

DECADE OF THE ROMA

NON-ROMA GROUPS - SLOVAKIA

FOCUS GROUPS DISCUSSION

JUNE 2005



Grösslingová 37, P.O. Box 293, SK – 810 00 Bratislava 1,
Slovak Republic, tel.: +421 2 529 31 366, fax: +421 2 529 31 378, e-mail: focus@gtinet.sk
www.focus-research.sk

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METHODOLOGY

The investigation was done using the method of focused group interview (focus groups). Focus groups /Non-Roma population/ were carried out between June 2 and June 8 in four cities (Bratislava, Nitra, Poprad, Kosice). Discussions were led by a trained moderator. Each group consisted of 7-9 participants.

SAMPLE

Five focus groups were conducted:

- **in different locations**
- **to respondents selected: on sex (males and females in each group); on age (18 – 30 years old, 31 – 60 years old); on education; on nationality (slovak nationality only)**

The participants in the focus group were recruited by trained FOCUS interviewers. The participants were selected randomly and recruited through screening interviews where we checked the above mentioned parameters.

	DATE	LOCATION	SCREENING CRITERIA	No. OF PARTICIPANTS
1	June 2	Bratislava	Age: 18-30 years / College or University (Higher income)	9
2	June 3	Nitra	Age: 18-30 years / Secondary school (Average income)	8
3	June 6	Kosice	Age: 18-30 years / Secondary or less (Lower income)	7
4	June 7	Poprad	Age: 31-60 years / Secondary school (Average income)	8
5	June 8	Kosice	Age: 31-60 years / Secondary school (Average income)	9

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

- **views of the direction of the country**
- **attitudes toward their own quality of life**
- **attitudes toward government resources**
- **views of ethnic and minority groups in their country**
- **attitudes toward and perceptions of Roma**
- **views of government effort to improve the lives of Roma**
- **views toward aspects of reform that potentially will improve the lives of Roma (“the Decade of Roma”)**
- **identify the “ambassadors of change”**
- **identify the messages that resonate most with populations to change their perception and views**

A focus group discussion is a type of qualitative research method, used especially in cases where the objective of the research is to reveal and describe the mutual relations and coherences of the researched phenomena as comprehensive as possible. This method enables a more detailed penetration of the discussed issues and to obtain spontaneous reactions to the presented views. It also facilitates an easier (freer) expression of view, attitudes and ideas as well as a confrontation of arguments between the individual respondents.

*The results of the focus group discussions help us to clarify a specific researched issue – **but those results cannot be generalised or quantified on countrywide or regional basis.***

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY

- The current direction of Slovakia has been granted both positive and negative attributes, which come "hand in hand". The positive ones included mainly better opportunities for travelling, studying or working abroad following Slovakia's entry to the European Union. In the group of the positives we could also find, less often though, some reforms in progress or the economic growth (mainly the inflow of foreign investments).
- Current direction of Slovakia also has its less positive face. The respondents are critical towards the negative impact of the school system, health care and social sphere reforms in progress as well as growing social gaps (often also resulting from the reforms). Among the negative trends in Slovakia, the respondents included also "brain drain", penetration of materialism and consumer way of life (mainly younger respondents), resignation on Slovakia's own values as a result of integration or globalization processes. In the total rating significant generation differences have occurred. The more optimistic are mostly the younger respondents from the western part of Slovakia. The older respondents are considerably more critical and negative.
- Despite the age or regional differences, the respondents have concurred in the idea that "we are only at the beginning" and so many processes are inevitable despite the fact that are "painful" for citizens.
- Regarding the greatest problems Slovakia is facing at present, the answers of respondents correspond with the long-term results of quantitative measuring in Slovakia. The list of problems stated by the respondents is dominated mainly by the unemployment issue. In connection with the school system reform in progress, the educational system in Slovakia has become a more reflected issue. Respondents are sensitive also to the ongoing problems in healthcare and mainly to introduction of healthcare fees. The issue of the living standard, insufficient financial support of families and people in need also concern the respondents deeply, regardless of age or regional differences. Sporadically respondents have included also Roma minority, "brain drain" and corruption among the main problems of Slovakia.
- At first place, the respondents hold the government responsible for these problems but occasionally some respondents suggested that in many cases the problems are mostly consequences of the transformation process or current changes and reforms in Slovakia.
- Direction of Slovakia has been spontaneously discussed in the context of integration processes. The Slovak EU membership is perceived commonplace. Slovakia has become a part of Europe bringing along positive consequences for Slovakia, partially perceptible also for "common" people (opportunities to study, work or travel abroad, inflow of foreign investments, Euro funds).
- Respondents have also named several negative aspects of integration. Younger respondents criticise "the loss of our face" in the foreign policy and support of foreign investors, which harms domestic business men. Older respondents speak more about the negative consequences of the EU's subsidies policy in agriculture, bureaucratic procedures of Brussels and their potential impact on domestic environment, occasionally they express fears from Turkey's entry to the EU or diminishing traditional values and own Slovak culture.

- Government should spend more resources in the areas, which are perceived as the most critical in Slovakia (e.g.: healthcare or education, environmental protection, employment policy). More money should be directed at agriculture and development of rural areas, development of infrastructure, social services for the poor as well as the area of economic growth or governance.
- Government's spending in order to gain foreign investments is perceived rather ambivalently. The area where, according to the respondents, the government should not spend its resources (i.e.: what they put into it now is enough) is solving the minority issues, especially Roma. Mostly older respondents tend towards such rejection (rating based on the sheets they were given but also during the following discussion).

NATIONAL IDENTITY AND ATTITUDES TOWARD DIFFERENCES

- Being a Slovak does not necessarily mean being proud of it. In fact it is very difficult to find out what should represent a source of national pride for the Slovaks. Mostly younger respondents found it difficult to identify themselves with the national feeling, experience the feeling of "national pride" or simply define what makes Slovak the Slovak. To be a Slovak means to be born in Slovakia, speak the language, be familiar with the local habits and traditions (such as Christmas) but – "otherwise it does not make much sense". On the other hand the older respondents think a bit more straightforwardly, they have named quite a long list of mostly positive characteristics of the Slovaks as such.
- What is a typical Slovak like then? Younger respondents describe Slovaks as quiet, passive, people who are not quarrelsome, who are neutral and nobody minds them. Their biggest problem is their inability to sell themselves, express themselves and present their "sovereignty", "self-confidence" in the contact with other nations or nationalities abroad. The older respondents have described a typical Slovak as a "hardworking do-gooder", trustful, modest, dutiful, adaptable, temperament, honest and with an open heart.
- Tolerance in Slovakia should not be taken for granted, at least based on the reflection of the younger respondents. They speak not only about intolerance but almost "a xenophobia" or a strong standpattism and long-term separateness from the outer world, which represents a breeding ground for "intolerant attitudes" typical mainly, in their opinion, for the countryside or older people.
- On the other hand the older respondents (from East Slovakia) have concurred in the opinion that tolerance is one of the most typical features of the Slovaks. They spontaneously declare general tolerance toward foreigners, ethnic and national minorities as well as religious groups. Tolerant attitudes subside in case of further (verbal) confrontation with more concrete situations or minorities (mainly the Roma), nations and nationalities.
- Foreigners are in general perceived rather selectively. If a foreigner is a solvent tourist from the West he/she is tolerated with all their vice. On the contrary, the immigrants represent a group, which is not very welcome. There have been fears from diseases, violence, extremism, terrorism – "we should watch out!"

- Respondents reflect the presence of several national minorities in Slovakia, judging mainly based on their personal experience (residence, community). Based on this criterion the respondents have named besides the Hungarian and Roma minority also Russians (Kosice), Germans (Carpathian Germans in Poprad). Respondents declare having a personal experience with smaller Arabic communities in their towns. In general, "except for Roma, the co-existence with minorities is trouble-free" – "they live just like we do".
- In relationship to the Hungarian minority we could feel slight tension but the respondents do not consider it a serious problem. The opinion, that it is all only a consequence of politicization of the relationship, has occurred.
- In all towns where the discussion groups have been conducted, the respondents have more or less rich hand-to-hand experience with Roma. In Bratislava people feel that the Roma are integrated, respondents do not have any significant negative feelings when they have an interaction with a Roma. They have mainly experience with the "fully integrated" ones – "they are as normal as we are".
- Situation in the East Slovakia (Kosice, Poprad) is significantly tenser. Roma are perceived differently (the less problematic "decent" ones, representing a minority though, and the problematic ones "indecent – there are much more of those". These respondents (in both towns) react sensitively to the presence of the Roma in their towns. They mentioned a lot of negative experience with the co-existence with the Roma. They speak about fear, concerns, tension, and barriers. Older respondents are significantly more negative in their ratings.

ATTITUDE TOWARD THE ROMA

- Non-Roma respondents have provided us with a long list of problems the Roma face in Slovakia. Most often they concurred in the issues such as unemployment (often related to the unwillingness to employ a Roma), low education level (almost illiteracy and lack of interest in education), poverty (low standard of living) as well as a low civilization standard (e.g.: hygiene and consequent diseases). Hand in hand with stating the particular problem, many respondents had a strong tendency to blame the Roma from all the problems, as if the mentioned problems were only the result of Roma's lack of interest, passiveness and inability to adapt.
- Less often the respondents stated the problem of the existence of segregated communities, so called "settlements" with a typically low quality of living, low hygienic standard, serious shortages in health situation, alcoholism, criminality, usury. Younger respondents speak more openly about the discrimination and prejudice, negative picture of Roma in the majority population based on their negative presentation in media or the tendency to generalize the negative image of all Roma community – "lumping everybody together".
- Respondents (mainly the older ones) tend to find the reason of the problems in what they call the passiveness of the Roma, lack of interest; they even speak about the inability of Roma to adapt (in the most extreme ratings). To a small extent they tried to explain bad living conditions of a very big group of the Roma population, pointing to their internal disunity, conflicts within their community.
- Most of the respondents speak about everyday contact with Roma, they stated various experience both positive and negative; the negative ones prevailing. Such experience significantly contributes to (mostly not good) "internal picture" of the Roma, their further perception and opinion of this minority in Slovakia.

- All respondents have a contact and experience with Roma. In Bratislava the respondents concurred that the situation is different than in other towns; more favourable. But still, some respondents shared their experience, which had significantly influenced their not very positive opinion of Roma. In other towns the respondents experience intensive contact with Roma every day. Respondents know Roma from their neighbourhood; work or their children go to work with them. Experience differs, from the positive ones to extremely negative ones – a physical attack (in Kosice). Respondents declare that similar experience is widespread even in their closer or wider social networks (relatives, friends, acquaintances).
- The idea of a model situation of a closer contact with a Roma (e.g.: meeting on a bus) arouses a spontaneous reaction of fear in a respondent, in case the person, based on visual assessment looks "suspicious" ("he/she only looks for something to steal"). The reactions can be also less negative, though. The basis for the "reaction choice" is mostly a visual assessment of the appearance of the Roma but also the fact if the respondent knows the person. In total, the feelings of threat or fear prevail and so "if it is possible I better evade them. "
- Respondents differentiate the Roma community and speak about the "decent" or "adaptable" and "indecent" or "non-adaptable" Roma. In case of a close contact with the latter ones – "indecent", the problems begin. Solution to these problems could be leaving work, moving away, etc.
- In spontaneous associations negative perception of Roma in Slovakia prevails in general and attributes such as inability to adapt, carelessness, laziness, criminality, unemployment, dirt, smell, intolerance, importunateness, illiteracy or deception are mostly associated with Roma. Respondents have mentioned only a few positive attributes such as music or musical talent, openness, temperament and spontaneity.
- As for Roma the respondents know personally, the picture is a little more positive. In spontaneous associations more significant attributes are e.g.: openness, communicativeness, good manners, education, intelligence, decency, respecting others, adaptability, diligence, parental care, tolerance. It seems that it tells us a lot about a real contact of the majority with Roma minority in every day life: "the ones I meet are different but quite "decent" but I do not want to have anything to do with the other ones". The discussion corresponds with perception of Roma based on the above mentioned associations. The rule is that the further to the east of the country you go the more negative opinions about Roma you will hear.
- According to the respondents vast majority of Roma is not integrated. On the contrary, an integrated Roma is considered an exception. Respondents think that Roma are not interested in the integration into the majority society and that they like it the way it is. They repeatedly declare that Roma live and "want to live" from the benefits of the majority society. The integration of the Roma is perceived as the only solution to their problems but the initiative must first come from the inside of the Roma community.
- Prevailing feeling on the side of non-Roma respondents is that the Slovak society approaches Roma equitably. They say that Roma have equal opportunities with the non-Roma. Moreover there are no "official" (e.g.: legislative) efforts to discriminate Roma – "they have the same chances as we do if they want to use them". In the subjective comparison Roma with non-Roma we could see some kind of feeling of "grievance/injustice" that the society takes care of Roma more than of non-Roma, even "more than they deserve."

