

The Roma Elite as an Upper Social Segment and its Role in Changing the Style of Life within Roma Population Communities

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Abstract: *The present study wants to bring a new approach of studying the Roma community based on a shift of perception which will end up depicting a completely new image of this population. We hoped that this survey of the upper social segment of the Roma – intellectuals, community leaders, and businessmen – would make a contribution to changing the negative perception of the Roma by the majority population. The objectives of my paper are closely related with some more important reasons of my previous survey approach of the Roma population: First, we wanted to create a more balanced and complete (self-) image of the Roma population and to change the perception of the majority population on the Roma people. This survey produced a more realistic and comprehensive image of different life situations present in the Roma community. Second, we wanted to create more optimism regarding the possibility to improve the life of the Roma and to motivate their actions towards overcoming underdevelopment using the power of their elite group. According to the C. Wright Mills' definition for the power elite, the success stories can become social models for the rest of the Roma community, proving the actual possibility of social mobility and success among Roma population. In this way, C. Wright Mills pointed out: "The power elite is composed of men whose positions enable them to transcend the ordinary environments of ordinary men and women; they are in positions to make decisions having major consequences" (Grusky and Szelenyi, 2007, 87). The success life stories can become social models for the rest of the Roma community, proving that social mobility and success are possible among the Roma. Third, the strategy of success by modernisation might consolidate the Roma's educational and professional outcomes, an important predictor of personal success in their professional career towards a highly desirable social status.*

Keywords: Roma elite; educational policies; positive discrimination; success factors; work culture; labour market integration.

Cuvinte-cheie: elita roma; politici educaționale; discriminare pozitivă; factori de succes; cultura muncii; integrarea pe piața muncii.

The Roma community and its problems within the context of Romanian social policies

This analysis follows from my previous interests and studies on the importance of

education for the Roma people with a view to their inclusion in the labour market following proper professional training. I would like to emphasise from the very beginning that education and professional training have been and remain a core/priority theme of the social policies of

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support for the Roma community. From the very first study on the socio-economic conditions of the Roma that I conducted back in 1992, I noted their low educational attainment, the high school dropout rate, and their lack of interest for schooling (Zamfir and Zamfir, 1993). Moreover, there was evidence for functional illiteracy both the children and the youth. As a result of many studies of vulnerable groups, in time we proposed a plan for active intervention through services of specialised social work, properly organised within the communities, with the purpose of improving the rate of school enrolment among Roma children and adults (Surdu in Zamfir and Preda, 2002; Zamfir, 2002). We recommended several ways of continuous professional education and reconversion, both classical and modern (Zamfir and Runcan, 2011; Burtea, 2006). Unfortunately, 20 years later, the situation of the education for Roma people has not changed as much as we expected back in 1990-1991. There are several reasons for this lack of change: lack of active educational policies to support the poor and very poor segments, lack of proper monitoring of social work programmes, fragmentation of social aids, lack of motivation and involvement with of the Roma people to maintain a stable place of work etc. Furthermore, it seems that the foreign social perceptions on the Roma community are increasingly negative, together, very often associated to minor or major delinquency, to serious deviations from the social norms of life, to aggressions, violence and even murder. George Ritzer, referring with concern about the migration phenomenon in Europe, mentioned in his book about globalization the negative impact also on Roma population: “The rapid transformation of the ethnic and racial composition of Europe’s population due to the influx of large number of immigrants has resulted in an increase in racial and ethnic discrimination and

violence. There is considerable variation across countries and among various migrant populations within European countries. Undocumented migrants, asylum seekers, Roma people, Jews, and Muslims are among the most vulnerable to discrimination in employment, housing, education, health care, access to goods and services, and the media. They are also more likely to be victims of racial profiling, racist violence, and racially motivated crime... Recent immigrants – foreign nationals and asylum seekers – have replaced Jews as the major victims of racist violence in Germany. Today, “non-German looking” people, mainly Turkish nationals, people of African origin, Romany people, and Vietnamese nationals, are particularly vulnerable to violence in Germany (RAXEN National Focal Point for Germany 2005)” (2010, 452).

In Romania, and in all the communist countries, the start of a process of modernization during the 1950s and 1960s offered important social advantages to other categories of Roma too, who exit their closed communities and thus benefited of school education and jobs in the socialist economy. However, the Romanian communist state didn’t acknowledge formally the Roma community as a distinct ethnic group and didn’t support the development of their own culture and of a group consciousness. Such policy hampered the process of cultural modernization: the Roma culture survived at the margin of the Romanian society with a statute more likely tolerated than formally acknowledged (Burtea, 2006, 2008).

About the methodology: Who are the members of the Roma elite?

The present study is based on the empirical data research which I coordinated

with my colleague Vasile Burtea within the Research Institute for Quality of Life from Bucharest, Romanian Academy in late 2012.

The research was focused on the Roma elite: intellectuals, businessmen and community leaders. This was an exploratory research project which identified three successful categories among the Roma people, as well as the factors associated to their success, especially the formal education.

I imagine that the extremely derogatory image of the Roma community might have something to do with the fact that most of our sociological research was focused on serious social problems confronting the Roma: deep poverty, delinquency, and social exclusion, instead of the successful segment of the Roma population. For this reason I considered it is the moment to open a new approach in our sociological studies focussed on the superior/upper segment of Roma population: Roma elite. The Roma elite, characterised by multiple patterns of success and social/professional accomplishments, paints a completely different image of the Roma people and of their life style.

In our survey, we selected ten geographical areas representative for the variety and complexity of success scenarios of the Roma population in Romania: the city of Bucharest and the counties of Galați, Iași, Brăila, Buzău, Constanța, Ilfov, Neamț, Timișoara, and especially Bihor (where we conducted extensive research). In these areas, we identified three subgroups of participants representing the three categories of the target group: intellectuals, national/community leaders, and businessmen. The sample consisted of 432 Roma people, of which 193 intellectuals, 112 community leaders and 127 businessmen. However, the sample does not have the representativeness across the country, because the successful segment of the Roma population is sometimes difficult to identify; it is not

very visible within Roma communities. Despite these difficulties, we identified our participants using formal data from several institutions and informal data from Roma communities.

The people belonging to the elite Roma group were the ones who succeeded in their professional, political and business careers. For the purpose of our survey, we defined the three subcategories of successful Roma individuals as follows:

- Roma intellectuals: Roma people who graduated from formal programmes of higher education and who have the typical occupations and social status of intellectuals within the Romanian society;
- Roma leaders: Roma people who are politically active as Roma, within their community and the new Romanian political context;
- Roma businessmen: Roma people who acquired good economic standards with their personal stories of economic success.

