

INTRODUCTION

The history of the last 31 years highlights a number of changes related to the status of roma minorities in Romania. As a trend, we can see, that the concerns towards the Roma population are moving from understanding the living conditions (Zamfir, Zamfir, 1993), the cultural specificities, the relations with the majority, the authorities and public institutions through small-scale local projects and research projects towards a more structured approach of projects at the macro-social level. Public policies for the Roma are one of the novelties that the regime change of 1989 made possible. We can speak about four distinct periods, or stages, in the evolution of Roma public policies in Romanian society (Cace, Duminica, Preda, 2006).

The first period, between 1990 and 1997 can be named the stage of "unstructured searches". During this period, policies and programmes were like more of an exploratory approach necessary understanding of the mechanisms leading to a coherent social intervention. Several studies were carried out expressing the concern of the academic community about the polarisation of social and economic status between large segments of the Roma population and the majority population, and the negative prospects of maintaining status-quo. A number of effective intervention programmes were also initiated that followed the same route of exploring the actionable in social intervention.

Roma leaders tried to set in motion a machinery capable of contributing to the recognition of the ethnic group as a pole of interest for socio-economic and political structures in Romania. Naturally, the attraction was initially political. Political structures

were created to defend the interests of Roma communities. Progress was evident:

- recognition of the Roma ethnic group in public discourse as well as in official documents and policies;
- political representation provided for in the electoral law;
- the emergence of Roma activists willing to take on the responsibilities of representation at various levels- political, cultural, educational (Ionescu, Cace, 2000).

The second period begins in 1998 and ends in 2001 with the appearance of the "Strategy for the Improvement of the Roma Situation in Romania". We can call it the period of "understanding of responsibilities" both on the part of public institutions and civil society. For three years the level of awareness and intervention increased significantly leading to the aggregation of interests for immediate solutions. A number of factors have contributed to this development:

- European Union Commission reports calling for the Roma situation to be addressed by including it as a political criterion for accession;
- the maturing of civil society and in particular of Roma civil society;
- the creation and development within the government of institutions explicitly responsible for Roma issues;
- Involvement of international institutions in funding Roma communities in Romania.

The 2000 report assessing Romania's progress towards EU accession noted that Roma still face widespread discrimination throughout Romanian society and that the government has not been involved in addressing the problems. Progress in this area has been insignificant. In fact, the delay in developing the strategy was the main negative aspect mentioned by the report.

The Roma non-governmental sector has developed rather slowly and with little articulation. While in the early 1990`s the

number of Roma NGOs was very small, it increased significantly in 2000`s up to 100. The quantitative leap in Roma civil society took place in 1998 and 1999 when the Open Society Foundation contributed, more or less directly, to the establishment of more than 15 Roma NGOs with real development potential. This leap has been, also a qualitative one, leading to a more cohesive, pragmatic and powerful Roma movement (Ionescu, Cace, 2000; Ionescu, Cace, 2006).

The main government institution with responsibility for minority issues was, until the end of 2000, the Department for the Protection of National Minorities (DPMN). Through its activities, the National Office for Roma within the DPMN (now part of the Ministry of Public Information) contributed to the drafting of the national strategy for Roma protection funded by the European Union through the Phare programme.

All these factors have contributed, to a greater or lesser extent, to the better understanding of what is happening to the Roma in Romania. In fact, during this period, the argumentative dialogue started to be more and more present in Romanian society (Zamfir, Preda, 2002).

The third period begins with the development and institutionalisation of the strategy in April 2001. It is the beginning of the assumption of responsibilities. The National Strategy for the Improvement of the Roma Situation in Romania was a legitimate response of the Romanian Government and its partners (especially Roma organisations) to a difficult and growing situation. Mediated by international institutions (European Union, Council of Europe, United Nation institutions), this strategy sets out a series of national and local measures in response to both general and sectoral problems.

The sectors included in the strategy are: public administration, housing, social security, health, economic, justice and public order, child protection, education, culture and worship, communication and civic participation.

The fourth period is linked to Romania's integration into the European Union and is characterised by the most important progress in the social development of Roma communities in Romania. It combines problem-focused approaches or areas of intervention with the integrated approach. The integrated approach has become more concrete in the last 4-5 years and has been included in the Structural Funds funding programmes.

Chapter 1

This chapter analyses the development context in four development regions in southern Romania: South-East, South-Muntenia, South-West Oltenia and Bucharest-Ilfov. The study highlights regional specificities in terms of employment, education and the situation of the Roma population. The data are secondary and come from administrative and statistical sources. The role of contextualisation is to outline the modalities of intervention through applied projects that contribute to increasing access to the labour market for the Roma population. Although the development regions are similar, there are some differences, which determine appropriate interventions in regional or local contexts. An integrated approach, which takes into account several components of social life, is best suited to respond to multiple and growing needs.

Chapter 2

The chapter outlines the approach developed in an integrated programme that looks at labour market actions for Roma employment. Are these measures effective and responsive to the needs of the Roma population or does the lack of

appropriateness to the specificity of the population lead to poor results? The data collection methodology included face-to-face questionnaire interviews with pre-defined questions administered by trained fieldworkers. 1064 questionnaires were collected with Roma people. Marginalised Roma were selected using the snowball method (we started with the town hall; if we were unsuccessful with the town hall, we approached the following institutions that could steal such information, e.g. church, health unit, police, school etc.). Of the respondents who would like to participate in training, 30% would like to qualify in construction, 19.90% in agriculture and 18.30% in commercial activities. The top three areas of interest for men are construction (49.70%), trade (13.60%) and agriculture, hunting and fishing (12.10%). Women were mainly interested in training courses in agriculture, hunting and fishing (31.40%), trade (24.70%) and hotels and restaurants (18.80%). In Bucharest-Ilfov, the top three areas of vocational training of interest to respondents are construction, trade and hotels and restaurants. In the other development regions surveyed, respondents were also interested in construction, trade and agriculture.

Chapter 3

This chapter evaluates in which way training courses for the Roma minority are carried out and their results. The data collection methodology included face-to-face questionnaire interviews with predefined questions administered by trained fieldworkers. A total of 1064 questionnaires were collected with Roma people. Marginalised Roma were selected using the snowball method (we started with the town hall; if we were not successful with the town hall, we approached the following institutions that could provide such information, e.g. church, health facility, police, school etc.). 13% of respondents said that they had taken vocational training after graduating from school. Respondents who had taken vocational training after graduating