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE ROMA

- Opinions if life of Roma in Slovakia got better or worse vary: one part of respondents think that the situation got worse, about the same number of respondents believe that the situation got better. Worse situation is perceived mainly in the area of social welfare, employment and healthcare. Better situation of Roma respondents associate with better opportunities to travel or more freedom to decide about their lives. When discussing these questions the respondents expressed a significant feeling of "grievance/injustice". Strongly embedded idea that the state provides "more care" for Roma than for non-Roma, evokes negative reactions and rejection.
- In general respondents concurred that it is important to deal with the Roma issues, they are also aware of seriousness of the problems cumulating in this community and they also reflect a problematic co-existence of majority and minority. However, the tools that are chosen should be more effective (e.g.: directed material support). Positive discrimination tools for solving the Roma issues have been strictly rejected.
- The Roma help issue has also evoked contradictory reactions. At the background of respondents' statements we could often sense some doubts regarding the meaning of helping Roma. It seems to them that even now Roma are being helped quite a lot, or even "more than the others (minorities)", but situation is not getting better anyway. There is a lack of initiative on the side of Roma, their real interest in using the provided help to the benefit of their personal growth or improvement of their status. Otherwise, it is only one-way, inefficient "waste of money".
- Responsibility for help to Roma community is assigned to everyone – "both them and us". However, the help is meaningful only if the other side shows interest in it, only then the situation can get better, only then it makes sense. And it is interest, openness to such help, that respondents believe Roma lack "we can help them only if they want us to". We can observe that on the other side there is a lack of emphasizing the need for the majority to open up more to the Roma minority.
- In the discussion the respondents referred to the responsibility of the government/state, non-government organisations, Roma intelligentsia as well as the church active in Slovakia.
- In many discussion groups, the question who should be responsible for solving the Roma issue, initiated discussion about the meaning of providing help to this minority. Older respondents have mostly resigning attitudes, they doubt the sense of any activities when it comes to Roma – a dominant motive of their statements – "A Roma will always be Roma, nobody and nothing will ever change it".
- Separateness of the majority society toward Roma has shown especially when talking about a concrete help to Roma personally – "from my side". Respondents could only hardly imagine what in particular they or people from their neighbourhood could do for the Roma living in their neighbourhood. More positive signals could be found only among younger respondents. Only they were able to verbalize also more concrete proposals how to help or become more open to Roma in their neighbourhood. Older respondents have mostly remained silent when asked this question.

- Unemployment rate is widely considered to be one of the most serious problems of Roma. Respondents' estimates corresponded with the available datum (80%) for Slovakia. The Roma unemployment rate at the level of 80% they perceive as realistic and almost "optimistic" number. Respondents have named several reasons for high unemployment rate of Roma: no or insufficient education, discrimination practices in the employment process but also lack of working habits or skills. All these "objective" reasons, according to the respondents, are conquered by the most important reason: "Roma do not want to work" (and never wanted to). This explanation comprises all reason such as unwillingness, lack of interest in work, impatience as well as irresponsible attitude toward duties.
- Integration versus isolation: Respondents, mostly the younger ones, have agreed that integration is the best solution for Roma issues and which can from the long-term point of view bring benefit for the Slovak society. However, they repeatedly emphasize that the impetus must come from the side of Roma at first place. Older respondents were again more sceptical and rejective in this question – "why should they integrate? It is convenient for them not to be integrated! " Moreover, many people believe that "it is in their nature" and so any effort to change it must lead to failure.
- On the other hand the proposals of possible separation, even if equality principles are applied, can only make the Roma problems worse. Such solution only supports the separateness of the community and its problems. Moreover respondents believe that such solution is based on the discrimination principles against both minority and majority.

THE DECADE OF THE ROMA

- Awareness of activities and campaigns focused on improvement of lives of the Roma is not very high. Besides the general statement "the state is trying", there are more, mostly local initiatives or projects. Respondents have mostly no information about institutional background of such efforts.
- Respondents mostly concur that one of the Roma problems, which needs "acute attention" is the question of improving their educational level. Education is perceived as potential "channel" of integration of Roma or at least a partial solution to many problems of Roma in Slovakia. Respondents are critical toward the participation of the state and other organisations in solving the Roma issue.
- Respondents have absolutely no information about the Decade of the Roma project. None of the non-Roma respondents in all the discussion groups has ever heard of this initiative. When we introduced main goals of this initiative to them respondents were mostly sceptical. They doubted mostly the implementation and effectiveness regarding the practical results of this initiative. Most of them had a feeling that it would again be "only waste of money". Moreover many respondents think that most of things, which the Decade should bring to Roma, e.g.: access to education, healthcare, etc. "are here" or were here in the past but did not do well (e.g.: providing Roma with flats).

AMBASSADORS OF CHANGE: VOICES TO TRUST

- Regarding the familiarity with Roma personages/celebrities or Roma organisations, it was important in which age category the respondent belonged to. The younger respondents named many Roma personages from political life (K. Orgovanova, L. Fizik, A.Patkolo) as well as many celebrities from cultural or sports life (P.Koncek, J. Suchy alias Dzigá Dzigá, Berki Mrenica, A.Cibula, M. Danihel alias Guru, music band Kmetoband, Romathan theatre). On the contrary, the older respondents have only a little knowledge in this sphere. They could only name the personages famous from the political life.
- When choosing an appropriate leader of the "the Decade of the Roma" initiative, respondents suggested candidates mostly from the artists, either Roma singers, musicians or non-Roma actors or singers. Many respondents think that a leader of the Decade could be a person, who is not medially famous but achieved significant successes in work with Roma (it could be both Roma and non-Roma). It should be a person, who is accepted on "both sides of the barricade" – by both Roma and non-Roma.
- Younger respondents, although not very convinced, named some currently popular Roma and non-Roma musicians or actors.

MESSAGE CONCEPTS

- In total, the submitted concepts of messages evoked mostly contradictory reactions in respondents. It was obvious in questionnaire ratings of concepts before the discussion as well as in opinions, which were expressed in the following discussion. Convincingness of the concepts on the scale oscillated around average – middle values, none of the concepts proved to be univocally convincing. In the following discussion respondents expressed dissatisfaction mostly with ambiguous formulation of concepts resulting in low acceptability. Respondents doubted mainly acceptability of concepts, which mentioned discrimination or unfair Roma treatment in Slovakia.

SURVEY RESULTS

1. SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY

- **The current direction of Slovakia has been granted both positive and negative attributes, which come “hand in hand“. In the overall rating we can see mainly generation differences. Younger respondents tend to be more positive than the older respondents. “However, we are only at the beginning and beginnings are usually difficult...”**

Regarding the direction of Slovakia, respondents speak about both positive and negative aspects. More optimistic are mostly the younger respondents from the western Slovakia (Bratislava, Nitra). Respondents emphasize better opportunities for travelling, studying or working abroad, which Slovakia’s entry to the European Union has brought. Less often the positive ratings are also connected with some current reforms or economic growth in terms of inflow of foreign investments. Spontaneously the respondents concurred in the fact that “we are only at the beginning” and so many processes are inevitable although “painful”.

»World of open opportunities (opportunities to travel, study or work abroad)«

“I think that we are going in the right direction. I think that we are further than Belarus or Bulgaria that are exactly the kind of countries we used to be. It means we can travel.” (Man, 27, Bratislava)

“Good thing is that there are various advantages for young people. Travelling, various offers, simply studying. We can study abroad – there are various study stays. This is where the advantage is.” (Woman, 18, Nitra)

“Openness toward the outer world, this is what has changed for the better, we can travel, communicate, study.” (Woman, 26, Kosice)

»Positive benefit of some reforms«

“I also think that it is getting better but not in everything. For example also the pension reform, that one can save money for himself. I can see some progress here.” (Man, 27, Nitra)

“Despite the fact that I do not know everything that regards this reform or this matter, regarding the healthcare, for example, there are a few points there that are good for Slovakia. Although the introduction of fees was hard but it is good for us in a certain way.” (Man, 18, Kosice)

„I think that regarding the social issues, they are changing it the way so it will not be possible to misuse it.“ (Woman, 22, Nitra)

“I believe that the healthcare system has improved with these reforms, which have been conducted. I am not saying that it is as it should be but it is better than it used to be. (Woman, 44, Kosice)

»Economic growth and foreign investments«

“I think that foreign investments. But I think that nobody can say if they would like to live 100 years ago and that then they would have a better life. So it is changing for the better. This is my opinion.” (Woman, 22, Nitra)

“The inflow of foreign investments has already started. Even other countries are interested in us. It is much better.” (Man, 22, Bratislava)

»"We are only at the beginning"«

"I think that we are only at the beginning, that it all has only just started and it is going in the right direction. We can see that now it is much easier to travel abroad." (Man, 22, Bratislava)

"I believe that we are going in the right direction but I also think that we are only at the beginning; so it will be a long process until it is as we dreamt about it in the year 1989." (Woman, 22, Bratislava)

"The beginnings are always difficult. But we always have to start somewhere. So we are exactly in this phase. We are the ones, where it is all starting and we are so young but I think that we are going in the right direction." (Woman, 22, Nitra)

Respondents concurred in less positive attributes of direction of Slovakia, that its current direction also has "the other side", e.g.: negative impact of the current reforms in the realm of education, healthcare or social sphere and bigger and bigger social gaps (often resulting from the current reforms). Among the less optimistic ratings of Slovakia's direction respondents have mentioned a wave of "brain drain", penetration of materialism and consumer way of life (mostly younger respondents), resignation on Slovakia's own values as a result of integration into the European structures or globalization processes. (Both older and younger respondents). In the general the older respondents are considerably more critical and negative.

„In my opinion it is wrong. I can't help myself but it is still going down the hill. Everybody has been saying recently that it is going to be perfect, fantastic but I think that it will take another 20 years until everything gets to normal, as it was in the healthcare and social sphere. I have current experience with the healthcare and it is going down the hill. It doesn't matter if you are young or old; you have to pay for everything. Although I'm employed and as such my social and health insurance levy are deducted from every salary, when I come to a doctor I pay the same amount of money I give from my salary." (Woman, 24, Nitra)

"Many people do not know where to turn. Every one has existential problems and problems with managing own life and not to look at the others. Regarding the reforms, I say healthcare. Many people criticise it, they say it is bad; many steps are good but also bad. But I think that some of them result in a worse health status of people because they can not stand what is happening in the healthcare, the waiting time, fees everywhere. I think that the school system reform is the worst thing there is now, I mean the introduction of the fees." (Woman, 25, Kosice)

"Normal common people can see it in the growth of their living standard. This government only makes promises. Now before the elections it will move a bit forward also in the family economy. But in total common people are at loss. The ones, who had a lot, got a lot. The ones, who had little, they have taken them even more. But I know that people, who are in the average, or God help them! unemployed, they have a problem. And what is a really serious problem, is the social policy of this government." (Man, 58, Kosice)

"I take a bleak view of it. They have even raised the pension age! When will the young people start to work when we work until 62? And will we live that long? It was done on purpose so we will not live that long, to retire. My blood pressure is high even now so maybe we will not live that long. This is the goal of our government, not to pay pensions." (Woman, 49, Kosice)

"Young people leave school and the first thing is "I have no job". They do not get money; their parents support them if they can. There are no conditions prepared for them so they run away and I think that a lot of capacities, just like it used to be forbidden once, they ran away, even now the young people do it. And another thing – Americanism. It is true, I feel it too. I see young people, who adjust to such life, to drugs or other things, what they see in those films, or detective or action films and the young people live like that." (Woman, 54, Poprad)

- **Unemployment, bad social situation, healthcare and school system represent the greatest problems Slovaks are facing at the moment. Mostly government is responsible for these problems but they are also a result of current reforms.**

Regarding the greatest problems Slovakia is currently facing, the answers of respondents correspond with the long-term results of quantitative measuring¹ in Slovakia. The list of problems the respondents stated is dominated mostly by unemployment (in all its complexity). As a consequence of current school system reform, the school system has also become a reflected problem. It is not surprising that people still point to the long-term problems in the healthcare system, which according to them, reform has not solved. Low living standard issue, insufficient support of families or people in need also resonates strongly, regardless of age or regional differences among respondents.

Respondents in Kosice have spontaneously named Roma issue as an exceptionally serious and complex problem, probably due to extremely edgy situation regarding the local Roma community (mostly medially “shamefully” famous Lunik IX – a segregated housing estate).

Less often respondents named “brain drain” or corruption.

➤ Unemployment

“Unemployment of graduates because when you finish university and you find out that you are not at all ready for work.” (Man, 26, Bratislava)

“I think that the greatest problem of Slovakia is unemployment. Because if there were more work opportunities, fewer people would leave abroad and more finances would stay at home and so we could give more and fewer finances would be drawn from the social sphere.” (Man, 20, Kosice)

➤ Healthcare (introduction of fees, corruption)

“It is also connected with that corruption; I have a feeling that if you do not slip something in their pocket, the healthcare is not 100%.” (Man, 22, Bratislava)

“For example in the healthcare, the reforms might be done with good intentions but in the end we – citizens, the poorest ones will pay for it. Or let’s take the emergency ward; you must pay 60SKK and those gypsies go there all the time, or those who go there to have a tooth pulled out regularly, they go there all the time. And if I come there with my child for example, I pay outrageous sum, he sends me to another district physician, he maybe to another one so it cost me 500SKK at minimum. I do not approve those healthcare reforms.” (Man, 28, Nitra)

➤ School system, education

“Education is where we should invest and the ideas that have been here recently (introduction of fees proposal) are rather polemic and I think that we should invest into education because it is the thing that is the future of Slovakia. Even the schools should be modernised.” (Woman, 22, Bratislava)

“Introduction of universities fees, I believe.” (Woman, 18, Nitra)

“Reforms that are in progress in the school system.” (Woman, Kosice, 35)

¹ The greatest social problems chart has been, for a long time, headed mostly by living standard (salaries, pensions, prices), unemployment and lack of work opportunities, healthcare, corruption and bribery.