These three categories were analysed along the following dimensions:

- Formal education,
- Economic position,
- Family organisation/structure,
- Ethnic consciousness,
- Attitude towards the Roma community of origin,
- Attitude towards the Roma culture, etc.

We used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods for this survey: three types of questionnaires, one for each category of successful Roma people, as well as focus groups, interviews with community leaders and Roma personalities, and a case study. Data from previous surveys on nationally-representative samples were re-analysed, providing information on the socio-economic, educational and cultural problems of the Roma communities, as well as on the evolution of these problems. The research also revealed the role of the

church in the moral behavioural changes and in the professional success of the Roma people. We also identified that the majority population had an ambiguous attitude towards the Romany language and Roma culture.

The main purpose of this research was to investigate as close as possible the complexity of the socio-cultural reality of a certain life style within the context of the global transformations brought by the contradictions and risks of a modern civilisation. An important rationale for this study was our wish to eliminate the cultural prejudice and the discrimination of the Roma that is insistently displayed by some western European countries. The Roma community can and must be helped to go past a mentality by a 'culture of learned helplessness/disabilities'. A dose of optimism and self-confidence is absolutely necessary in order to restore the capacity for normal integration within the community and for the active pursuit of self-autonomy. The Roma must be convinced that solutions do exist, so that their individual destinies can have trajectories other than marginalisation and sinking into severe poverty.

However, we noticed how difficult it was to determine accurately the proportion of the group of people we conventionally labelled as socially successful. Thus, we selected the three categories/types of Roma people we mentioned earlier, which are part of the Roma elite with their personal story of success. Through this we aimed to open a different research perspective on the Roma, focusing on the segment of the population that left the difficulties behind, which capitalised on opportunities, which found personal ways of overcoming 'the culture of silence' and 'the culture of poverty' which contribute to maintaining underdevelopment. It is interesting though that this upper segment is clearly expanding, having a significant impact on the

changes that face the Roma community in the context of a modern, competitive economy. Due to the power of their personal example, this group of people may play a decisive role in the future of the Roma community. They illustrate the idea that one can lead a different life without giving up one's cultural identity. The research data highlight once more reaching success through education and professional qualification is a certain, long-lasting strategy within the process of modernisation. Education and professional qualification are the main factors that generate a high social status and a satisfactory life standard, relying on the responsibility of changes in agreement with one's own cultural identity.

Our survey shows, using significant statistics (especially from secondary data analysis) the benefits of education and school enrolment for the Roma people within the context of the process of modernisation and increased competition on the labour market (Zamfir and Zamfir, 1993; Zamfir, 2012; Cace et al., 2010). The analyses also revealed the participants' opportunities for development through education and the social costs of change due to the severe economic crisis (Preoteasa, Cace and Duminica, 2009). The major economic crisis with its different austerity measures of the past years seriously affected the school enrolment and educational attainment of the Roma (Zamfir in Chipea et al., 2007; Surdu in Zamfir and Preda, 2002). The participants' attempt to quit marginalisation was presented in terms of structured or semi-structured patterns of success for each category included in the research; each of these patterns was associated to a distinct modern life-style that supports and preserves the cultural identity of the Roma. We identified several key-aspects of the profile of successful categories of Roma people based on the conditions and opportunities that facilitated their social success. The study highlights the mechanisms of active intervention for

the process of modernisation and inclusion of the Roma in relation with the new political context which provides new opportunities for this ethnic group.

Unlike previous studies mentioned above (e.g., Zamfir and Zamfir, 1993; Cace et al., 2010; Zamfir and Preda, 2002; Stănculescu and Berevoescu, 2004), this project no longer focused on a bleak diagnosis of the Roma poor and marginalization population, as well as being devoid of hope for the future. We noticed that some of the latest sociological studies conducted on national samples in Romania in 2002 (Zamfir and Preda, 2002), in 2010 (Cace et al., 2010) etc. failed to include the successful segment of the Roma population. Anyway, this oversight had adverse effects on the morale of the Roma population as well as on the attitude the majority population towards the Roma. Hence, taking into consideration only the negative, dramatic cases of poverty or social segregation of the Roma, which are indeed quite common nowadays, the image those results from these studies is rather bleak. Such an image is the result of excluding the very active successful segment of the Roma community that managed to overcome social dependency while preserving their ethnic identity. These successful individuals freed themselves from the poverty trap but never ceased to identify as Roma. They became active members of the broad community and took advantage of the new socio-economic context. It is true that the proportion of this segment is still small compared to the rest of the Roma population, which tends to be poor, and, to the general public, it appears even smaller than it is, because of persistent social perception that might be the unintended result of many sociological studies. This is why the present study aims to counterbalance an image of the Roma population that might exaggerate how negative things really are. The present study provides a unique perspective on the Roma who proved they could overcome the

social and economic disadvantages of their communities while remaining active members of the community, in charge of collective change.

Taking into account the multiple problems that face the Roma community, the duty of sociological research is to embody action research and become more applied, directing its efforts, towards social intervention to implement social changes. Ultimately, research should support efficient/active social policies and programmes aimed at improving the situation of Roma people and at helping them overcome poverty and become integrated within the modern market economy. Sociological research must identify not just the problems of the Roma population, but also the exact mechanisms for the urgent integration of the Roma people into the labour market. After the Revolution 1989, in Romania, several studies have already presented decision makers with proposals for social policies of inclusion for the Roma people on the labour market; these proposals are focused on practical solutions (e.g., Zamfir and Zamfir, 1993; Zamfir and Zamfir, 1996). All these studies take into account the increasing competition on the labour market as well as the fact that the new opportunities that arise for the Roma people must be correlated organically with vocational training and professional qualification as with higher education too. School and professional qualification seem to be the primary factors for success in life, for major and profound changes of individual destinies.

The detachment of the successful segment from any form of social dependency by preserving their ethnic identity is a strong motivating example for those who want to overcome their condition of marginalisation. The power of personal examples of successful Roma shows that one can change one's life if one takes an active role in constructing it or shaping it, taking advantage of the new political and social

context. Through their new life-style, the Roma elite prove that one can break the barriers of a 'culture of silence' embedded in severe poverty, while preserving one's ethnic affiliation.

