among others things, overtly calling Gypsies parasites.

one immediately after the fall of the communist regimes in East European countries, and one in the period preceding the accession of most of these countries to the EU. From this perspective, it bears no considerable importance that in both cases, West European countries and international institutions were mainly trying to protect themselves from an influx of Roma migrants rather than showing their sincere concerns for human rights and democratic values, the main outcome was that eventually, such concerns did show up in the policies they prepared.

National governments were somehow late (and reluctant) in responding to these trends at the beginning of the 1990s. As one prominent Hungarian policy researcher has noted in a private conversation, very few would have expected that the Roma issue would receive such a prominent attention. The initiative was thus taken by policy actors different from national governments: large international NGOs, international organisations and EU institutions, while at the same time, the topic also gained increasing amounts of academic attention, too. When the pressure on national governments (mostly CEE countries wishing to join the EU) was already obvious and real to deal with these questions, the tasks of problem definition, framing and interpretation had already been carried out. Although there were differences among the already existing interpretations, there were a number of points that enjoyed consensus. First and foremost, everyone seemed to agree that the most severe underlying issue is discrimination, with many analysts using the expression racism. Whatever the terminology, international policies and analyses clearly put the blame on the majority societies in question, and they presented the Roma as the victims of the situation. This approach was also supported by the increasing volume of scientific research results, too, which pointed out that segregation and racial (or ethnic) discrimination is so widespread and systematic that addressing the problem is not possible without a systemic approach which would target discrimination and segregation in practically all areas of life from education to health care, while also promoting the advancement of the Roma in particular fields, most importantly education.

National governments were thus faced with the task of creating policies and action plans, and implementing them with already existing, and widely accepted guidelines. Agenda setting seemed to have been completed, with Roma issues already taking place in the decision agenda.

This was not a desirable situation for national governments. Looking at this state of affairs from the social construction policy theory viewpoint, what governments were facing (and still are facing) was the very strong pressure to prepare *decision agenda* policies for a target group which has considerable power, but has an extremely negative image. The power of the group is none other than the pressure coming from EU institutions and other, highly influential

organisations to deal with the question, while the extremely negative image is something that a large number of surveys prove: that the Roma have *the* most negatively constructed image of all in all of the countries with a large Roma population.

In a situation like this, governments are supposed to be acting in a way that may satisfy both requirements: distribute benefits to the target population, since they have power; but do this in a covert way, since the vast majority of the population of the country will not be happy to see benefits going to non-deserving groups. This is, of course, only what the theory suggests. However, this would not work in the case of Roma policies. Most importantly, we are not simply talking about benefits to be distributed: there are many more things on a much wider scale, which cannot remain covert if properly implemented. The most significant of these is fighting discrimination and racism. It is only possible to address this issue in a way whereby the majority population (including educational and other institutions, officials and various representatives of state and other establishments) are not only directly targeted but clearly accused of a major wrongdoing, and on top of that, in connection with the most despised group of people, the Roma. This of course carries the risk of losing political support and voting power. None of the governments seem to be willing to take this risk. As a result, fighting discrimination and racism is regarded as a definite no-go area. Acknowledging the existence of *some kind of* discrimination *to some extent* is still something that many policies risk doing, but we can already see that some governments such as Hungary, are refusing to regard discrimination as a major cause of the problems altogether.

The result is that governments are in a vastly undesirable situation, where they are expected to act in a way that they clearly regard highly risky from the perspective of political gains and re-election. Indeed, it is obvious for them from present-day examples too, that political gains could be earned with the opposite approach: blaming the Roma and regarding them as basically causing trouble and claiming that it is themselves who must change their attitudes, morale, refrain from crime and learn to live a civilised way of life. This is of course also a taboo for policymakers to claim publicly. And, as is known, this is also precisely the racist image that is widespread among the general public in these countries.

There is one important circumstance that is different from the group of contenders in the social construction theory. The target population in our case does have power, but it comes from outside, mainly in the form of primarily international political and policy support. Although there are Roma groups, they do not normally possess a considerable influence, and the Roma voting power is at least questionable (see page 33). This essentially means that retributive action

in the form of voting is not to be expected if the group doesn't get the policy attention that it wishes for. If there is any kind of backfire, it can be expected from international organisations and EU institutions, and mainly in the form of naming and shaming and minor "clashes" with and the disapproval of international courts⁷².