➤ Social welfare, family support

"In general, financial support of weak social classes, multi-member families, orphanages and the whole situation regarding the child adoption." (Woman, 27, Kosice)

➤ Low salaries

"Because even if they offer you the job the salary is so low that it is funny. If one is alone, he/she can manage if does not need much. But I can not imagine that from the money an average person gets you can support children and family and he/she should give them everything they need." (Woman, 25, Kosice)

➤ Big regional differences

"Irregular development of regions and social problems of some regions." (Man, 27, Bratislava)

➤ Roma

"I think that here in the East Slovakia, particularly here in Kosice, there is one serious problem. It is connected with unemployment; it is connected with social poverty. But it is also connected with education school system in the relationship with this group. All the problems cumulate exactly there. They are the Roma." (Man, 58, Kosice)

➤ Brain drain

"Brain drain. For example, many young people are leaving, mainly the educated ones because they have better offers abroad." (Woman, 27, Bratislava)

"Young people have no chance to assert themselves in here. My son does not want to stay here either. And there are many young people who are leaving now. It bothers me because only the old ones will stay here." (Woman, 35, Poprad)

➤ Corruption

"From the position where I work, I am entitled to say that – corruption." (Man, 26, Bratislava)

At first place, the responsibility for these problems lies in the hands of the government but sporadically respondents said that in many cases the problems are mostly consequences of the transformation process or current changes and reforms in Slovakia.

"I would also say that government but we can not speak only about the negatives... But it is a natural process of transformation." (Woman, 22, Nitra)

- **Slovakia's membership in the European Union was necessary for our country if it wanted to "set out for the journey of prosperity". Integration to the European structures is taken for granted; moreover it has brought a lot of good to Slovak citizens. "However, everything has its pluses and minuses"...**

Direction of Slovakia or current situation of the country has been spontaneously discussed in the context of integration processes. The Slovak EU membership is taken for granted. Slovakia has become a part of Europe bringing along positive consequences for Slovakia, partially perceptible also for "common" people. The European Union has offered Slovakia a wide palette of possibilities – opportunities to study, work or travel abroad as well as the inflow of foreign investments and financial support from the Euro funds.

"I think that the EU is positive for us. Definitely. Staying outside would not be such a good idea." (Woman, 22, Bratislava)

"In fact the positives are that they have opened their borders; that one can look for a job in another state." (Man, 27, Nitra)

"Slovakia has entered the EU. We belong there, now Europe considers us a member of the EU. Let's say that the borders have opened more. People know us a little and most important is that we opened the door for investments in Slovakia. If we had not been a member of the EU I doubt that the car producers would have come here to build, because there are no guarantees. And the Union gives a guarantee for us. And if it had not been I don't know if we would have a better life now. Maybe there's an impact now, the prices went up, certain things have changed but we have to think toward the future a little. If we had not gone to the EU, I don't know what it would be like now." (Man, 18, Kosice)

"Positive are those grants, which are starting, that the money will come. The more skilled ones, who know their way around, will gain. We can see it even now. If you have a good grant, you get good subsidies. So we can do something about it. Youth can go and work abroad and also the others, not only the youth." (Woman, 35, Kosice)

Despite the general agreement in positive ratings of consequences brought by Slovakia's entry to the EU, respondents have also named several negative aspects of integration. Younger respondents criticise "the loss of our face" in the foreign policy and support of foreign investors, which harms domestic business men.

"Well I can see it black and white. White, because we are in the union, we can travel, we have access to abroad. There I see the advantages; communication with foreign countries, education. Black, because we are offering ourselves too cheap." (Man, 29, Bratislava)

"We don't give the impression of a sovereign country toward the other countries; I mean in opinions like France for example, they said in the referendum that they will not go to the constitution in the EU." (Woman, 23, Bratislava)

"I'm only afraid that we will not do much in the EU. Everything will be imported to us, the most disgusting things will be imported, and we will not export because they won't let us and there will be norms. We will be that kind of state, which will not be able to say anything and we will be given all the bad things." (Woman, 24, Nitra)

"I can see more negatives of Slovakia's entry. Especially regarding the investments, it is to the same industry. Cars, yes. That we don't have wider base. I think government should invest and support more the home production than those foreign investors." (Woman, 24, Bratislava)

"The negatives are that our policemen now want to be very good, that is very good on one side. I mean that they want Slovakia to be on the same level with for example Germany immediately, but they have a lot of money in their pockets, so it's not a problem for them. The prices are rising, for example, and it has an impact on the citizens. It is bad because now we don't have our nation financially supported so it is a minus." (Man, 18, Kosice)

Older respondents (mainly from Kosice) speak more about the negative consequences of the EU's subsidies policy in agriculture, bureaucratic procedures of Brussels and their potential impact on domestic environment, occasionally they express fears from Turkey's entry to the EU or diminishing traditional values and own Slovak culture.

"It is a problem even in the agriculture but I think that it's not a problem of the hypermarkets but the EU. Mostly the cheap groceries because the union subsidises it. Everybody will sell it only for how much the union is willing to pay for it." (Woman, 35, Kosice)

"Because I am seriously afraid of one thing in Slovakia. The European bureaucracy is the problem. And a very painful one. But we have this bureaucracy also here at home. It is not much better; I would even say that is even more envious." (Man, 59, Kosice)

"I thought of one more negative, that they want Turkey. And Turkey only has 5% of its area in Europe. And they (the union) don't look at them as at people but potential customers. But I think they are totally different. When they crawl throughout Europe, I think it can bring us more bad than good. Their mentality is different than ours, the Europeans." (Woman, 35, Kosice)

"We are going the right direction because we copy everything from the outside and we forget about all that is ours, our values and traditions. Now it's happening exactly what the French have warned us about: "Don't discard what is yours, your culture" and we do it with no mercy every day." (Woman, 54, Poprad)

- **Government should spend more resources in the areas, which are perceived as the most critical in Slovakia (e.g.: healthcare or education, environmental protection, employment policy). Government's spending in order to gain foreign investments is perceived rather ambivalently. The area where, according to the respondents, the government should not spend its resources (i.e.: what they put into it now is enough) is solving the minority issues, especially Roma. Mostly older respondents tend towards such rejection (rating based on the sheets they were given but also during the following discussion).**

Regarding the government expenses² more sources are, according to the respondents, required in the area of healthcare, education, environmental protection (average value 1.1) as well as the employment issue (average 1.2) (see the tab. GOVERNMENT SPENDING). These ratings in general correspond with reflecting the greatest problems of this country in the following discussion. The ratings are rather consistent even regarding other areas. More resources should be directed to agriculture and development of rural areas, infrastructure and social services for the poor. Respondents believe that more resources are needed also in the area of economic growth or governance.

Other resources for gaining foreign investments (1.8) and mostly to help minorities such as Roma were rated quite ambivalently. In case of these areas, there have been biggest differences in respondents' ratings.

Regarding the **help to minorities, such as Roma**, the ratings varied not only within the discussion groups but also between the particular discussion groups. Younger respondents from Bratislava would give more resources to this area (average rating 1.6) - relatively most favourable. Young people from Kosice are also quite positive but in their group the ratings showed higher internal heterogeneity.

² Respondents were asked to fill out the sheet „Government spending“ before the discussion

In Nitra the respondents concurred that the amount of resources flooding into this area at present is sufficient (average 2.1) and the respondents are relatively homogenous in their answers. Older respondents from Kosice rate such help similarly (average 2.2) but within this group the ratings were contradictory. In Poprad the results were the worst. The average value is getting close to the value 3 (average 2.5), i.e.: fewer resources, which were the only case when respondents have agreed on fewer resources for the particular area.

Tab. GOVERNMENT SPENDING

	Agriculture and rural development	Health	Infrastructure (roads, transport, bridges)	Attracting foreign investment to our country	Services for the poor	Environmental protection	Assistance for minority groups such as the Roma	Education	Governance (corruption)	Economic growth	Employment (particularly for our youth)
Average Bratislava	1.4	1.1	1.2	2.1	1.2	1.0	1.6	1.1	1.4	1.4	1.4
Standev (BA)	0.53	0.33	0.44	0.78	0.44	0.00	0.53	0.33	0.53	0.53	0.53
Average Nitra	1.8	1.0	1.6	1.6	1.1	1.0	2.1	1.1	1.4	1.5	1.1
Standev (NR)	0.71	0.00	0.74	0.74	0.35	0.00	0.35	0.35	0.52	0.53	0.35
Average Kosice I (18-30)	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.4	1.1	1.1	1.6	1.1	1.3	1.1	1.0
Standev (KE I.)	0.38	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.38	0.38	0.79	0.38	0.49	0.38	0.00
Average Kosice II (31-60)	1.4	1.1	1.2	1.9	1.3	1.3	2.2	1.1	1.7	1.1	1.1
Standev (KE II.)	0.53	0.33	0.44	0.60	0.50	0.50	0.67	0.33	0.87	0.33	0.33
Average Poprad	2.0	1.3	1.3	2.0	1.6	1.0	2.5	1.3	1.1	1.3	1.1
Standev (PP)	0.00	0.46	0.46	0.76	0.74	0.00	0.53	0.46	0.35	0.46	0.35
TOTAL Average	1.6	1.1	1.3	1.8	1.3	1.1	2.0	1.1	1.4	1.3	1.2
TOTAL Standev	0.55	0.30	0.50	0.74	0.51	0.30	0.67	0.36	0.59	0.46	0.38

Note: 1=more resources, 2=about the amount, 3=fewer resources
The standard variance accounts for variability of respondents' ratings.

During the discussion respondents also pointed to the need to direct a greater volume of resources and attention to the areas such as school system, healthcare, reduction of big regional differences, supporting socially weaker groups (pensioners, children, handicapped people), supporting family, rural development or supporting agriculture.

»School system«

"If I were a politician I might put more money to education. If we don't invest into youth we can only hardly expect that our future will be bright." (Man, 29, Bratislava)

"Regarding culture, education and school system, maybe even this needs a financial injection. Because our young teachers are often underpaid and must change the industry. I think that neither doctors are appreciated. Nor are teachers." (Woman, 44, Kosice)

»Social sphere«

"Maybe we should support the social sphere more. Pensioners, multi-member families, children, handicapped people..." (Woman, 22, Nitra)

"The state doesn't support families at all." (Woman, 30, Kosice)

"I would give more money to the social sphere. Mainly the pensions. I think this is the most important. Because a man works all his life and when he gets old, he has nothing." (Man, 47, Poprad)

»Regional development«

"Regional development should be promoted more or increase the standard of people, villages and regions, which are weak and can't help themselves." (Woman, 29, Bratislava)

»Agriculture and rural development«

"Agriculture, the foodstuffs, our people could grow them and we could be more independent; and now we buy them for peanuts. Despite the fact that our (crop) is better quality; so I think we should strengthen also the agriculture." (Man, 52, Poprad)

In the context of government's priorities, when it comes to spending resources, some respondents spontaneously spoke about Roma as well. Their comments were mostly negative and rejective – "Roma have already been given enough".

"If I should give less money somewhere so definitely to Roma. The money that goes to them is not distributed addressly; a big amount of money gets lost and most important is that only little money goes to their education. It should be done addressly. We can give them the moon, build houses for them, anything, but until we give them education it makes on sense." (Man, 59, Poprad)

"The social sphere. I also think that there should be given more and in the Roma area we should differentiate, reduce, because incredible money is squandered there. And regarding the Roma issue, there are different projects; I have an experience that they are manipulating with the money. The money gets to people too late and somebody is probably putting it to their accounts." (Woman, 54, Poprad)

2. NATIONAL IDENTITY AND ATTITUDES TOWARD DIFFERENCES

- **Being a Slovak does not necessarily mean being proud of it. In fact it is very difficult to find out what should represent a source of national pride for the Slovaks. Mostly younger respondents found it difficult to identify themselves with the national feeling or simply define what makes Slovak the Slovak. Older respondents think a bit more straightforwardly, they have named quite a long list of mostly positive characteristics of the Slovaks as such.**

Younger respondents (mainly in Bratislava) speak mostly about the problem to identify themselves with the national feeling, experience something like a “national pride” or simply define what makes Slovak the Slovak. To be a Slovak means to be born in Slovakia, speak the language, be familiar with the local habits and traditions (such as Christmas) but – „otherwise it does not make much sense“. They tend to think more in more general categories “we are all humans”. Younger respondents describe Slovaks as quiet, passive people who are not quarrelsome, who are neutral and nobody minds them. Their biggest problem is their inability to sell themselves, express themselves and present their “sovereignty”, “self-confidence” in the contact with other nations or nationalities.