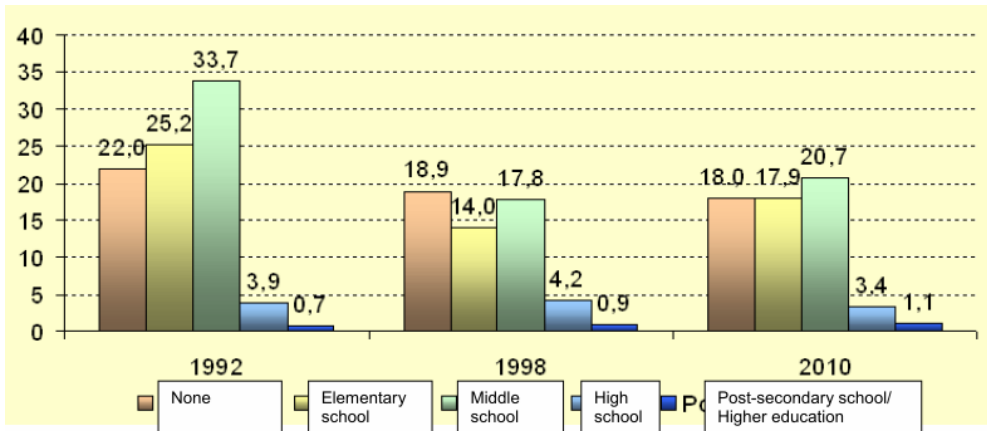
Hence, in addition to focusing on the diagnosis of serious social problems still confronting many Roma, our survey had a triple objective:

- understanding how Roma derive their self-esteem through a high social status;**
- increasing the confidence of the Roma in their power to restore their destiny and lead 'normal' lives;**
- reinforcing the positive perception of the Roma within the collective consciousness of the majority population.** We also took into account the possibility to free the Roma from

the negative connotations of an adverse history. Paraphrasing Hegel, I might say that history was hostile to them and worked against them for a long time (Hegel, 1963).

Formal education and its benefits

I considered that for my paper it would be helpful to see the dynamics of changes in Roma social status through the education and training during the transition. For this, I summarised the data about Roma education from our previous sociological studies based on national sample since 1992-2010 (Zamfir and Zamfir, 1993; Zamfir and Preda, 2002; Cace et al., 2010).



Source: E. Zamfir and C. Zamfir, 1993 for 1992; C. Zamfir and M. Preda, 2002 for 1998; S. Cace et al. (coord.), 2010 for 2010.

Figure 1: *Training evolution of the Roma during transition (graduated educational grades, %)*

The available data is worrying. In almost 20 years of transition, the Roma population did not improve its education and professional capacity. Perfunctory efforts to improve this situation were made in time, particularly through NGOs and educational programmes, but their global

effect is hardly noticeable. The very low educational attainment of the Roma still hinders their chances for social development.

There has been a slight increase in initial school enrolment, but this increase is cancelled by school dropout rates before

the end of the first 4-year cycle. The school dropout before the end of middle school and high school also increased. The school

dropout before the end of elementary and middle school is particularly worrying:

| | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1992 | 1998 | 2010 |
| <i>13.8%</i> | <i>19.6%</i> | <i>25.1%</i> |

The graduation rate for high school is very low and does not seem to increase; on the contrary, it decreased from 3.9% in 1992 to 3.4% in 2010.

The existing data fail to show any sensitive increase in the proportion of graduation from higher education.

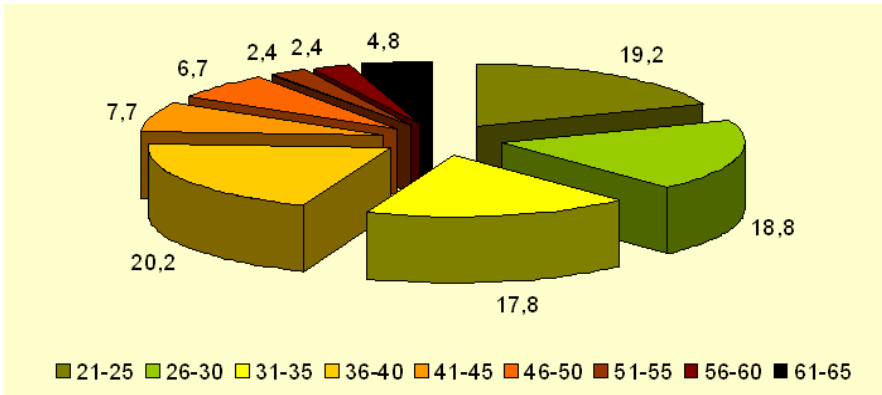
Overall, Roma's access to education in the past 20 years is characterised by stronger educational polarisation with a very small increase in the upper socio-economic/income group.

A dramatic consequence of this process is the decrease of Roma's formal employment. It all happens in the context of socio-economic and educational/ professional polarisation. However, two notes of caution are necessary at this moment. The educational system underwent many changes, which created chaos, and discouraged the school attendance among the Roma. The increase in poverty, which affected the Roma even more than the rest of the population, together with the lack of occupational opportunities, was a decisive factor that dissuaded school enrolment etc. However, the low level of enrolment inherited from the communist regime should have been backed by supportive measures for the Roma in difficulty and corrected even under these difficult circumstances. However, this did not happen. We may also consider the impact of the sampling procedure. The 1992 sample included both people self-identified as Roma, and people who were hetero-identified as Roma. The people who did not

self-identify as Roma proved to have a significantly higher educational and employment level. The 2010 sample included only the self-identified Roma who, according to our observations from 1992 and 1998, had a lower educational and employment level. Because of this difference in sampling, it is plausible that, actually, over the past 20 years, the Roma population acquired a slightly higher educational attainment than in 1992: possible lower participation in elementary and middle school and some increase medium and higher education. Of course, the educational progress cannot be evaluated using this data. Thus, further research is needed in order to measure accurately the differences within various groups of the Roma population, not just among the poorest and least educated segment.

Despite the initial disadvantage from the point of view of education, during the early years of the transition, the Roma displayed a noticeable capacity to take new openings/opportunities. An upper successful Roma segment (we use upper segment as the group with a high social status within the community) started to coagulate gradually; part of this group was included in our sample of the present survey in 2012.