As an addition to the social construction theory for policy, we argue that the tool that governments are likely to use in such a situation is reframing and redefining the problem in a way that may lessen the contradiction between their political gains and the pressure to make policy for a controversial target group with no "direct power". One of the main goals is to avoid confrontations with massive and powerful groups of voters. It is also expected that they will strive to change the image that is contradicting the public image, and reconstruct it if possible, or modify it if complete reconstruction is not an option, in order to bring it closer to the public image. With this approach, it is evidently impossible to build a policy with the original goals in mind. It is therefore in the interest of the policymaker to use vague indicators, elusive concepts and ambiguous forms of evaluation and monitoring. The basic tenet regarding contenders of the social construction theory also remains valid: if benefits are distributed, they should be covert and downplayed. To this end, it is most advantageous if the policy is using a generalist rather than a targeted approach. As far as action plans are concerned, there are safe and unsafe actions depending on how much public attention they are likely to get and what they suggest in connection with problem framing and interpretations.

Let us examine how these points are supported by the findings of our research detailed in the separate chapters above.

We argue that fighting discrimination and racism will be over the limits for policies. This is clearly what we have found: none of the policies have a systematic way of dealing with the issue, and only some of them have a few items in the action plans regarding segregated schools, but these are sporadic at best and even then, they are constructed in a way that they are not likely to bring any tangible results, and sometimes they cannot even be taken seriously. Some strategies even claim that discrimination and racism are not the cause but the effect of poverty.

We have seen that poverty is commonly regarded as the most important underlying reasons described in problem descriptions, and "fighting" it is the most important goal in action plans

⁷² The European Court of Human Rights has dealt with a number of cases including the discrimination of Roma and has found discrimination and racism. See: http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/execution/themes/roms/roma_EN.asp

of Roma strategies. This is a complete redefinition of the problem compared to international policies and academic research, where it is discrimination rather than poverty (poverty being a consequence). We should see that it is a logical result of the framing effort: if discrimination is left out of the equation, the next problem, that is indeed an existing problem described in all external problem descriptions too, is indeed poverty. To put it simply: to completely redefine the problem, all you have to do is delete the first item, i.e. discrimination and racism, and leave most other elements untouched. This is what happened in the Roma policies we have examined. In the rest of the problem description, most of them precisely repeat what we know from scientifically based research. In the field of education, this will include items such as low levels of school attendance, the lack of preschool education, dropouts, the difficulty of transition from lower secondary to upper secondary levels or the unmeasurably low number of higher education students. This has led some analysts to prematurely conclude that some of the Roma policies included an excellent problem description (and later express their surprise why the rest of the policy is very low quality). We believe can provide the solution to that puzzle: they retained the upper elements, but the underlying cause has been deleted and then, of course, the whole structure will collapse.

Emphasising poverty has another major consequence. Making the Roma problem a problem of poverty helps downgrading the Roma issue. If the Roma problem is redefined as a problem of poverty and socio-economic circumstances, what policymakers may end up with is a poverty agenda rather than a Roma agenda. It is a highly significant difference if we talk about a number of “vulnerable groups” in danger of poverty and marginalisation as opposed to talking about an ethnic group, whose many problems include poverty and marginalisation, all of which are mainly caused by discrimination and racism. We must realize that this way the Roma agenda may simply disappear, or at least dissolve in a broad policy framework. We can see that in a number of cases, this is really what is going on. The Hungarian government is simply refusing to construct a Roma policy, instead, they have constructed a policy to address problems of the poor *including* Roma, but other countries also put the Roma on a list of a number of other “vulnerable” groups implying that they face the same problems *for the same reasons*, which is obviously not the case. The ill-conceived recommendation by the COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (2009) is a boon to policymakers who wish to reach this goal of “demoting” Roma issues, although the recommendation supposedly has an entirely different purpose (but is phrased in a rather unsuccessful way).