“Maybe it is the language that sets me apart from other people but otherwise I do not have the feeling that I should identify myself that I am Slovak, that I am one or another nationality. More or less I think that it really doesn’t matter what nationality one is. I wouldn’t identify myself with this feeling of the Slovak nation.” (Woman, 29, Bratislava)

“I think that to be a Slovak means only that I was born here and I live here. We have some traditions that have developed here in this area for centuries, for example the way we celebrate Christmas. Otherwise it doesn’t make sense I think, to be divided that I am Slovak or German.” (Woman, 24, Bratislava)

“I would say that every nation has its specifications and we can’t say that the Slovak identity - that we have such or such characteristics, because everyone is different, we all have different ideas, feelings, nature but as a Slovak I belong here, I was born here and it doesn’t matter what nationality I am. But I experience that when I go abroad, as we mentioned here – the Germans, French – they are proud of it. When a Slovak goes abroad, he is quieter and doesn’t show that he’s Slovak.” (Woman, 22, Bratislava)

“A German comes to our square, sits in the first pub he sees, has a beer and can commend that he’s German. We come to the square somewhere in Germany or other country and sit on the wall. And we don’t commend ourselves much.” (Man, 29, Bratislava)

“Slovaks have always been oppressed, so we are adaptable. Whatever happens, all the politics or complaining is done in pubs and nowhere else, we are afraid to rise. For example French or Italians, they are constantly on strike and they win. We only complain about the reforms but we go on. Somewhere in a pub we swear or somewhere at home when watching the news but we go on. We aren’t assertive enough.” (Man, 28, Nitra)

“Definitely with our mentality, our performance. I think that in some areas we are afraid to sell ourselves. On one side we have a big potential but we are not self-confident like the Dutch, for example.” (Woman, 27, Kosice)

Older respondents were able to name a bit longer list of characteristics that “make Slovak the Slovak”. They describe a typical Slovak as a “hardworking do-gooder“, trustful, modest, dutiful, adaptable, temperament, honest and with an open heart.

“I think that Slovaks are in the world perceived as dutiful, honest and hardworking people. We can work. I think that in this the Slovak nation was always better.” (Woman, 44, Kosice)

“We are a modest nation. Here in the east we say ‘let’s be happy that we have work’. But how much we get for it? That doesn’t matter.” (Man, 60, Kosice)

“Slovak nation is very adaptable to everything. And it has the modesty deeply embedded; unfortunately it’s not always good.” (Man, 32, Kosice)

“I think that we are mostly temperament, we Slovaks but I will go back to Germany again, because I was there and I compared their mentality with ours. We are a “warm” nation. Maybe I had only a bad experience but they are very cold. Maybe they are not like that; maybe I’m hurting them now. Maybe they have feelings but don’t show them. We do.” (Woman, 39, Poprad)

“Diligence. I think that our people are very diligent. And let the others use them. Because they are also trustful.” (Woman, 32, Poprad)

- **Tolerance as it seems is not a strong point of Slovaks. And they know about it. Despite the fact that it is not easy to declare tolerance, when “it comes to the crunch”, tolerant attitudes retreat the fears, prejudice and stereotype. “We can find an enemy easily”. In general it is true that the further to the east (from Bratislava) you go, the more decided opinions you will encounter.**

Tolerance, ability to tolerate divergence, is not commonplace in Slovak conditions; at least based on reflection of younger respondents. Although we cannot generalize this to the “whole nation”, it seems that intolerant attitudes prevail. Younger respondents speak not only about intolerance but almost “a xenophobia“ or a strong standpattism and long-term separateness from the outer world, which represents a breeding ground for “intolerant attitudes“ typical mainly, in their opinion, for the countryside or older people.

“I don’t think that we are able to accept divergence more than we admit. Divergence in the meaning that it is a foreigner, different mentality, different language, sometimes different colour of skin, different traditions. I think we are afraid of foreigners. We have a phobia.” (Woman, 29, Bratislava)

“It seems to me that not only from the foreigners. I think that vast majority, or ¾ of Slovaks are so conservative in their opinions – something is different, that one is a different ethnic, that one has different viewpoints, so we look at it with a great deal of conservatism. If something that is different isn’t good I don’t want to have anything to do with it.” (Woman, 22, Bratislava)

“I meet different type of people, the ones who don’t mind things like that, and the ones who are tolerant and accept it... I don’t know, I think it is fifty fifty. The younger ones are maybe more tolerant than the older ones because they have more opportunity to get to know all those countries and cultures. But the ones, who were nowhere and maybe never will go anywhere, because why should they – now when they are older – they have different opinion.” (Woman, 27, Bratislava)

On the other hand the older respondents (from East Slovakia) have concurred in the opinion that tolerance is one of the most typical features of the Slovaks. They spontaneously declare general tolerance toward foreigners, ethnic and national minorities as well as religious groups. This declared tolerance is rather selective, though. Tolerant attitudes subside in case of further confrontation with more concrete situations or minorities, nations and nationalities.

“I think that in general we are quite tolerant. Because even immigrants can come here. There are fears that Indians and Pakistani are coming. Some inhabitants are afraid of that. But we perceive it differently, because I live here. I think we are tolerant to Roma. That we grouch about it is another thing, but there are no organised groups, which would arm against them. As it is in the Czech Republic for example... And another thing. We are tolerant because there are no fights or hostilities among various religions. I think we are too tolerant in this.” (Woman, 40, Kosice)

“We are tolerant. Mainly toward foreigners we are forthcoming; even we kiss their asses, mainly of those from the west. We might be less tolerant toward Roma, Hungarians. Mainly Hungarians; we are allergic to them. But also toward the Germans, Russians, Ukrainians We are able to find an enemy if we want to.” (Man, 47, Poprad)

- **Tolerating “others”:** everybody tolerates a solvent tourist. However, respondents do not welcome immigrants with open arms, not mentioning the ones from “the Arabic world”; they represent diseases, violence and religious extremism threats.

Foreigners are in general perceived rather selectively. If a foreigner is a **solvent** tourist from the West he/she is tolerated with all their vice. If it is a “Chinese or Arab”, fears and rejection appear.

“It depends who it is. In my opinion the ones from the west who come: English, Italians, yes, but Roma that are here, Chinese, Hungarians, no. Czechs in some cases, they were oppressing us, people are afraid. They are afraid that we will belong under the one, who will dictate.” (Woman, 24, Nitra)

“I admit that we are not very hospitable toward foreigners. And we know how to kiss their asses sometimes. That’s one thing, but only to the certain groups.” (Man, 58, Kosice)

“I also think that it depends on many things. For instance when the foreign tourists come here, we perceive them as a source of some finances. They have money; they get better treatment in restaurants.” (Man, 27, Nitra)

Immigrants represent a group, which is not very welcome. We have noticed concerns and fears, either from diseases or even terrorist attacks – “we have to watch out”.

“We are a country people are not trying to get into. They might only be passing it. And the ones, who want to stay here, I don’t think we accommodate them, because we are not such country. We are not such a big country and moreover we are solving own problems. If we had enough finances, it would not be such a big problem.” (Woman, 27, Bratislava)

“Indians and Pakistani are coming. And one part of inhabitants is afraid. But our perception is different because I live here. .. Yes, I’m afraid, because there are infections and sources of any danger. I think that Muslims are the most dreaded group. We don’t know what they are capable of. And the terrorist attacks in general. And we see it on the news every day as they kill each other. We should keep an eye on this group.” (Woman, 40, Kosice)

Religious tolerance among traditional religions (Catholic, Evangelic) does not represent a serious problem for respondents.

“We are tolerant because there are no fights or hostilities among different religions. I think that in this we are too tolerant.” (Woman, 40, Kosice)

- **Minorities: “If they live among us and are like us, there is no problem to live with them.” It is different with Roma. The rule is that the further to the east and the more Roma in the area, the bigger problems in co-existence of majority with the Roma minority.**

Respondent reflect the presence of several national minorities in Slovakia, judging mainly based on their personal experience (residence, community). Based on this criterion the respondents have named besides the Hungarian and Roma minority also Russians (Kosice), Germans (Carpatean Germans in Poprad). Respondents declare having a personal experience with smaller Arabic communities in their towns. In general, “except for Roma, the co-existence with minorities is trouble-free” – “they live just like we do”.

“But it is all about the adaptability, I mean that the Arabs, Hungarians, Ukrainians – they adapt, because they also live in their country as they live in our country. They work here, work on themselves, they simply don’t attract the attention. The Roma, it is something else, it is true, however, that there are also adaptable people among us. They are really intelligent, educated, but it is only a small percentage.” (Man, 18, Kosice)

Regarding the conflicts, problems in mutual co-existence in case of the Hungarian minority, respondents did not mention any significantly negative experience. However, from time to time some less positive feelings appeared, or a slight aversion (they do not like the language, they mind them using the Hungarian language in public), but in general the co-existence with this minority is not problematic. The opinion, that it is all only a consequence of politicization of the relationship, has occurred.

“Kosice is a good example because Hungarians live here and we have here a lot of Roma, so when I have to compare Hungarians and Roma, I have absolutely no problem with Hungarians, especially the ones who speak Slovak fluently and even if they speak Hungarian in the streets, I don’t mind it at all. And it depends on individuals, a Roma or a Hungarian, not on the whole group.” (Woman, 27, Kosice)

“I think that in Slovakia there have been no signs of intolerance toward nations. And the fact that the politicians create conflicts, I think that politicians are against Hungarian politicians, but I have to confess that my favourite politician is Bela Bugar. I’m very sorry to say that. But when we think about that, if we don’t want to lose the south of Slovakia, there must be conflicts, because their demands regarding the separation of those areas, Slovakia cannot let that happen.” (Man, 18, Kosice)

“Here in Kosice Slovaks vs. Hungarians, it is ok. It is fine. At least I see it this way, there are no big problems.” (Man, 18, Kosice)

In all towns where the discussion groups have been conducted, the respondents have more or less rich hand-to-hand experience with Roma. In Bratislava people feel that the Roma are integrated, respondents do not have any significant negative feelings when they have an interaction with a Roma. They have mainly experience with the “fully integrated” ones – “they are as normal as we are”. The prevailing feeling is that Bratislava as the biggest town in Slovakia “is big enough so the Roma can get lost easily”. Simultaneously the respondents reflect no interest in this minority and its problems. Some of the respondents have experience with “less integrated”, “more problematic” Roma – “they only take the advantage of better opportunities a big town offers them”.

“The Roma here in Bratislava are more integrated than in other parts of Slovakia. They also have more opportunities to work in here. I think that they have better conditions for life but only if they can integrate. If they can’t they mostly leave. I don’t think they are trying to live here somehow because it is more expensive here.” (Man, 22, Bratislava)

“I would say that what this is all about is the fact that one is used to it and watches media, where the only things he can see are some Roma settlements somewhere in the east, but nobody talks about the Roma living in towns. Nobody knows about it. I think that discrimination is also there, that Roma live in their community.” (Woman, 22, Bratislava)

“Regarding the integration, I don’t know if they are so integrated here, I don’t think so. I would say that they only take the advantage of the conditions in here because the conditions are better than in the countryside or in poorer towns. It is true that they live here in hostels and not in some huts, but on the other side there is education, the fact that a lot of things are solved by criminality and let’s say that they have more opportunities to steal here. Whilst in villages they steal potatoes, here they steal at hypermarkets for example.” (Man, 29, Bratislava)

In Nitra respondents have expressed significant discomfort regarding the presence of Roma. They speak about the problem of mutual co-existence. But they also declare – “Our golden Roma in Nitra”. Respondents have a feeling that this community make much more effort, they help each other, and they are on a higher level in comparison to those “in the east of the country”.

“I feel very bad in their company. I live in Klokcina and for 20 years nobody had done anything with them and now, all of a sudden...bang...they have moved them out. Somewhere, behind Nitra ... But I say, thanks God for Roma like that. In the east of the country it is very bad; they don’t know what to do with them. But the ones here are more civilized now. I would put it this way, in the east there is absolutely no civilization, nothing. The ones here are at least trying in one house, one couple, two or three families, they help each other you know, but I mean also the cleanliness. Mainly the cleanliness.” (Woman, 24, Nitra)

Situation in the East Slovakia - in Kosice is significantly tenser. Still, Roma are perceived differently (the less problematic “decent” ones, representing a minority though, and the problematic ones “indecent – there are much more of those”. Moreover in this town there are also significantly segregated Roma communities (e.g.: the housing estate Lunik IX.). Respondents speak about negative experience and fear but also about mutual barriers or open discrimination practices against this community in their town. Respondents are afraid of them, they consider their presence a serious problem, they speak about strong barriers in their mutual co-existence: “we ignore them and they ignore us”. Even the vocabulary is different – in the east respondents use a word “Gipsy” for a Roma and non-Roma in their vocabulary are “White people”³. In case of older generation (30+) we have noticed more intensive negative feelings.

³ Term „Roma“ is considered to be politically correct in Slovakia. Using the word „gipsy“ in terms of political correctness is considered a pejorative name for Roma ethnic.