In our sample with three categories of successful Roma, 213 had graduated higher education. The distribution by years/age groups shows a fast increase of the proportion of young people who graduated from higher education:



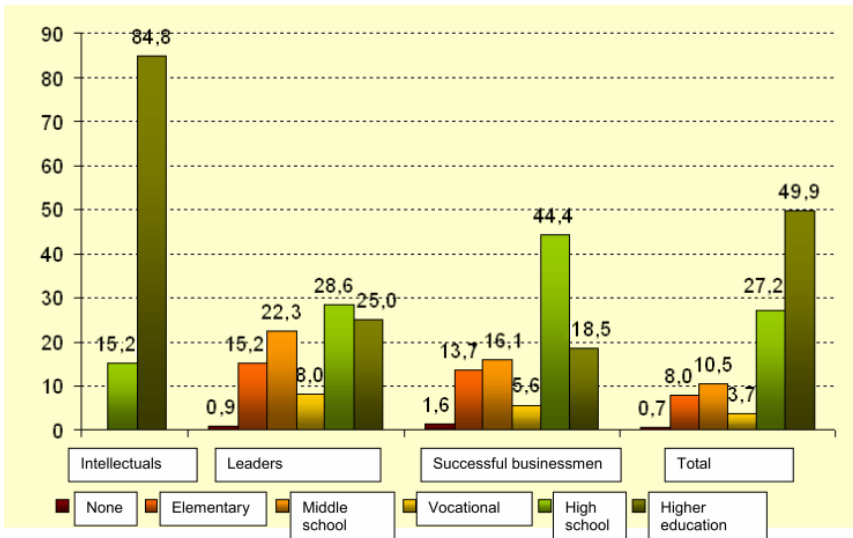
Source: ICCV, Roma elite survey, 2012.

Figure 2: Roma people with higher education, by age (%)

After 1990, the young generation (less than 40 years old in 2012) had a high annual proportion of higher education graduates compared to the generation aged 40+.

A proportion of 75.5% (158) of the young people below 40 have higher education, compared with just 23.0% (50)

of the young people aged 40+. Among the entire Roma population from our survey sample, the young people below 40 produce 7.9 graduates of higher education per year, compared to just 2.0 graduates of higher education per year produced by the young people aged 40+.



Source: ICCV, Roma elite survey, 2012.

Figure 3: School level of the upper (elite) Roma segment (%)

That in our sample of social leaders and businessmen (older ages), only 21.6% are graduates of higher education, while 34.8% are graduates of elementary or middle school. These opportunities, even for the people with low educational attainment, were not available for all Roma people; only a small segment of the Roma population could benefit of them.

The explosion of opportunities after the Revolution turned people with modest initial social resources (low educational attainment) into leaders of businessmen. In our sample, only 25% of the social-political leaders and 18% of the businessmen had higher education. Only a third, and almost half of these, completed elementary, and middle school respectively.

Some of the individual initiatives were likely to be successful, but they had to be consolidated/strengthened by education and training. However, the pace of advancement was rather modest.

Some businesses initiatives, although very profitable for the Roma, proved to be vulnerable and they collapsed. Some Roma who hoped to get rich immediately during the early years of transition built great, ambitious "palaces" in their villages. Shortly afterwards, Roma "palaces", unfinished and buried in debt, were abandoned by the owners who were unable to pay their taxes on time. The Roma population became polarised: a rather small segment of Roma advanced socially and economically, while the large majority of the population sank into deepening poverty and continuous marginalisation.

The problem lies in deciding what actions to take in order to increase support for the school enrolment and education of the increasingly impoverished population that has a low level of training, so that it can take advantage of new opportunities. The answer to this problem can be found only if we understand the personal examples of the successful group. In order to be able to take the opportunities provided by the new international context that

promotes the rights of minority ethnic groups, urgent active measures of educational and employment policies should be taken, but this is a matter of political that will lead to innovative, sustainable, efficient means of support.

Nevertheless, the current trend of increasing number of young Roma intellectuals will probably continue in the near future too. Started in 2002, the University of Bucharest's positive discrimination initiative to reserve special places in higher education for Roma people seems to have decreased lately. This is why we will not witness a noticeable increase of the medium and upper socio-economic segment of the Roma, which could turn into a source of young people attending higher education. The social polarisation among the Roma also caused the dramatic decrease of the average educational reserves. The number of high school graduates does not seem to have increased significantly during the recent years. But the following question that has a direct impact on the success of the Roma remains important: did the educational/professional situation of the Roma improve over the entire period of transition?

People often explain the low enrolment rate and the low level of formal education of the Roma by the characteristics of Roma culture. Actually, we believe that the explanation reside in the modern socio-economic context instead.

It is worrying that the two basic factors of a modern society are not considered as serious subjects for debates: education and having a stable, formal employment, factors that secure the routes of personal success. The question is: where should we place the explanation? Is it in the traditional culture that could keep the Roma at the margins of society, or is it in the realistic perception of opportunities provided by the current socio-economic conditions (the difficulty of going to school and the increased risk of school dropout, which may cancel the possible benefits of education, including a job suited to the training)?

Contrary to some speculations, we believe that the school is the only factor

that provides effective odds for the personal success of the Roma under the current circumstances; tradition, supported by cultural prejudices, is just another factor that facilitates the adverse situation with respect to education.

It is true that under the conditions of the present crisis, the ratio of the costs of education (very high for the impoverished Roma population) to the immediate benefits achievable by education is disappointing. The school, by itself, does not provide immediate opportunities to find a job correlated with the level of education and does not even promise the Roma that they will no longer be poor. In line with Jeffrey D. Sachs's question from the eponymous book titled *The end of Poverty. How we can make it happen in our lifetime*, we can ask a similar question: what strategies of support are needed so that the marginalised Roma can benefit from positive socio-economic outcomes? In fact, in his book, Jeffrey Sachs proposes an important mission for the present generation to promote the Enlightenment vision in establishing much more equality between humans in the world: „Our generation work can be defined in Enlightenment terms:

- To help foster political systems that promote human well-being, based on the consent of the governed
- To help foster economic systems that spread the benefits of science, technology, and the division of labour to all parts of the world
- To help foster international cooperation in order to secure a perpetual peace
- To help to promote science and technology, grounded in human rationality, to fuel the continued prospects for improving the human conditions” (2005, 351-352).