Image construction is also something that we have seen happening in all of the Roma policies

examined. With only a few exceptions such as the Croatian policy, strategy documents are careful enough not to openly confirm the extremely negative and unjust image of the Roma that is to be found in abundance in virtually every segment of public life from media through the arts to everyday conversations. They do, however, confirm at least parts of this image in the way they phrase a problem and in measures recommended. As we have seen, blaming the Roma themselves for their problems is common practice. The Roma are constantly claimed to be unwilling to cooperate, to be uninterested in their own children's future, to be unmotivated to take up employment etc. Even criminality is mentioned in several strategies as a problem related to the Roma, and they are accused of discriminatory practice against Roma women. Even if some of these points may need attention, they are so much overemphasised, that the reader can only conclude that these are the main causes of the problems. Actions recommended are also in line with this approach, and we can mainly find corrective measures and providing assistance to the Roma to make them able to change their own attitudes and their behaviour, exactly as observed by William Ryan in "Blaming the Victim". Systemic and systematic measures that would target the school and other institutions, again as noted by Ryan, are rarely, if ever, found in Roma policies.

Distancing the problem of Roma issues from the policymaker (i.e. from the governments) is another method very often employed. Like the overemphasising of poverty, this also helps to get rid of the undesired agenda or at least place it at a different level or in a different perspective. One of the methods used is placing the Roma issue in a European perspective and emphasizing that the responsibility is just as European as it is national. Some of the policies send this message very openly, while some others only contain indications, for example through highlighting the Europeanness of the Roma and presenting them as one group whose members are much closer to each other than to their fellow citizens in their own countries. This (obviously false and harmful) idea is also supported by different NGOs and advocacy groups whose activities may sometimes be characterised by a similar approach. It seems that the making of a nation was a cherished idea of some Roma groups, and today, we can also see signs of this activity. Talking about a Roma culture rather than Roma cultures doesn't help the situation either. As we can see, Roma policies are using these ideas to their full advantage. Describing the Roma as a foreign group is common both among leading politicians and in policies (see Chapter 5.7), underlining differences between their culture and the majority culture can only lead to separation rather than inclusion. There is no evidence either: as far as we know, no one has ever researched how different particular Roma cultures are from the surrounding majority cultures. We can only hypothesise the logical, namely that population groups living together in the same political-

economical-social structure will be much nearer to each other than groups living in different structures. The result of this distancing is manifold. On the one hand, it helps to paint an image of the Roma which is nearer to the public image than to the image in academic research and international policies, since it claims that the Roma are not actually “our” people, they do not really belong to this community. It also helps to downgrade the Roma agenda, since this way, the responsibility is shared at least between Europe and the particular state. Responsibility is a key issue. Policymakers may well be aware that the policies they are preparing is not able to properly address the problems, the main goal being problem framing rather than solving problems. But if responsibility is not solely on their shoulders, the situation will become much more favourable: the failure to solve problems is as much a failure of the European community (or even more so) as it is that of the individual country’s.

However, shifting the responsibility onto the European Union or at least the international community in general hasn’t borne much fruit for the member state governments yet. The European Commission has underlined several times during recent years that the final responsibility rests with the member states (which is a sign that the attempts are already quite obvious for the EC, too), but the idea that the Roma are a European people and therefore it is Europe who should take care of them hasn’t become widely accepted even among member states as far as the policy documents are concerned⁷³. This means that they must address the problem of responsibility, particularly the fact that their own Roma policies are largely futile. In Chapter 4, we have examined what evaluations usually point out as problems in connection with Roma policies. We have already discussed why policies disregard discrimination and racism. The remaining points were the lack of data, the lack of clear budgeting, vagueness, problems of accessibility in the use of EU funds, the lack of clear targeting, the lack of usable indicators, and the lack of monitoring and evaluation. All of these points share one common feature: they make it impossible to measure success or to track actual work. This is precisely what is desirable if the policymaker is aware that the policy cannot be expected to have tangible results. It seems as if policymakers are trying to block the way from revealing the true state of Roma inclusion. As we have mentioned, we have of course no way of looking into the minds and intentions of policymakers, but the results are there to see, and they point to one clear direction: making the measuring of results impossible. Government self-evaluations, on the other hand, are always positive and they never point out major deficiencies.

⁷³ Although we see a very different picture if we look at other types of communications, see Chapter 5.7), so the trend is towards this direction anyway.