“Regarding the Roma, I think it is all about the environment they grew up in. I had Roma neighbours and they were quite adaptable, they were always dressed neatly and had everything nice and clean. You couldn’t compare them with the ones in Vodarenska street or in Lunik.” (Man, 20, Kosice)

“Not all the Roma are the same.” (Woman, 25, Kosice)

“And gipsies; I know one swimming pool where they won’t let a Roma in, not a chance. I know three of them. And I think they are quite oppressed.” (Man, 18, Kosice)

“Really, Roma are a serious problem. It’s not that we’re intolerant toward them. We are totally ignorant. They are starting to treat us the same way; they ignore our needs and interests. And they do their things. It’s like that there are two groups next to each other and each of them thinks differently. Even I sometimes catch myself that I only brush aside. I really do feel that we have resigned.” (Man, 58, Kosice)

The most edgy atmosphere was in another town in the east Slovakia – in Poprad (generation 30+). Even in this group there was a tendency “not to lump everyone together” and differentiate so called “adaptable minority” and “non-adaptable majority”. However, respondents strongly reflect the presence of Roma in the town and negative feelings prevail significantly. Respondents had a spontaneous tendency toward extreme ratings, e.g.: “we should regulate their birth rate, otherwise nothing will be solved”. Just like in Kosice, respondents use mostly expressions “gipsies” for Roma and “white people” as the opposite majority.

“There are also decent, adaptable people among them; they work, take care of children. But most of them... they get a dole and that’s the end. There’s a noisy party for 4 days and you can’t do anything, not even call the police. Because they would promptly say that they are minority and that they are discriminated.” (Man, 52, Poprad)

“I think that if they were as adaptable as we are, because I also know some poor gipsy family and they are very decent, I think nobody would even notice them and nobody would know they are gipsies. That is the adaptability, the decency. I am tolerant to those ones.” (Woman, 49, Poprad)

“Not all the Roma are the same. There you see little Roma in the street and they start to make jokes of you and insult you. Sometimes you are afraid to walk past them. But there is another group of Roma and they are very decent.” (Woman, 35, Poprad)

3. ATTITUDE TOWARD THE ROMA

- **Non-Roma respondents have provided us with a long list of problems the Roma face in Slovakia. Most often they concurred in the issues such as unemployment (often related to the unwillingness to employ a Roma), low education level (almost illiteracy and lack of interest in education), poverty (low standard of living) as well as a low civilization standard (e.g.: hygiene and consequent diseases). Hand in hand with stating the particular problem, many respondents had a strong tendency to blame the Roma from all the problems, as if the mentioned problems were only the result of Roma's lack of interest, passiveness and inability to adapt.**

- Unemployment, problem to find a job, discrimination when looking for a job

"I also think that it is discrimination but I have never experienced that they would be looking for a job." (Man, 26, Nitra)

"Unemployment. Many Roma for example find it difficult to find a job in food industry. Many people do not employ a person, who maybe is skilful but has dark skin, to the kitchen or a cake shop to sell cakes because they know it would draw a lot of customers away, just because it is a Roma." (Man, 27, Nitra)

"It is very difficult for them to get a job. Because they are less educated, and personal hygiene and such things. And also the thing with lumping everyone together." (Woman, 26, Kosice)

"During the era of previous government they had to work. Nobody forces them to work today. They say they can't work because nobody wants them." (Man, 32, Kosice)

"I worked at one department where some Roma worked. And they found out that they are getting a lower salary than the other Roma get on social welfare." (Man, 32, Kosice)

"They don't have work or they are no longer a cheap labour." (Woman, 54, Poprad)

"The one who knows Roma also knows how hardworking Roma really is. He is working hard only until there's somebody checking on him. Then he would work like a navvy. When the supervisor left, that was the end. It isn't inside of them, the responsibility." (Ivan, 52, Poprad)

- Education, low education level, no interest in education

"They are for example not interested in education. When I worked here with children, it wasn't like that for them. I had to push them to make homework or other things; also the contact with parents was missing. They didn't care. The children just didn't feel like going to school, so the parents let it stay at home and then you had there children who were 8 or 9 and they were still in the first grade. They simply didn't care. They like to play, they sing nicely but regarding education – absolutely not." (Woman, 27, Bratislava)

"Going to school. And right from the first days of school they don't go there." (Man, 32, Kosice)

- Poverty, low standard of living

"Maybe poverty, but I wouldn't say that poverty because there's always something to do about everything. If they want they can change everything. But it looks like that they are satisfied with the poverty." (Man, 20, Nitra)

"I think that they have a problem to feed those 20 children they have at home and dress them." (Woman, 38, Kosice)

Discrimination and prejudice, negative picture of Roma in majority population based on their negative presentation in media or tendency to “lump everyone together” – mostly younger generation of respondents think about the Roma issue this way. Sporadically they mention aggressive behaviour toward Roma from the side of some non-Roma groups.

➤ Discrimination, prejudice, stereotypes

“When there’s a Roma who wants to work, who’s trying, who wants to integrate into society and wants to be a Slovak and not to separate as a Roma, he doesn’t have a chance because everybody judges him from the point of view that 90% of them is like that. And he can try, he can come and ask for a job, nobody will employ him anyway, because he’s black, he’s a Roma.” (Woman, 23, Bratislava)

“In my opinion it is discrimination of those Roma but it is again in people. The prejudice are a bit embedded, I perceive the gipsy other way than some Albanians. These Roma co-inhabitants, you know, quiet heavy metals they wear, but just because it is an Albanian and his name is Ali Whatever, then they buy even some ice-cream from him but if it was a Roma standing at that window, it would be quite empty there. People take it a little differently but I don’t know why. It is probably embedded somehow – the racism toward them.” (Man, 28, Nitra)

“I think that they lump them all together. Even if a Roma is trying to integrate into society, he must make more effort, he must be much better than a normal better person; to make others accept him.” (Woman, 25, Kosice)

“I also think that it is about prejudice, either justified or unjustified, but the overall impression the Roma community makes leads more to negative prejudice.” (Woman, 29, Bratislava)

➤ Aggression of some groups toward Roma (e.g.: Skinheads)

“There are various groups /Skinheads/, which attack those Roma because they have a different colour of skin, they in fact do not need a real reason.” (Woman, 18, Nitra)

Less often the respondents stated the problem of the existence of segregated communities, so called “settlements“ with a typically low quality of living, low hygienic standard, serious shortages in health situation, alcoholism, criminality and usury.

➤ Segregated communities, settlements

„Settlements. That’s really something I can’t understand it whatsoever; how can they live or want to live there or they don’t really mind? They don’t do anything to change it. That mentality is maybe their biggest problem or the stubbornness.” (Man, 26, Bratislava)

“For example those ghettos, where they live. They have no contact and they don’t make contact with any majority. Neither infrastructurally or other any other way.” (Man, 29, Bratislava)

➤ Housing (low quality of housing caused by the attitude to the housing provided)

“Regarding housing, they got Lunik IX. I think that even if they get quality housing, as they have in their nature, they will simply damage it, demolish it And that dirt, smell.” (Woman, 44, Kosice)

Respondents (mainly the older ones) tend to find the reason of the problems in what they call the passiveness of the Roma, lack of interest; they even speak about the inability of Roma to adapt (in the most extreme ratings). To a small extent they tried to explain bad living conditions of a very big group of the Roma population, pointing to their internal disunity and conflicts within their community.

➤ Passiveness, lack of interest, inadaptability of Roma

“Today we are taking such precautions that we finance them from various funds. They have done everything for them. They don’t go there. The ability to adapt. It is given by the history, because they are nomads. These ones are only used to talk and talk. They even have spokespersons today. From Strasbourg. But why should we do something for somebody, who doesn’t do a stroke of work?” (Man, 32, Kosice)

“I have to say that gypsies are the children of nature and they haven’t adapted to our style of life yet. There is no point in living in hostels when they can’t keep house. They think that money is what the nature has given to them. ‘Money grows so I’ll pick some.’ Now they have money so they spend it, drink it all, they go to a shop to buy a bottle of wine and the cheapest chocolate to satisfy children. That’s where the problem is. And that causes unemployment. One must beat a child to the point it becomes half-invalid because it means extra income and unfortunately they torture their children and make invalids of them.” (Woman, 54, Poprad)

➤ Disunity of Roma community

“They are not cohesive among each other.” (Man, 47, Poprad)

- **Most of the respondents speak about everyday contact with Roma, they stated various experience both positive and negative; the negative ones prevailing. Such experience significantly contributes to (mostly not good) “internal picture” of the Roma, their further perception and opinion of this minority in Slovakia.**

All respondents have experience with Roma, including Bratislava (where their presence is less perceptible). In Bratislava the respondents concurred that the situation is different than in other towns; more favourable. But still, some respondents shared their experience, which had significantly influenced their not very positive opinion of Roma. (Respondents mentioned also “very memorable” experience from their childhood, which had left a literally “inerasable” trace.)

“In our block of flats for example we had three Roma families. They occupied three flats. One family consisted of thirty members living in one flat and when we as children went out, our parents had to take us out of the gate through them, there we played and then our parents picked us up. If they didn’t do so, they (the Roma) either beat us or they stole our snacks or emptied our school bags and threw all the things around. But always it was because we are white and we do something to them, they spitted on us or they did such things to us.” (Woman, 23, Bratislava)

“I also have a personal experience. When I was at primary school I shared a desk with one Roma. He constantly disturbed, he took my exercise book and draw pictures in it. Then when a teacher gave me a question I didn’t know anything because I was keeping eye on him, I got an E but then the teacher made me change my seat. Fortunately.” (Peter, 29, Bratislava)

“I also had girl-classmates, who were Roma and I don’t know if it was just a coincidence but they all ended up in a special school for problematic children so there probably is a problem somewhere. They don’t feel like studying. Their family never led them to it. This is maybe the reason of my prejudice, we all have something. In

my neighbourhood I meet mostly the adaptable ones. I meet Roma who are “normal”. When I meet the aggressive ones I better move on.” (Man, 22, Bratislava)

“I don’t meet them much now. But there was a time when they moved into our block. Our block had always been very decent; the walls had been beautifully clean. After a few months they were all scratched, the windows were broken, you could find excrements there, that’s what it was like.” (Man, 22, Bratislava)

In other towns the respondents experience intensive contact with Roma every day. Respondents know Roma from their neighbourhood, work or their children go to work with them. Experience differs, from the positive ones to the extremely negative ones – a physical attack (in Kosice). Selected examples:

“I don’t know, I work with one Roma woman and I don’t have any problems with her. But you can’t see that she’s a Roma. I don’t know how the others would react if they knew that she is a Roma.” (Woman, 24, Nitra)

“I don’t have any problems with the decent ones. I lived close to them and they were absolutely good.” (Woman, 26, Kosice)

“I get on a public transport, theirs is stuffy air so I open a window and a gipsy says to me: ‘Hey, you white, do you think I smell?’ So it’s not only our attitude, they also express objections toward us. I also have unbelievable problems with attacks. They wander around the housing estate, they dope, walk around with big dogs, rob people, and that is a common day in here.” (Woman, 25, Kosice)

“There is a little gipsy outside the shop asking people for some money to buy a roll. I usually do one thing: ‘Do you want some money for a roll? You know what? I’ll bring you one.’ But once a little gipsy asked me for some money to buy an exercise book. So I told him ‘Come with me and show me which exercise book you need.’ And the child said: ‘I don’t need an exercise book I want money.’” (Man, 58, Kosice)

“I meet Roma at work every third day. I also only ignore it. We have one Roma there and if I told him at 6 in the morning ‘Go and check something for me’ he would call me at 6:20 ‘yes, I’ve checked it, it is ok’. And fifteen minutes later the supervisor would call me that the machine stopped and who had checked it. We do it every third day and there is always a problem. And nobody does anything about it.” (Man, 32, Kosice)

Respondents declare that similar experience is widespread even in their closer or wider social networks (relatives, friends, acquaintances).

Respondents create (or rather confirm) their opinion of Roma mainly based on every day contact with different representatives of this ethnic. From the reactions of respondents we can feel that when they judge the Roma they base their judgement on negative experience with them (often confirmed by selected media information and experience of their friends, acquaintances or relatives). At the background of these attitudes we can also see an “inherited, historical” experience with this ethnic in the course of long decades.

- **The projection of a closer contact with a Roma: “What will be the first thing that crosses my mind? I will hold on to my purse and a mobile. ... If he/she looks suspicious. “Reactions can also be less negative. The basis for the “reaction choice” is mostly a visual assessment of the appearance of the Roma but also the fact if the respondent knows the person.**

The idea of a model situation of a closer contact with a Roma (e.g.: meeting on a bus) arouses a spontaneous reaction of fear in a respondent, in case the person, based on visual assessment looks “suspicious” („he/she only looks for something to steal“). However, the respondents agreed that their reaction is just the same when they come in a close contact with a “suspicious” non-Roma.

In case of a contact with a Roma, who “looks normally, just like us”; the reaction is not different from meeting a common non-Roma. Even more intensive it is when meeting a Roma “if I know them and they are decent – I even say hello to them”. In total, however, despite a slightly selective attitude, strong feeling of threat and fear (from thefts or verbal or physical attack). And so “if I can I rather avoid them.”