Among the conclusions of the studies conducted on the Roma population, we often find phrases such as: *'formal education is a basic life strategy only for a low*

number of subjects' (4.1%)). For instance, in 2002, Mihai Surdu in “School education of the Roma population” (p. 123) listed the following strategies/conditions that were important for success in life:

| | |
|------------------------|------|
| * Have money | 28.5 |
| * Work much | 23.9 |
| * Be lucky | 14.0 |
| * Know a profession | 8.0 |
| * Be healthy | 7.3 |
| * Be educated | 4.1 |
| * Have a job | 3.2 |
| * Help from the family | 2.8 |

Our sample of successful Roma people, intellectuals, socio-political or religious leaders, and businessmen, shows higher educational attainment compared to the rest of the Roma population. It is worrying, however, that the registered unemployed who have recently lost their jobs have a higher educational attainment than the ones who are currently employed (8.2 years of education versus 6.9 years of education) (Cace et al., 2010, 64). The reorganisation of the economy in times of crisis seems not to have taken into account the level of training among the Roma, eliminating those who were better trained. The Roma, with no stability on the labour market, enter rapidly the underdevelopment trap. The data from the empirical research based on the national sample in 2010 (Cace et al., 2010, 2) shows that the employment in the standard economic system does not provide significantly better opportunities to escape from poverty. We may find here an answer to the question: is work able to pull people out of poverty? Here, we can see specificity within the Roma population. The economic activity is motivated extrinsic, more by the level at the elementary need for survival, than by intrinsic rewards for work satisfaction. A safe job provides only the minimal requirement or slightly more than that for one third of the Roma population. The other two thirds are satisfied with a barebones standard of living situated at the limit of survival. Only a tenth of the Roma

population have a decent life being employed or running their own businesses.

Transition had a negative impact on the standard of living of the Roma people; the Roma were affected more severely than the majority population in Romania. With the exception of the past three years, the population of Romania continued to improve its conditions of life, particularly after 1989, while for the Roma the situation continued to deteriorate.

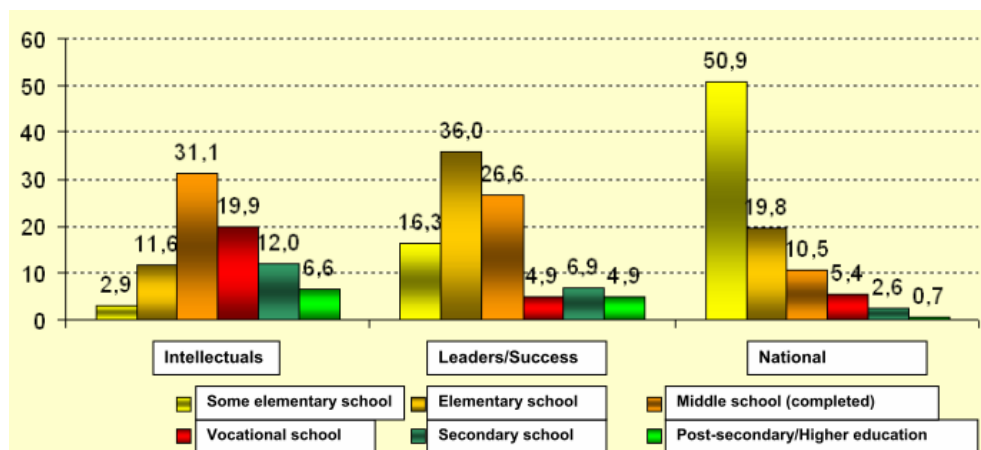
The policy makers from Romania could be much more attentive to the big number of academic studies focused on the dimension of poverty and social polarization, with their pragmatically proposals for the social problems. As Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett point out that the roots of all social problems are lying in unequal societies: “The health and social problems found to be related to inequality tend to be treated by policy makers as if they were separate from one another, each needing separate services and remedies. We pay doctors and nurses to treat ill-health, police and prisons to deal with crime, remedial teachers and educational psychologists to tackle educational problems, and social workers, drug rehabilitation unit, psychiatric services and health promotion experts

to deal with a host of other problems. These services are all expensive, and none of them is more than partially effective... we know that our societies are endlessly recreating these problems in each new generation. Meanwhile, all these problems are most common in the most deprived areas of our society and are many times more common in more unequal societies” (2010, 26).

Family environment: an important factor for the individual success

The present Roma in our survey benefit from a supportive and stimulating family environment for their personal development. The family also provides a competitive advantage.

The families of the subjects from our sample (parents and brother/sisters) have a substantially higher educational level than the overall Roma population. As a term of reference we used the data from a research since 2010 (Cace et al., 2010), based on a national sample.



Source: S. Cace et al., 2010 and ICCV survey on Roma elite group, 2012 (compared approach).

Figure 4: Education of the Roma depending on their social standing (%)

The present day intellectuals come from families with a substantially higher educational training than the educational level of the entire Roma population. The family educational environment of origin of the social leaders and of the successful businessmen is also substantially higher than that of the average population, but slightly lower than the educational environment of the intellectuals.

Contrary to a social stereotype that the Roma women were not allowed to go to

school (although there is a clear trend, yet it cannot be generalised), the families of our sampled subjects show that the mothers too had an educational level close to that of the fathers. The educational level of the mother (if we consider her role within the family in growing up children) may have been a very important motivation for the educational and professional formation of the children. Following are some data showing the family environment of the leaders and successful businessmen.

Table 1: *School education of the parents of the successful Roma*

| | Intellectuals | | Leaders | | Successful businessmen | | Total | |
|---------------------------------|---------------|--------|---------|--------|------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| | father | mother | father | mother | father | mother | father | mother |
| Illiterate | 5 | 10 | 19 | 25 | 14 | 19 | 38 | 54 |
| 2 grades | 1 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 10 | 13 |
| 4 grades | 16 | 20 | 33 | 43 | 30 | 30 | 79 | 93 |
| 8 grades | 34 | 32 | 28 | 14 | 26 | 18 | 88 | 64 |
| 10 grades | 33 | 31 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 43 | 42 |
| Vocational school | 33 | 5 | 6 | - | 4 | - | 43 | 5 |
| High school | 28 | 43 | 10 | 8 | 4 | 4 | 42 | 55 |
| Post high school/foremen school | 6 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 9 | 5 |
| University | 9 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 16 | 3 |
| Doesn't know | 5 | 3 | - | - | - | 2 | 5 | 5 |
| NR | 22 | 38 | 15 | 21 | 28 | 35 | 65 | 94 |

Source: ICCV, Survey on Roma elite group, 2012.