We also dealt with the items in action plans. Here, we saw irregularities which are sometimes difficult to account for. Why do policies deal with some of the questions such as culture and language at length and why don't they pay attention to other, much more pressing problems like school segregation? As they are part of the policy, action plans may not contradict the main goal of the policymaker, which is problem framing and image construction. Any action that is listed should be looked at from this point of view, and some may be regarded safe, while some others unsafe. Culture and language are two areas which are not only safe to include, but they may also help some of the partial goals such as distancing the problem from the policymaker and emphasizing differences. As we say earlier, culture is commonly used for the purposes of blaming the victim too: explaining why Roma fail to achieve good results. And although action plans concentrate on cultural heritage rather than culture per se, keeping the topic on the agenda is useful, and it also meets the approval of various NGOs, who would like to promote Roma cultural heritage. Other actions clearly serve the purpose of promoting the image and the problem frame that was outlined in policies. Targeting Roma children themselves rather than the school, providing financial help in the form of free school materials is emphasizing the poverty agenda, focusing on extra-school and extra-curricular activities is helping the distancing attempts.

All in all, the Roma integration policies of CEE countries are not essentially different from, among others, the Dutch strategy paper, which openly refuses to work in the field of Roma inclusion and says that it is the task of the Roma to integrate themselves into Dutch society and is blaming them for any failures to do so. The difference is that CEE countries are not in the position to openly act this way. They need to resort to more sophisticated ways, and reframing the problem and reconstructing the image of the target population is one of these options open to these policymakers.

8.2 Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes⁷⁴

Imagine a situation where a child is requested to draw a tree, but he draws a house instead. Then his drawing is appraised and the teacher points out how the windows should be placed elsewhere or the chimney should look different, and that a fence with a nice gate around the

⁷⁴ Latin: "I fear the Greeks even when they bring presents." From Virgil's Aeneid, referring to the famous Trojan horse, the "gift" of the Greeks. When Laocoon sees the horse, he warns the Trojans of the possible danger, saying the Greeks have already shown they are unreliable, so even a gift that they present should be treated with caution.

house would really improve the overall picture. He is never reminded that he was supposed to draw something entirely different: it is a drawing, after all. We sometimes feel that something similar is happening in the evaluation of Roma policies.

A lot of the analyses look at Roma policies from a technical point of view. By technical, we mean that they examine the overall quality, how coherent they are, whether the problem description uses scientific evidence or not (in the form of references), whether the individual actions could be expected to reach tangible results, whether there are indicators, and whether the strategy contains clear budgeting. In the next step, they provide recommendations to the policymaker on how to reduce these deficits or how to correct possible mistakes. Along the way, they also examine the proposed measures from a technical point of view: how the measure meets sustainability requirements, whether it has clear budget allocations or whether there is a “robust monitoring and evaluation” (a favourite term of policy analysts nowadays) in place. Meanwhile, they forget to look at such fundamental issues like problem framing and interpretations in these policies. They may not realise at all that the policy in question is dealing with problem framing and image construction rather than anything else, this being the main goal of the policymaker.

Implicitly, these evaluations suppose that policymakers and political leaders are completing the task of building Roma inclusion policies. It looks like a policy, after all, similarly to the house drawing, which is a drawing after all. The OSF review cited several times above, presupposes “good intentions” on the part of the policymaker.

But do we really have to assume that governments and their members are basically different from the general public and that they do not share the publicly held racist or discriminatory views? It seems that evaluators normally suppose that governments and their representatives agree with what academic research and advocacy groups hold about the most important aspects of Roma issues, and perhaps most importantly: that they have the same image about the Roma. They presuppose that they aim to protect human rights and fight against discrimination and injustice. And so, the failure of Roma policies should be due to bad management and organisation, inadequate planning, poor implementation, the lack of data and the lack of a robust monitoring and evaluation system.

But what is this assumption based on?

We have seen above (especially in Chapter 5.6), that political leaders including heads of

governments very often express highly discriminatory or outright racist opinions about the Roma. Some of them have openly and unambiguously claimed that they do not regard the Roma as part of the nation, some others have claimed that it is impossible to integrate the Roma into society, yet others have attributed the failures to genetic factors or at least to the Roma culture. It has happened that a minister responsible for Roma policy has (successfully!) fought *for* the lawful segregation of Roma children. We have no reason at all to assume that these very same political leaders would like to see a completely different image of the Roma in the policy documents that the government they are leading or that they are members of prepares.

On the contrary: we have good reason to assume that they would like to see the same ideas in government policies, too. And if it is not possible to openly include them, they might use other tools to reach a similar result. This is indeed precisely what we have revealed in this research.