“I automatically reach for my mobile and purse. That’s my reflex. Especially when I don’t know them. After some time it’s ok; when I know that nothing happened to me, but I don’t know. I am alert.” (Man, 27, Bratislava)

“They have stolen my first mobile, and I hope that the last one too; on a bus. It was a Roma, so I’ve been careful since then. When I’m close to a Roma I leave and I do the same when there’s a suspicious white person. When it is in a shop or in a bigger distance, I judge more by his/her appearance. If it is bad, I think about what the person does, that he/she might be a criminal.” (Man, 29, Bratislava)

“It depends on what radiates from them when you look at them. It can be a white person and I can think that he/she is bad. It happened to me, one evening I met a person who was white but he radiated something negative and I guessed it right. It’s hard to say.” (Woman, 27, Bratislava)

“If I was a merchant and they are in my shop, I would watch out. Or when they get on a bus, so watch out for your purse.” (Man, 20, Nitra)

“It depends what impression this person has on me. If he/she is clean, decent, maybe in a suit and a jacket or if it is a person, who’s only looking around for something to steal or he/she is smelly. It depends on the person.” (Woman, 22, Nitra)

“I better move somewhere else. It depends what they look like. Because there are also the decent ones. If they say hello I do too. Even now when I meet them in Kosice I greet them. I think there are also the decent ones among them.” (Woman, 49, Kosice)

“I hope they don’t sit next to me... But when they are on the bus, their hygiene - it’s disgusting and once I almost fainted there But it depends, from a man to man.” (Woman, 54, Poprad)

“I don’t do anything when I meet the ones I know. But the ones I don’t know I send to hell. You never know what they like on you. One must really watch out.” (Man, 47, Poprad)

- **Only a “decent Roma” the one who is educated, goes to work, looks after family and children is acceptable, either as a new neighbour, colleague at work or a classmate of “my” children. In case of a close contact with the others – “indecent” ones can result in leaving (work, moving away, etc.)**

Respondents react similarly in case of projection of having a Roma as a potential neighbour or a colleague at work. “It depends what he’s like.” Respondents approach the Roma community differently and speak about “decent” or “adaptable” and “indecent” or “inadaptable” ones. In case of a close contact with the latter ones – “inadaptable” ones, the problem begins. This problem can result in leaving work or moving away.

“I think that all these situations, we can’t judge straightaway and say that they are bad. I don’t know what the Roma will be like in the particular situation. If the Roma are vandals, we will react accordingly but the word Roma doesn’t necessarily mean that you’re bad. This is how I see it.” (Man, 22, Bratislava)

“If they moved in our block, I don’t know. It would depend on what kind of people they are, because the first impression tells us if they are decent or indecent. And if they were indecent, it would be a huge problem. Normal white people would move away for sure. And it would be a problem to move in there, sell a flat. It’s not possible, you know. Nobody would buy it there.” (Woman, 24, Nitra)

“If I could compare it, if somebody told me that Roma would move into my neighbourhood, one gets scared straightaway because they represent the bigger negative group. Maybe it’s only the first feeling if I asked anyone who would like to have a lot of Roma in their neighbourhood. But I think that I would definitely not be happy if a lot of Roma moved into my neighbourhood.” (Man, 27, Nitra)

“One knows where they belong. They are decent as you could hear here already. They are educated, go to work, and take care of family and children.” (Man, 47, Poprad)

- **In spontaneous associations negative perception of Roma in Slovakia prevails in general. As for Roma the respondents know personally, the picture is a little more positive. It seems that it tells us a lot about a real contact of the majority with Roma minority in every day life: “the ones I meet are different but quite “decent” but I do not want to have anything to do with the other ones.”**

Respondents were supposed to form spontaneous associations and state some general characteristics of Roma on a sheet of paper. Roma as a whole are, based on these spontaneous associations, perceived mainly in negative light.

More than 2/3 of associations (28 out of 41) ranked on the first place (top of mind) are negative. On the first place respondents spontaneously mentioned the attribute ‘inadaptability’, from other characteristics there were carelessness, laziness, criminality, unemployment, dirt, smell, intolerance, importunateness, illiteracy and deception. From the positive attributes on the first place the respondents ranked music or musical talent, sporadically also openness, temperament and spontaneity. From the neutral attributes we can mention for example vicious circle, dark skin, difference from the surroundings and life style (see the complete list of associations in the appendix).

Overall situation in spontaneous associations is even less favourable. Almost 8 out of 10 attributes carry a negative charge. The most negative is the generation 30+ and the most positive regarding Roma community are younger respondents mostly from Nitra and Kosice.

“The Roma I know” are “different” but they are different than most of Roma. Even their perception is more positive than the perception of the Roma community as a whole. Almost a half of these spontaneous associations at first place (top of mind) represent positive ratings, such as openness, communicativeness, good manners, education, intelligence, decency, respect toward others, adaptable, hardworking, parental care, lively, tolerant.

Similar situation was in the overall rating, almost a half of all associations carry positive denotation. Most positive ratings were stated by respondents from Kosice (both older and younger) and from Poprad.

Associations, which represent more negative experience, correspond with negative perception of Roma as a whole, e.g.: aggressive, alcoholism, little education, inadaptable, mess, noise, dirt, criminality, alcohol, etc. (see the complete list in the appendix).

- **Discussion corresponds with perception of Roma based on associations. Very often we heard about a “selective attitude” toward Roma and respondents often operated with the words such as “adaptable and inadaptable” and they concurred in the opinion that most of Roma in Slovakia can be categorized as “inadaptable”.**

In Bratislava respondents were thinking about a different culture, specific for the Roma community and different from the major society, which forces the majority community “live different way than we do.” They reflect the separateness of the Roma community, which leads Roma to reproduction of negative behaviour examples. Sporadically the respondents appreciated honesty and openness as features characteristic for the Roma community. Respondents rated also the Roma they are in contact with or they know and regard it a positive experience.

»General rating of the Roma community«

“I believe that if a white baby was born into a Roma family, in the same conditions in which they live, it would be very much like them. But there’s still a big question mark for me; that the Roma in most of the world are similar, that it is the question of culture that they only found themselves in a different culture where they can live.” (Man, 29, Bratislava)

“They are the way they are. It’s the matter of parental education. If one grows up in such environment, they will see the same thing all the time and will not be different. This is the way they have been taught, they know it is good. We, who live differently in different families, have been brought up in a different way. I think that Roma, if they were elsewhere, outside the Roma family, away from their parents, I think that the children could grow up normally. Unless they were discriminated by the society because of the colour of their skin. The way they live, they way they are, they have their culture, openness and they speak their minds. They say anything they think, see or hear.” (Woman, 22, Bratislava)

»The Roma I know«

“My parents, probably due to seasonal work, have been employing one Roma for about five or six years. He’s something about my age and I have to say that they can rely on him on 100% and he’s given all the trust. And when I meet him somewhere in the town I have no problem to talk to him. I approach him as any other men. Maybe sometimes some white men are not like him.” (Woman, 29, Bratislava)

“We also had one Roma helper, he used to lend us some tools so he is in fact absolutely normal and we don’t think about it. We greet him and we always give him some soup or a beer.” (Woman, 23, Bratislava)

In other towns the opinions were more decided, respondents had a tendency to select Roma more to “adaptable” and “inadaptable” ones. Roma as a whole are assigned more negative characteristics, which are connected with “the inadaptable ones”. As this is the group that represents the majority of the Roma population, such generalization is not surprising. They are “different”, “have no interest in integration”, “they don’t want to work”, “they have many children and don’t take care of them well”, “they steal” ... The Roma, who respondents know from a personal experience, are quite often perceived as something “better” from this community, they are the “decent” ones, who show an interest to “live like us”, they are educated, they work and look after family.

»General rating of the community«

"I think that in general Roma aren't integrated. They are mostly in some groups. Hats off to the exceptions! There are a few Roma like that but they live more separately in some blocks or so. And I think that it's also because of their mentality because they all also don't get on very well." (Man, 27, Nitra)

"I think that there are Roma, who integrate themselves but they are mostly those mixed ones. The real Roma, I wouldn't agree that it is possible to make them work. I think that they wouldn't work even if they fell to the very bottom of poverty, because they more or less live in not very good conditions anyway. There are things that are hard to understand, what they can do. There were cases that they pricked their child's eye only to get child allowance and we are still talking about the more civilised Roma here, who live in a town." (Woman, 22, Nitra)

"I want to close this topic with two sentences. There are more of them now. They reproduce. They had much more advantages in the past. They don't do anything to get them back. They prefer stealing."

(Woman, 44, Kosice)

"Also in our society there are those, who are adaptable and try to live decently and integrate. And they also live in villages, not in settlements, but they bought little houses in villages. They are adaptable. From time to time they steal something but so do the white people do, you can't lump them all together." (Woman, 54, Poprad)

»The Roma I know«

"I can also say that I had a girl classmate at school. You could see that she had those special manners but she was trying to integrate somehow. She didn't give us the reason to discriminate her, she was simply trying." (Woman, 18, Nitra)

"I have no problem with the decent ones; I lived in their neighbourhood but they were absolutely good."

(Woman, 26, Kosice)

"One knows where they belong. They are decent as it was said here. They have education, they go to work and they look after their family and children." (Man, 47, Poprad)

"I knew one gipsy family. This boy came from a family where mother wasn't very educated. But his father was a musician. But from all the five children, it was this classmate of mine who got to University. And he left with his wife to live and work in Canada. There are exceptions. But as I say, there are only a very few of them."

(Woman, 44, Kosice)

- **According to the respondents vast majority of Roma is not integrated. On the contrary, an integrated Roma is considered an exception. Respondents think that Roma are not interested in the integration into the majority society and that they like it the way it is. They repeatedly declare that Roma live and "want to live" from the benefits of the majority society. The integration of the Roma is perceived as the only solution to their problems but the initiative must first come from the inside of the Roma community.**

Roma are not integrated and according to the respondents, their interest in integration into the majority society is minimal, either because they "don't know what the integration is" or "it is convenient for them to live from the benefits of others". Respondents speak about separateness of this community and unwillingness to take over the examples of the majority society. Roma do not even allow some individuals, who are interested in integration, to tear from the community. In the discussion the integration is often perceived as a possible way how to solve problems of the Roma community. It is expected though, that the initiative will come mostly from the side of the Roma. "They must be the ones, who start."

“I think that they don't want to integrate. ... I think that they like to keep this easiness of being.” (Woman, 29, Bratislava)

“I have this model, but not only for Roma but for all people. ‘I can't help you if you don't want it yourself’. If they don't want and don't do that step, we can't help them because we can't do all the work if they don't want it to come. It's not possible.” (Woman, 23, Bratislava)

“It is convenient for them. They don't make any secrets about it.” (Woman, 22, Nitra)

“In my opinion, if they wanted to integrate they would have to integrate into life. They would have to start to work, they would have to pay the bills and it is simply not convenient for them. They only want others to give them things and look after them. ‘We live here, have nothing, so look after us.’” (Woman, 24, Nitra)

“They have no idea what integration is, they don't even think about such things. As we always talk about the integration of Roma or some cultivation. Now we are not speaking about all of them but about the vast majority. They have nomad kind of life in their blood, ‘here we use all the supply and we will move on.’ And they were used to get the things, so they got them. And now they have used it all and now they want to move on. Or something like that.” (Woman, 27, Kosice)

“In my opinion they don't want to. Because they get everything for free. What they get is enough for them. To survive. And they are not motivated. They are used to the fact that the state gives them something. And they send their children out to beg.” (Man, 60, Kosice)

“No, they are not interested in integration. The better ones have already integrated, they live decently. But the others, not at all ... They were spoiled by the money they got for nothing. ... I think that we have spoiled them because also the Roma women got it and only a few of them worked. They excused them that they hadn't had a chance to work but they get the dole now. They get money for their children and even the woman, who has never worked, gets the dole. She has right for it. Now they say “look after us”. “Give us the money and look after us.” (Woman, 39, Poprad)

- **Prevailing feeling on the side of non-Roma respondents is that the Slovak society approaches Roma equitably. They say that Roma have equal opportunities with the non-Roma. In the subjective comparison Roma with non-Roma we could see some kind of feeling of “grievance/injustice” that the society takes care of Roma more than of non-Roma, even “more than they deserve.”**

Prevailing feeling on the side of non-Roma respondents is that the Slovak society approaches Roma equitably. They say that Roma have equal opportunities with the non-Roma. Moreover there are no “official” (e.g.: legislative) efforts to discriminate Roma – „they have the same chances as we do if they want to use them”. There has been an opinion that Roma get the same support as the non-Roma but because Roma are often in a worse social situation than non-Roma, they get “more intensive support”.