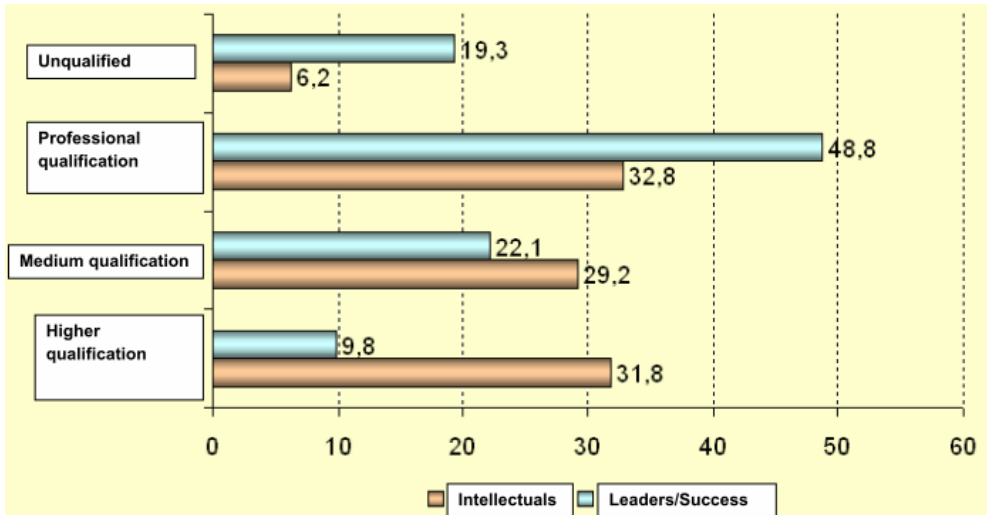
If we look to the figures of the above table, the role of the school training of the mother is even stronger for the intellectuals from our sample.

The family environment of the Roma from the current upper segment (intellectuals, leaders and businessmen) provides thus a social-economic and cultural advantage for the young generation. The educational level is not too high, but it is higher than of the overall Roma population. The difference among of educational level of

the parents, and among categories, is reproduced in the educational level of the categories of subjects, and of their children. The fathers from our sample have rather a medium level of education, but at least the middle school, high school, post high school education and some have higher education. We may suppose that the educational level of the family was a supportive factor for their children, motivating them to complete at least a medium level of education.

The support of the family is also reflected in the training of the other children, brothers and sisters. We may notice that the brothers/sisters also have a high level of training. The family may be thus

considered as a favourable and stimulating environment for the process of modernization and for the social success of the target group.



Source: ICCV, Survey on Roma elite group, 2011-2012.

Figure 5: Training of the first three brothers/sisters of the successful Roma (%)

As we can see, the training level of the brothers is higher for the category of the *intellectuals*. The potential of social development of the leaders and businessmen exceeded the less advantageous starting point.

The parents of the intellectuals from our sample are highly professionalized: higher or middle qualifications. The brothers/sisters too have a similar educational level with the subjects of the survey. We noticed among these many social workers and even sociologists (16 social workers, sociologists, PhD and PhD students in sociology).

We may thus suppose that the family environment is characterised by a high level of modern educational-professional evolution focusing on children education, many of whom tend towards a medium-higher level of qualification.

Impact of modernisation on the birth rate

The problem of the Roma birth rate became, from many reasons, a thorny problem, ethically, religiously and even politically. Taking into consideration the sociological perspective, the issue of the birth rate may be considered in realistic terms. The basic idea pertains to the stimulation of the birth rate in order to prevent the risks of accelerated old ageing of the population. This requirement is closely related to a constant increase of the birth quality. Statistically, the high birth rate has some defined characteristics:

- The high birth rate, with few exceptions, is a characteristic of the traditional communities. Modernization, itself, produced the fast decrease of the

birth rate. Except the small communities, there are no communities which, within the process of modernization, didn't experience higher or lower decreases of the birth rates, even more than the community considered desirable.

- Usually, the high birth rate is associated to the poor areas and it is a source of poverty, provided it is associated to social support and equally to community support. Prosperity decreases the birth rate.
- The high birth rate in a poor community is a factor which decreases the development opportunities of the children. It decreases the capacity of the family to

support the multiple requirements for a normal growth and education/formation of the children.

We only have few data, but they suggest new hypotheses and bring arguments which show the global demographic image of the Roma.

The analysis of the successful social segment of the Roma population confirms all these expectations.

We will take the example of the Roma intellectuals. The families of origin of the Roma intellectuals are large families, with many children (an average of 3.13 children), but they are smaller than the average size of the entire Roma population.

Table 2: *Number of children within intellectual families from our sample*

| | No. families | % of total families | Total number of children in the families |
|-------------|--------------|---------------------|--|
| 1 child | 31 | 16.1 | 31 |
| 2 children | 54 | 28.0 | 108 |
| 3 children | 44 | 22.8 | 132 |
| 4 children | 36 | 18.6 | 144 |
| 5 children | 10 | 5.2 | 50 |
| 6 children | 7 | 3.6 | 42 |
| 7 children | 4 | 2.1 | 28 |
| 8 children | 3 | 1.5 | 24 |
| 10 children | 1 | 0.5 | 10 |
| 11 children | 2 | 1.0 | 22 |
| 13 children | 1 | 0.5 | 13 |

Total children 604: 193 families = 3.13 children/family

Source: ICCV, Survey on Roma elite group, 2012.

Our data show that the other two samples display much different situations. The successful businessmen come from large families (4.09 children/family), while the social-

political leaders and the religious leaders come from even larger families (4.70 children/family), compared to just 3.13 children/family for the families of the intellectuals.

Table 3: *Average number of children in the families from our sample*

| | Average number of children in the families of origin | Average number of children of the subjects of our sample |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Intellectuals | 3.13 | 1.6 |
| Leaders | 4.70 | 3.3 |
| Successful businessmen | 4.09 | 2.9 |

Source: ICCV, Survey on Roma elite group, 2012.

The large number of brothers and sisters show not just a traditional cultural and conservative profile, as well as the fact that the families of the present intellectuals are small in size, in order to be able to support the present intellectuals on their modest resources. They went through the school and professional career rather by their own effort and with the support of the

families. The access to a higher social statute decreases significantly the birth rate.

Our sample, which includes the upper social segment, shows the effect of social advancement rendered more significant by the level of education. The families with higher education displayed an obvious decrease of the birth rate compared to the families with middle of elementary education.

Table 4: *Effect of the studies on the birth rate*

| Intellectuals | Leaders | | Successful businessmen | |
|---------------|------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| | Higher education | Middle or lower education | Higher education | Middle or lower education |
| 1.6 | 2.4 | 3.5 | 2.4 | 4.1 |

Source: ICCV, Survey on elite Roma group, 2012.

Levels of self-identification in the upper social segment: social type and cultural type

Which are the indicators that identify the Roma with the life style according to their culture, in all its dimensions? Several indicators may be considered.

We used a battery of questions regarding the way in which the subjects relate to their ethnic affiliation and to their culture. The analysis of the responses must take

into account the context in which the questionnaires were applied. From the beginning of the discussion, it was presupposed that the subjects are Roma and, hence, they are asked to answer the questionnaire.