We should also mention that it is a valid hypothesis that changing the status quo is not necessarily in the interest of some governments. Using demagogue approaches to various problems in a society where racism against the Roma is common is an easily available political tool. Some political analysts say that several parties in Central Eastern Europe have based their political career precisely on the discrimination of the Roma, and rather successfully. One such party holds second place in popularity in Hungary. This is perhaps the situation where the cliché is more than relevant: if the Roma issue didn't exist, it would have to be invented.

Lately, NGOs, advocacy groups and even some international policies have used an economic argument in their effort to convince governments to devise and implement good quality Roma policies. They basically argue that the successful integration and inclusion of the Roma will bring economic benefits to the country, with actual figures for a more convincing power. These usually include actual amounts of money a country would save if they didn't have to provide social benefits to Roma, and concrete amounts of money the country would earn if the currently unemployed Roma paid taxes if they were employed (cf. WORLD BANK 2014). These arguments should look very strange from certain respects, but they are understandable from others. The stick and the carrot method is a tool which is only used by policy advocates in certain settings. The Roma policy arena is apparently one of these settings. As far as the stick is concerned, there are the EU institutions and other international organisations, human rights advocacy groups and watchdogs, all of which have the capacity to exert pressure on governments. The carrot policy was also used several times, mainly with pre-accession countries. A good example for that is the Decade of Roma Inclusion. The reward was the smooth accession itself. Accession procedures are over; most CEE countries are full members of the European Union. The new

carrot, it seems, is the economic benefits of Roma inclusion. We should keep in mind that this carrot and stick policy only makes sense if the governments are assumed to be otherwise unwilling to properly (or at all) deal with Roma inclusion, or if they are deemed too unintelligent to understand the real motives, reasons, goals and targets. This is the understandable side: if governments are otherwise unwilling or unable to work for Roma inclusion, they need an incentive.

Another approach is saying that such a solution is unacceptable, even if they brought results – but we see that they haven't. We are talking about human rights and the basic tenets of democratic societies. Imagine the same stick and the carrot approach to domestic violence. Would it be acceptable in trying to convince the abuser, to argue that his/her fist would not hurt if he/she stopped beating the partner and other family members? In both cases, the abuser must stop the abusive activity because it is against basic rules of society and it is violating human rights.

Which are not, and should ever be, for sale.

8.3 Epilogue

In this work, we have presented results that describe trends in Roma policies, mostly in CEE countries. We argued that the primary goal in Roma policies is problem framing, redefinitions and image constructions rather than working towards Roma inclusion. Similarly to Ryan, when he claims that blaming the victim may not be the actual purpose of policymakers, we also say that we do not know the true intentions of policymakers, especially the individual professionals who were the authors of the documents. We believe that most of them are well-meaning, and would never want to do any harm to anyone, especially Gypsies, and that racism and discrimination is far from them. This, however, has little effect on the final result.

9 Recommendations

One especially important feature of our research is that it looks at policies in a broader context. Although we have examined individual policy measures too (and quite a lot of them), the aim was very different from what we have described above in connection with what most analyses and evaluations do. This is indeed one important message that we would like to present: trying

to correct mistakes in the house drawing when the task was drawing a tree does not lead to real change and is basically irrelevant. We think that giving advice on “correcting the house drawing” would legitimise the fundamentally erroneous completion of, or indeed the failure to complete, the task. Addressing the data problem for example, or constructing and implementing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will not lead to much improvement. And although using reliable data or implementing monitoring and evaluation are undoubtedly problematic in all Roma policies, we are reluctant to repeat the advice that has already been given to policymakers innumerable times. One reason for this is certainly our conviction that the policymaker is not likely to suddenly start to listen to this criticism and advice. The other reason is that we think this would be the wrong path to follow.

If there is any hope that they might change directions, we should talk about the directions themselves. This means that we would rather confront them with the findings of this research. The findings that show that rather than constructing a Roma policy, they are constructing an extremely negative and often racist Roma image. Rather than analysing (or openly discussing or even debating) the problem presented to them by social scientists and practitioners, they are cunningly and implicitly reframing this problem and they are reinterpreting issues in a way that fits the image they are constructing: the discriminative image which is present in their respective societies. Rather than trying to deal with the questions of Roma exclusion/inclusion, they are blaming the Roma for practically all the problems they face. They use action plans for these very same purposes rather than for actually dealing with Roma inclusion.