“I think that everyone gets a chance and whether they use it, it only depends on them.” (Woman, 27, Bratislava)

“But in my opinion, we want the state to look after Roma but the state would also look after the white people but they don't get to such situation very often, because it simply doesn't happen to them because they have some responsibility. But it's not that the state wouldn't look after the white people in such situation. I don't think so because we don't have laws here that would be discriminating.” (Woman, 22, Nitra)

In more extreme ratings there has been an opinion that this society looks after the Roma more than after the non-Roma, that they are somehow “preferred”, that they “get a better care” especially when it comes to the support in social need - social welfare, housing etc. Sometimes the respondents expressed a feeling of “the system injustice” ‘The state always looks after the Roma, not after me; I have to look after myself.’ ”

“I don’t know. Probably individually everyone acts more negatively but the society is trying more positively and sometimes they even excuse them.” (Woman, 24, Bratislava)

“Maybe they (the state) sometimes even spoil them.” (Man, 20, Nitra)

“Probably the society has taught them this way that when a non-Roma comes and can’t find a job, they can’t say anything. But if a Roma can’t get a job, it is discrimination. Ok, hats off for the exceptions. But mostly it is so, Roma – discrimination, non-Roma – everything OK.” (Man, 25, Nitra)

“Toward Roma absolutely comforting, absolutely good. The solution Slovakia is offering is too much ... The state gives them too much. Social welfare. Flats. Who gives a flat to us – the young people? And I would appreciate it for example, I wouldn’t damage it all, I wouldn’t sell it off.” (Woman, 30, Kosice)

“We shouldn’t give them so much if they can’t give us anything in return.” (Woman, 44, Kosice)

4. THE GOVERNMENT AND THE ROMA

- **Opinions if life of Roma in Slovakia got better or worse vary: one part of respondents think that the situation got worse, about the same number of respondents believe that the situation got better. Worse situation is perceived mainly in the area of social welfare, employment and healthcare. Better situation of Roma respondents associate with better opportunities to travel or more freedom to decide about their lives. When discussing these questions the respondents expressed a significant feeling of “grievance/injustice”.**

The number of respondents, who have the feeling that the life of Roma in Slovakia got worse is approximately the same as the number of the ones, who think that it got better. The respondents stated the reference point for comparison the “previous regime” or the period before the year 1989. Sporadically they also reflect the latest social policy reform (2004), namely lowering the financial support (social welfare), which significantly affected mostly the Roma.

When discussing this topic, quite often the respondents expressed a significant feeling of injustice. Strongly embedded idea that the state provides Roma with “more care” than the non-Roma evokes negative reactions and rejection.

»Downgrade«

Respondents think that Roma were socially more secured during the past regime, mainly with higher social benefits and income from regular jobs but also better healthcare. Sporadically respondents reflect the latest social policy reform (2004), representing great cuts in social welfare. This reform has strongly affected mainly the Roma.

“I can’t judge it but I think their life got worse. Socialistic state subsidised them much more.” (Woman, 29, Bratislava)

“There was no tuberculosis before. And now ... And there is hepatitis causing epidemics. And sexual diseases.” (Woman, 40, Kosice)

“Maybe socially the situation got worse in some groups. Back in 1989 it was better. They had to earn the money, now they get them for nothing.” (Woman, 35, Poprad)

“During the socialism they had to work. If they didn’t, bye, bye, no discussion, it was their duty. Now they say: ‘they wouldn’t give us work, we are gipsies, and I won’t work’ It was ok for them but now they decreased their dole. But before, how many children they had that much money they got. They had five or six children, they lived like kings. Normal people had two children. They struggled, they could hardly pay for the rent, and they didn’t even have a flat. I think they spoilt them too much. And now they finally do something about it, but what we had here before would probably never come back.” (Woman, 24, Nitra)

»Improvement«

The respondents associate the improvement of the situation of Roma with new opportunities to travel, more freedom, “freedom” to make decisions about one’s life and moreover, alongside with the change of the regime the obligation to work was cancelled (if someone did not work during the past regime they ended up in jail).

“They can travel. They are better off now.” (Man, 27, Bratislava)

“They can even complain now, they have freedom. They don’t have to work.” (Woman, 23, Bratislava)

- **Helping the Roma issue evokes contradictory reactions. In general respondents concurred that it is important to deal with the Roma issues, they are also aware of seriousness of the problems cumulating in this community and they also reflect a problematic co-existence of majority and minority. However, the tools that are chosen should be more effective (e.g.: directed material support). Positive discrimination tools for solving the Roma issues have been strictly rejected. Quite often we could hear doubts regarding the possibilities to help Roma effectively or the sense of the help in general.**

Respondents have concurred that we have to deal with the Roma issue, they are aware of the seriousness of the problems cumulated in this community; they reflect problematic co-existence of the majority and minority. However, Roma should not be excluded from the group of other people in need; we shouldn't apply "different" approach because it would inevitably discriminate the others. Respondents spontaneously shifted the debate about the help for Roma to the positive discrimination, which all of them rejected. There's simply "no atmosphere" for such measurements in Slovakia.

"I think that both Roma and non-Roma are poor Slovak citizens, so they should get the same. Otherwise one side would be discriminated." (Man, 25, Nitra)

Respondents from the east of the country (Kosice, Poprad) concluded that it is necessary to help Roma. However, they have a feeling that the method and tools, which have been used so far (mostly the system of support via financial benefits) were ineffective. Respondents suggest modifying the form of help, e.g.: to more addressful form (groceries, school tools, boarding schools).

"They (the state) invest a lot into them (Roma) but I think that the finances are given wrong way. The money they give them for social welfare, they should give them somewhere else. And not that they give them money for nothing and they have everything. The children, who live in the big settlements, for example. There's no chance that they will buy an exercise book for them and with that exercise book they would come to school only two or three times anyway. If they made some lockers at school so they could leave their things over there. This is just a primitive example." (Woman, 27, Kosice)

"I think they should be helped. Not financially but addressly. I always say to the little children 'what are you doing?' Racist or no racist. Boarding schools or I don't know what. I can't judge that, there are experts for that. Addressly. No money. To children." (Man, 59, Poprad)

At the background of respondents' statements we could often sense some doubts regarding the meaning of helping Roma. It seems to them that even now Roma are being helped quite a lot, or even "more than the others (minorities)", but situation is not getting better anyway. They say that the help to Roma minority is not only "not appreciated enough" but maybe even "misused". There is a lack of initiative on the side of Roma, their real interest in using the provided help to the benefit of their personal growth or improvement of their status. Otherwise, it is only one-way, inefficient "waste of money".

"I think that Roma are helped enough. Considering that they absolutely don't respect the help. They don't appreciate it." (Woman, 24, Bratislava)

"It's that they can't appreciate it. Maybe I'm exaggerating but I earn the money she gets on dole. And she doesn't even think of going to work instead. If she gets one or two thousand more, she won't appreciate it, that she could earn more. They don't want to change. Hats off for the exceptions. But they have no interest and they don't appreciate it." (Woman, 35, Kosice)

"There is positive discrimination here. There's no doubt about it. They have been given more than the other minorities. We shouldn't give them so much. If they can't give anything in return." (Woman, 44, Kosice)

- **Responsibility for help to Roma community is assigned to everyone – „ both them and us“. However, the help is help only if the other side accepts it. Respondents repeatedly emphasize the need of interest on the side of Roma - „we can help them only if they want us to“. However, respondents hardly speak about the need to open up to the Roma minority. In a deeper discussion respondents talked about the responsibility on the side of the government/state, non-government organisations, Roma intelligentsia but also the church active in Slovakia.**

In many groups the question who should be responsible for solving the Roma issue initiated discussion mostly about the sense of providing help. Younger respondents concurred that help is needed in this case, but any help needs a provider and recipient, only then it makes sense, only then there can be results. Based on the context it is not surprising that respondents express themselves in general categories – “Roma themselves are responsible”, or “We are all responsible”.

When respondents speak about the responsibility of Roma they mostly discuss their willingness or interest to change the present state and most of them believe that this is missing. On the other hand respondents do not speak about the need to open up to the Roma or to be more responsive to the solving of the problem. Respondents’ statements remain more on the general level, stating the need of a partner-like attitude (“even in marriage there are always two responsible”) or participation of both parties in the solving of the problem (mostly younger respondents).

“They must want it. Why should they get everything? If I get everything I won’t appreciate it. I also appreciate money that I earn. It’s not like when I was getting the pocket money. Then I squandered everything. But now, when I earn money, I can appreciate it more. But if they don’t want it we can try as much as we can.” (Woman, 27, Bratislava)

“I think that we can’t help somebody who refuses help. You can think of anything but that person doesn’t give a damn.” (Woman, 25, Kosice)

“My idea is that it should be partner-like. It doesn’t matter if it is on the community, town or regional level. The question was who should help them. For me the help means that I offer it and someone accepts it. That’s help. If I offer and the other side doesn’t accept it, then it’s not help.” (Man, 27, Bratislava)

“In my opinion both sides – both Roma and the society or those, who make laws and politics. Because also in marriage the blame is on both partners, so the laws are wrong, so there should be a change on both sides. They should want and the laws should enable the change to those who want to change. If they want to do something so they can do it and the ones that are lazy, so let them be where they want to be. So both sides should be responsible for it.” (Man, 27, Nitra)

The situation with older respondents is strongly pessimistic. They talked about lack of interest on the side of Roma; they even spoke about “insolvability” of the Roma issue. Their opinions carry strong tendency toward resignation. They believe that too much effort has been made on the side of the majority to solve the Roma issue with no significant results. They believe that any further efforts will result in the same results in the future. They are afraid of misuse of the resources spent and the respondents are also sceptical regarding the possibility to achieve any positive results “because of the Roma themselves” – the dominating statement was: “Roma will always be Roma, nobody and nothing will ever change them”.

“It is somehow given. This problem has been here for so long and it is insolvable. And how much money went to it! Roma activists drove fancy cars. They misuse everything. You can understand their mentality only if you are one of them, the one who got somewhere. But the one doesn’t acknowledge them. The minister Orgovanova, for example. When did she touch a child with louses? She doesn’t go among them.” (Woman, 44, Kosice)

“Just like the America hasn’t changed the Indians, we will not change them; we are strange if we want to change them. For them we are only strange “gadzos” as they call us, the gadzos who try to do something they don’t need. They are simply not interested. They are simply the ethnic that is absolutely satisfied with that kind of life and we are the strange ones, who are trying to do something about it.” (Woman, 39, Poprad)

“Roma will always remain Roma, even if they had blue eyes and a Detva folk costume on.” (Man, 52, Poprad)

➤ Institutions: Government/state vs. NGOs

During the discussion we tried to gain a list of competent subjects, which should be responsible for solving the Roma issue. However, there have been doubts whether the state or government should “again” be responsible. The idea is that if the central government solves it, legislative changes will have to be adapted and in the end it will be necessary to adapt “anti-discrimination legislation”. Respondents do not find this solution very acceptable. The reason of their rejection is the feeling that the others – mostly non-Roma – would be discriminated. Spontaneously respondents suggested for them more acceptable alternative to make nongovernment organisations responsible.

“In my opinion there should be some institutions, which would deal with the education, re-education, maybe from an early age of those Roma. Not the state ones, though, because as soon as you make it on a legal base, it could look like discrimination. ... So probably something more like nongovernment organisations.” (Woman, 22, Nitra)

“Who gave you education? The state made many things possible for us. Just look at it, the state will pay for this ethnic. ... But how can we make them do, what we did?” (Man, 32, Kosice)

The government’s role in this process invokes doubts. In the further discussion whether the state or government should invest more resources to solve the Roma issue, respondents react rejectively. Helping “yes” but equally to everyone and not to prefer one group of inhabitants to another one. Roma should not be supported more or less than other groups (either minorities or poverty threatened people) from one reason – “it is always discriminating” even in case of Roma it would be “a positive discrimination”, the result would still be discrimination of someone else (e.g.: poor non-Roma).

“I don’t think that helping only Roma is just. There are also white families where parents are jobless, they also have no roof over their heads and they don’t get anything. Why should we give someone and not give the other ones?” (Woman, 27, Bratislava)

➤ Church

Older respondents in the east of Slovakia (in Kosice and Poprad) spontaneously thought also about a potential role of church (catholic or evangelic). Respondents have the feeling that work with Roma creates conditions for missionary work. It is church that is perceived as a subject, which can introduce positive behaviour examples or by majority “more acceptable” behaviour examples and bring motivation and interest in bigger integration on the side of Roma.

“I think that everything has been given to them once. And no results. Maybe only if we showed them love. Church could look after that.” (Woman, 35, Kosice)

“They should work more with those gypsies than preach and talk about Roma. ... They are very scared. They are heroes when they are in a group. It is connected with that church, they are very afraid, church could give them religion. ... Church scares them that they will go to hell and they are scared. So somehow they definitely could make them study or keep the hygiene. This way. Because they will believe more to church that God is watching them.” (Woman, 54, Poprad)

➤ Roma intelligentsia, Roma activists

In the system of effective help to solve the Roma issue, respondents assign a significant role to Roma themselves. It is important so that Roma, who have achieved something and who are interested in the Roma community and want to enhance it, urge solving the Roma issue. Respondents speak about educated Roma or “Roma intelligentsia” but also various Roma activists. They have also noticed some so called Roma assistants, who work directly in Roma communities. Respondents believe that these are exactly the people, who can address Roma in a bigger extent than the non-Roma mostly because they are people “from their own ranks”. They could serve a positive example to other Roma and at the same time they can communicate more openly with the Roma than non-Roma could. However, respondents perceive presence of some kind of distance of the so called Roma elite from the poor majority and mostly lack of interest in solving the problems of the community on their side.