The subjects from our survey were asked to evaluate how much they agree or disagree with sentences which state the open acknowledgement of their ethnic affiliation, of their community practices, of their traditions and customs which they accept and practice. The situation looks as follows:

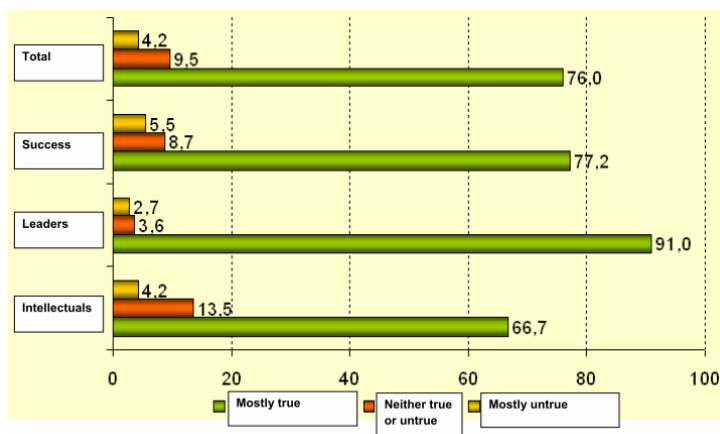
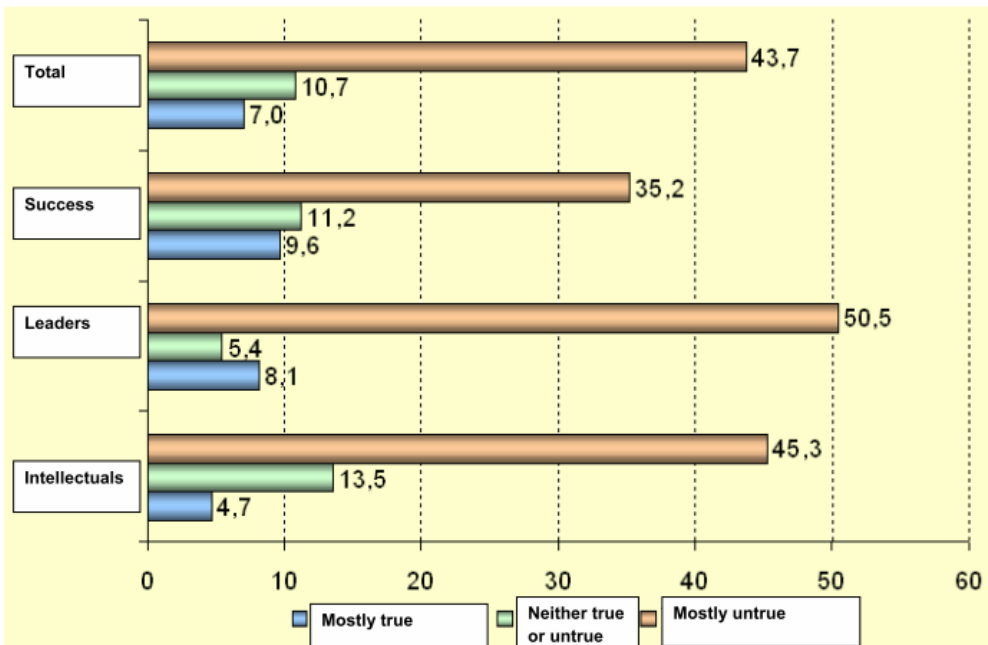


Figure 6: *I feel that I belong to the Roma ethnicity (%)*

As it can be seen, we preferred to observe the real state of the awareness of affiliation to a particular ethnic group since the people do not display a net, simple identification with an ethnic group; rather, due to multiple identification, the individuals may perceive themselves in different degrees as being or not being Roma.

Our data show a large variety of answers. The bulk, 75.4% consider much/very much that they are Roma people. However, there is a significant variation. The group of intellectuals identifies somehow less with the Roma ethnicity than

the groups of leaders of successful businessmen. It is interesting that the social workers as intellectuals self-identified most with their ethnic group. The same difference goes for the intermediary levels which imply nuances: they feel so and so being Roma. The low identification is rather scarce. It is interesting that the non-answers are significantly higher in the intellectuals than the groups of leaders or of successful businessmen. The non-answers may be interpreted as willing to avoid certain ethnic self-identification.

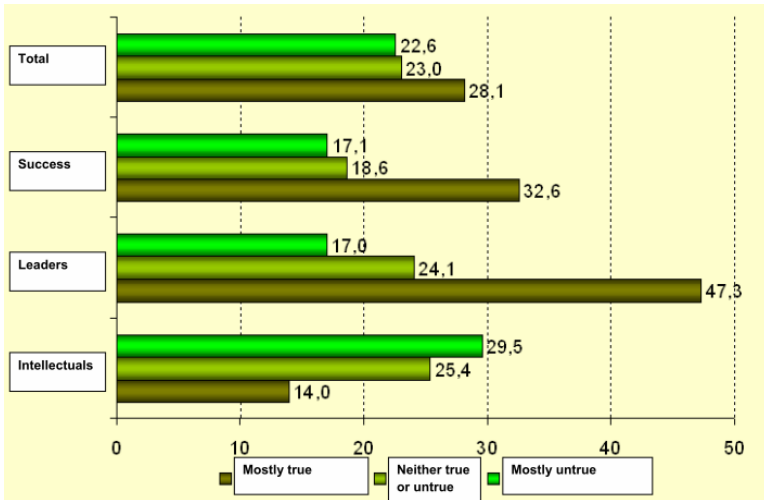


Source: ICCV, Roma elite Survey, 2012.

Figure 7: *I do not feel that I belong to the Roma ethnicity (%)*

Generally, there is a consensus of the three upper social groups: they feel that they belong to the Roma ethnicity. However, 10% displayed some reticence, while more than one third preferred not to

give a definite answer. If we take into consideration this reticence too, only little over half consider that they are Roma people and belong to the Roma ethnicity.