We would point out to them that before any further step, it is essential to *openly* discuss what they think about the problem, how they would frame it, what interpretations they have about different components of the problem, what image they think is associated with the Roma and what they think that image should actually be. We would offer very concrete questions for discussions before any meaningful policy work can start. What role do they think racism and discrimination plays in the exclusion of the Roma? How responsible are the Roma themselves for their own problems? Do they think Roma culture is hindering success? Do they think the Roma are unwilling to integrate?

We would like to remind all concerned parties besides policymakers (advocacy groups, policy researchers, social scientists, think tanks and watchdogs) that this step has never been part of the agenda. Governments received a ready-made problem description and an already constructed image from outside and they were expected to use them without questions. This is not to say that the problem description and the image that they received is wrong, but without

open discussions, they were forced to accept them, and the danger was always there that they would not be happy with this situation. Convincing them may have resulted in a better foundation than forcing them to accept these frames and constructions.

We would also like to make it absolutely clear that we are not recommending a debate which may result in a consensus between what we can see happen in Roma policies today and what social science and advocacy groups claim. We think that racism or any kind of discriminatory false image of the Roma is impermissible and thus they could not be legitimate “options” in the discussion. What we recommend is that governments should be convinced of these very well founded standpoints, which sees the Roma as victims of discrimination and racism.

No meaningful work in Roma inclusion can be expected to happen without an honest and open discussion of these questions. If governments go on working on social construction and problem framing in policies rather than working towards achieving the goals of Roma inclusion, it makes no sense to point out technical deficiencies like the lack of indicators or inadequate budgeting.

Let us forget about the details of the house when the task was drawing a tree.

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10.2 National Roma Integration Strategies

Most of these documents were submitted to the European Commission in 2011 or later, in response to the 2011 request made by the European Commission to all member states, to prepare or revise Roma integration strategies for their countries. All documents last accessed from

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma-integration/index_en.htm on 15 August 2015.

References to individual documents in the text use the abbreviation before each item.

BG-11: Bulgaria: *National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2012-2020)*

CZ-11: The Czech Republic: *Roma Integration Concept for 2010-2013*

ES-11: Spain: *National Roma Integration Strategy in Spain 2012-2020*

FR-11: France: *An equal place in French society: French government strategy for Roma integration within the framework of the Communication from the Commission of 5 April 2011 and the Council conclusions of 19 May 2011*

HR-11: Croatia: Government of the Republic of Croatia: *National Roma Inclusion Strategy from 2013 to 2020*, Zagreb, November 2012

HR-11A: Government of Croatia: *Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Roma Inclusion Strategy for the Period 2013-2015*.

HU-11: Hungary: *National Social Inclusion Strategy – Extreme Poverty, Child Poverty, the Roma (2011-2020)*

HU-11A: Hungary: *Resolution No. 1430/2011. (XII. 13.) of the Government Regarding the National Social Inclusion Strategy and Governmental Action Plan for the Implementation Thereof in the Years 2012 to 2014*

IR-11: Ireland: *Ireland's National Traveller/Roma Integration Strategy*

NL-11: The Netherlands: *Policy measures in the Netherlands for the social inclusion of Roma*

PL-03: Poland: *Program for the Roma Community in Poland*, Ministry of the Interior and Administration.

PL-11: Poland: (Letter to Francois Le Bail, DG Justice, European Commission, from Michal Boni, Minister of Administration and Digitization, in lieu of a strategy Warsaw, 28 December 2011.

RO-11: Romania: *Strategy of the Government of Romania for the Inclusion of the Romanian Citizens Belonging to Roma Minority for the Period 2012-2020*

RO-11C: Romania: Annex No 1e to the Strategy, Culture

RO-11E: Romania: Annex No 1a to the Strategy, Plans of Sectoral Measures, Education

SI-11: Slovenia: *National Program of Measures for Roma of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for the Period 2010-2015*.

SK-11: Slovakia: (without title)

SK-11A: Slovakia: Revised National Action Plan of the Decade of Roma inclusion 2005 – 2015 for years 2011 – 2015 <http://www.romadecade.org/article/decade-action-plans/9296>
Last accessed 15 August, 2015