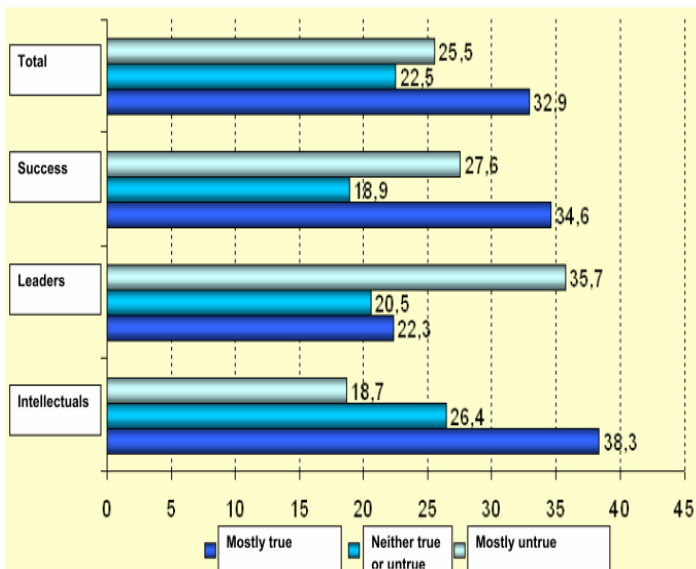


Source: Roma elite group Survey, 2012.

Figure 8: *I am Roma and I practice Roma traditions (%)*

Just a quarter of our sample fully identifies with the traditional practices and customs: the intellectuals scored lower percentages, while the social-political and religious leaders scored higher percentages.

More than quarter of the respondents refrained from any statement. Almost half of them practice *from time to time* or *little* the customs and traditions.

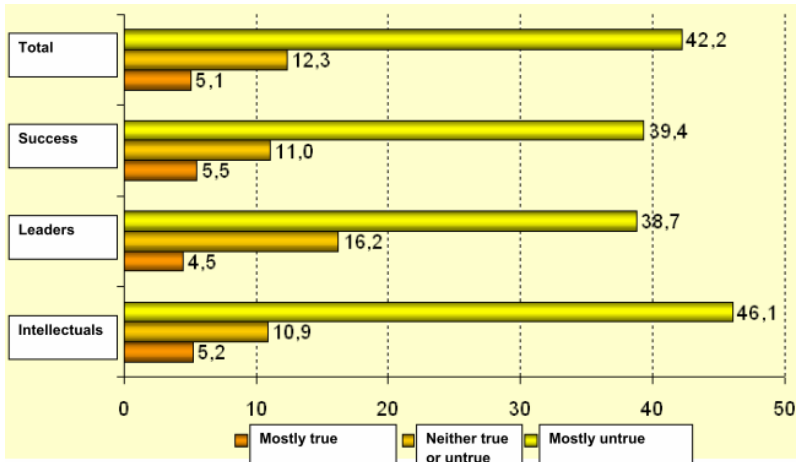


Source: Roma elite group Survey, 2012.

Figure 9: *I am Roma, I like the Roma customs and traditions but I don't practice them (%)*

Generally, a positive attitude of the three categories of Roma people from our sample towards their cultural traditions and customs can be noticed, but they differ. About a third of the respondents do not practice their traditions/customs. Others,

although practice their traditions/customs do not do it with pleasure, but probably out of respect for the community or because they have to do so on the account of the people around them.

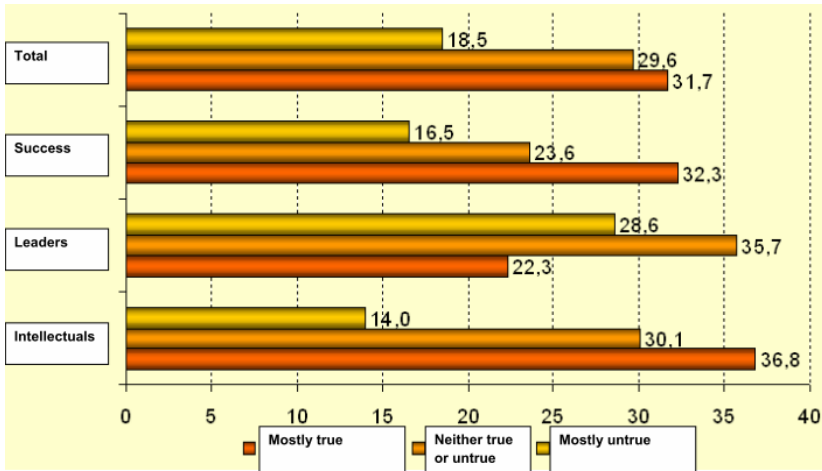


Source: Roma elite group Survey, 2012.

Figure 10: *I am Roma and I practice the Roma traditions, although I don't like them (%)*

It is only natural that the people who don't like the Roma traditions and customs don't practice them. The social pressure from outside is rather low. The formulation "*Roma traditions and customs*" has certainly variable significance among the ethnic communities. The ones adopting them probably refer more to the components which they consider positive, as desirable norms of life. Of course, they

detach from those which they consider to be old-fashioned and which have negative effects for a modern life style. As for those stating that they don't practice the Roma traditions and customs, they probably either thought about aspects such as prejudices, old-fashioned mentalities, or they may have grown apart from the Roma community and for their life style, adopting a modern, universal life style.



Source: ICCV, Roma Elite group Survey, 2012.

Figure 11: *I am Roma but I practice the Romanian traditions and customs (%)*

Third of the Roma from the upper social segment of our sample practice the Romanian traditions and customs (by Romanian traditions we understand a mixture of specific Romanian traditions and of practices specific to the universalized modern life) and just 18% practice them little or very little.

Conclusions

Our conclusion of the survey point out that the Roma cultural centre Romano Kher, initiator of our research, although not very popular among Roma population, it is frequented by many Roma people. The reasons are rather varied, but its cultural presence is significant. It is a point of intra- and inter-cultural attraction and communication in Roma communities

We noticed that it is difficult for sociologists to identify accurately the outlines of the Roma segment that we conventionally called the successful one. We do not know precisely the proportion of this segment within the entire Roma community. We focused, however, on the identification of

the types of successful Roma, with their history of individual success in their broad socio-cultural variety.

In fact, our present exploratory research, which I was coordinated with my colleague Vasile Burtea in 2012, aimed to shift perceptions by choosing not to focus on the poor and marginalised segments of the Roma population whose development is seriously hampered by strong societal barriers; instead, it focused on the social segment that overcame difficulties and was able to take advantage of new opportunities. This socially successful segment of the Roma population represents the potential future of a presently marginalised group; it paints a new picture of the Roma population and it endorses new life styles through the social success narratives of a narrow, but expanding, group.

We think that this research could be a contribution which balances and completes the social and cultural image about the Roma community. At the same time, it opens a completely new sociological theme, with multiple questions and possible answers: how can people who had been labelled as coming from a culture of po-

verty and delinquency, live in a successful economical-social-cultural environment; which are the mechanisms of their success in life; which is their vision of the development of the Roma community within a modern socio-cultural context; which are

the possibilities to preserve the identity of the Roma culture within the process of globalization; which are their possible individual destinies in the future, as a part of the minority.

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