“Maybe someone who’s also a Roma and educated, simply someone who shows a lot of interest. They should lead them because I think they will follow the one who’s also a Roma and not a white person.” (Woman, 18, Nitra)

“The only way leading to success is to make them understand life and change their perception of life and the Roma assistants could explain it to them. So through them because if we send them to school and they will be taught by the white people, in a moment they will prefer buying vodka from Ukraine.” (Man, 18, Kosice)

“There are a few of them. And even those, who emerged from this Roma community hardly ever come back. It’s like they break all the contacts once they have achieved something.” (Man, 58, Kosice)

- **Separateness of the majority society toward Roma has shown especially when talking about a concrete help to Roma personally – “from my side“. Respondents could only hardly imagine what in particular they or people from their neighbourhood could do for the Roma living in their neighbourhood. More positive signals could be found only among younger respondents. Only they were able to verbalize also more concrete proposals how to help or become more open to Roma in their neighbourhood. Older respondents have mostly remained silent when asked this question.**

A projective question ‘how could you personally help Roma from your neighbourhood’ invokes mainly confusion. Older respondents (30+) go through this question with obvious silence or very general formulation connected with criticism and refusal regarding the sense of helping Roma. More concrete ideas only came from the side of younger respondents. They were thinking about tutoring children from neighbourhood, working with children in their free time or offering them work opportunity in the form of housework help, “casual work” in some light building work (flat reconstruction, building a house, etc.) or work in the garden.

“For example me as a student, I could teach little children to read, write or basic things like that.”

(Woman, 19, Nitra)

“It is very difficult but I think what would really help them is some individual work with this community. Maybe we could start with spending a lot of time with those children and motivate them to join in and teach them some habits.” (Man, 27, Nitra)

“No but if I could trust them I would let them wash my windows. ... Maybe some work if there was some. Maybe some casual work.” (Woman, 22, Nitra)

“If we had a garden I would have a lot of apple trees there. So some kind of afternoon action. They would help me pick them, certain amount and then if I miss something they would be in trouble. This would be my solution.” (Man, 19, Kosice)

- **Unemployment rate is widely considered to be one of the most serious problems of Roma. Respondents’ estimates corresponded with the available datum (80%) for Slovakia. The Roma unemployment rate at the level of 80% they perceive as realistic and almost “optimistic” number.**

Respondents’ estimates oscillated between 80 and 99.9% or they simply stated that “majority” or them. And so the estimate of the unemployment rate available (80%) was not surprising from them. Some respondents said that this number is still quite “optimistic” and that the reality is “even worse”.

Respondents have named several reasons for high unemployment rate of Roma: no or insufficient education, discrimination practices in the employment process but also lack of working habits or skills. All these “objective” reasons, according to the respondents, are conquered by the most important reason: “Roma do not want to work”. This “explanation” comprises all reasons such as unwillingness, lack of interest in work, impatience as well as irresponsible attitude toward duties.

“They can’t stick to anything for too long. Now, for example, we will have to work for forty years. We are aware of that and we will work that long. But they are excited only for a while and in a week they’ll leave, because there will be a conflict, something will come up and they will lose their interest.” (Woman, 23, Bratislava)

“They lack life skills.” (Man, 26 Bratislava)

“They have no basic working habits. I know that when I want to earn money, I have to get up in the morning, go to work and work there all day.” (Woman, 29, Bratislava)

“There are two of them. They don’t have sufficient skills to get a job. But some percentage is also discriminated because if they come to the office and they see them, they only say, ‘we want no gipsy’.” (Woman, 27, Kosice)

- **Integration versus isolation: Respondents, mostly the younger ones, have agreed that integration is the best solution for Roma issues and which can from the long-term point of view bring benefit for the Slovak society. However, they repeatedly emphasize that the impetus must come from the side of Roma at first place. On the other hand the proposals of possible separation, even if equality principles are applied, can only make the Roma problems worse. Such solution only supports the separateness of the community and its problems. Moreover, respondents believe that such solution is based on the discrimination principles against both minority and majority.**

Integration is perceived as the best possible way how to solve the Roma issue mostly by younger respondents. But it must be Roma themselves, who come with the effort to integrate and to “live like we do”, (not to “live among us”). The observation of the need to integrate is more on a general level in the context of “accepting the majority behaviour examples”.

Moreover, the integration is perceived more like an antipole to the existing large segregated Roma communities, which are perceived as the source of great amount of problems. Roma enclose themselves inside of their community, it is not easy to get out of them also due to cumulated “negative behaviour examples”. Respondents spontaneously suggest “integration” in the meaning of “division” of large communities (younger respondents from Kosice).

“I have one more idea about the help. Maybe we could help them if those large communities, such as Lunik IX., were broken. Because even if some of them want to be different it is not possible. So the communities should be divided.” (Man, 18, Kosice)

Roma are perceived as a part of the Slovak society and so “they should be its real part”, they should be orderly members of the society. This is the opinion of mostly smaller group of respondents “the more open set ones” (younger), who perceive integration as potential solution for the Slovak society. The reason for their thoughts is that integration brings perspective solution of the problems and in the final implication also lower costs spent on the Roma community in the future. Sporadically there have been feelings that “integration of Roma can bring us something good from the Roma culture”.

“In my opinion it would profit because we would enrich each other, maybe. I think that we have something to offer to each other and we would profit because we would have fewer social problem.” (Man, 27, Bratislava)

“So as they are a part of Slovakia now and it would be better in the future, so definitely yes.” (Woman, 22, Nitra)

“I also think that it could be better. We would not waste so many finances uselessly. We would have money left if they could earn their own money. The state wouldn’t have to pay for them.” (Woman, 24, Nitra)

“Now we have a problem that will be even bigger in ten years time and it will be hard to solve because only the Roma will be unemployed and we will solve bigger problems with unemployment and the social sphere and so on. So we could avoid bigger problems than we have now.” (Man, 25, Nitra)

Older respondents mainly from Kosice declare, based on previous discussion, mostly sceptical opinions. They speak about necessity of the interest on the side of Roma themselves. And it is interest that Roma lack, they have a feeling that Roma are comfortable with the present state and that it is easier for them only “use what the state gives them for free” as it has been until now. Based on this the respondents think that Roma will never show interest in integration. Integration might be a good solution but they don’t see a possibility of success of such “project”. As a negative example of similar efforts they set the housing estate Lunik IX. in Kosice. Sporadically they say that in the country side the situation is maybe more favourable due to smaller anonymity of non-Roma and Roma, who live there and who find the way to one another and mutual help much easier than in towns.

“In my opinion they don’t want to integrate because they get everything for free. What they get is enough for them to survive. And they are not motivated. They are used to get things from the state. And when the situation is the worst they send their children to beg. But they are not interested in adapting.” (Man, 60, Kosice)

“We have had this here before. At the start they lived in Lunik IX. together with the white people. But it didn’t help.” (Woman, 44, Kosice)

“The people from villages know them more. They help the white people. And they are different from those ones in here. If there are a lot of them, they live in anonymity and nobody knows them. If there are fewer of them they can help each other. People in the villages know them more and accept them more.” (Woman, 38, Kosice)

Similarly to the respondents in Kosice, also the respondents from Poprad reject the idea that it would be possible to solve the Roma issue successfully. They also doubt the possibility of Roma integration. They think that to integrate Roma it means “forcing them our way of life but they will not accept it”. Older respondents in Poprad have a bit more extreme opinions of this topic. They think that Roma are “different from us” and so we can hardly expect an interest in integration on their side. They believe that the integration into majority society is not at all typical for the Roma as such. They refer to the “nomad-like” nature, a principal difference when it comes to relationship to material values, “they don’t have it”. The conclusion is unambiguous: “Roma don’t want to be different and nothing will change them”. Sporadically there have been suggestions to renew the possibility to migrate (have a nomadic way of life) – “we should let them go where they want” (with the undertow to let Roma leave this country somewhere else, “let the others set things right”). However a few “sharper” suggestions opinions appeared, for example using “firm hand” to make Roma adapt, “to make them lead a decent life just like we do”.

“I think that we shouldn’t push the ones, who don’t want to. ‘So you will live here now, you will do this, you’ll go to the church in the morning when you are a believer.’ They want to migrate. They bought themselves little houses. There’s no electricity but it doesn’t matter to them. Open fire is enough. Why should they solve the poverty? This is enough for them. They don’t want more. They will not work. They know that they will get 1,200 SKK or so and that’s enough for them. Why should we push them into something?” (Man, 59, Poprad)

“I think that they are such ethnic that in no time, no people will ever get on well with. They will not accept it. It’s like if someone put me in their ethnic and told me ‘go, live with the gipsies and adapt to them’ I would never do it because I was brought up in a different way and we are pushing them our way of life and they don’t want to accept it. It is about a man himself. The one who wants to adapt will adapt and live like we do. It’s simply their mentality. They live that way and don’t want to live any other way. I’ll put it this way. You will move them to a block of flats. They will “redecorate it” to suit them better. They don’t need to have a sofa there, they don’t need anything. They need to have an open fire in the middle and that’s their way of live – nomadic kind.” (Woman, 54, Poprad)

“They are together. That is important and that’s enough for them. That’s their way of life. No era will ever change them.” (Woman, 35, Poprad)

“If the firm hand was there, it is one solution – firm hand. Either you will work and live decently or get out of here. It’s hard to control them.” (Woman, 54, Poprad)

Separation or isolation of the Roma community and providing them with an equal access to education, healthcare, resources etc., is not perceived as a just solution both for Roma and for the majority population. One side could always feel discriminated; it is more just to provide equal opportunities in one system. Moreover, the isolation can be perceived as “exclusion” of the Roma community from the society in general, creating some kind of “parallel society”, which violates the right for “freedom of choice” or equality of all citizens in the particular country.

“I also do not find it just because why we should provide one community with equality if it doesn’t exist among some white people in this society?” (Woman, 29, Bratislava)

“In my opinion it is also unacceptable because it is some kind of exclusion from the society. It is a restriction that they could live and be only on a certain place. I think they should have a right for free choice.” (Woman, 22, Nitra)

Only sporadically there have been opinions that the isolation of the Roma community, although provided with equality principles, can lead to more serious problems of Roma. In closed Roma communities we can see a “negative power”, which does not motivate the individuals to “live like us” but it pulls them even “deeper” and indoctrinates negative behaviour examples to them. However, “if they lived here with us, they would have to adapt to us”.

“If they were scattered among us the community would not have such influence on them. So an individual would have to adapt. He would try more than if he lived with the Roma. I think that it would not be right to isolate them. Despite having the same conditions for both sides. I think that there are many bad things because of the community and its power.” (Man, 27, Nitra)

5. THE DECADE OF THE ROMA

- **Awareness of activities and campaigns focused on improvement of lives of the Roma is not very high. Besides the general statement “the state is trying“, there are more, mostly local initiatives or projects. Respondents have mostly no information about institutional background of such efforts.**

Respondents only have a little information about the particular campaigns or efforts to improve the life of Roma in Slovakia. Respondents were able to name partial initiatives or projects in their town but mostly they were unable to say “who’s behind it”.

In Bratislava the respondents think about the resources from the Euro funds, which are designated for solving the Roma issue, they could think of some projects focused on work with children, either the activities of special Roma teachers or various free time activities for Roma children.

“That the state is still helping them. The state is always trying. And so are the EU funds, they always give them some money. I know that there are some Roma schools where Roma teachers teach. I think they are starting something like that in here, too.” (Woman, 24, Bratislava)

“There are many projects, for children for example, so they would not be in the streets in their free time, so they would have some hobbies or clubs. They don’t have to pay for that. They can also try to work on computers there.” (Woman, 27, Bratislava)

Younger respondents in Nitra named for example a Roma festival, which took place directly in Nitra, a hygienic educational programme for Roma women (led by a colleague from work), they remembered some non-government organisations, which work with Roma, e.g.: Nitira civic association Citizens in the Action. Sporadically they have noticed also the campaign of the People Against Racism initiative.

“I don’t know when it was; sometime about a month ago there was a Roma festival – Roma culture. They presented it quite well, they also had promotion. And the people, who went there, they could learn something.” (Man, 20, Nitra)

“When I started in the Hygiene Department, there was one section of health education and there was this lady, she’s retired now, who worked with Roma. She had a programme there; she was teaching young Roma women some hygiene, cooking and such activities in household. But unfortunately, I think it’s finished.” (Man, 28, Nitra)

“I know that some non-government organisations work with Roma. It was something like People Against Racism campaign, or something like that. I know that there is one civic association here in Nitra, which works with Roma. And there is Citizens in Action. I think that they are trying to involve the Roma or something, to publish a magazine and do something.” (Man, 27, Nitra)

Respondents in Kosice named some particular activities, for example: Christian (or church) organisation, which works with Roma children. Their project is focused on building houses in East Slovakia by Roma, publishing a Roma magazine and a CD as well as a charity collection for Roma, who were the victims of floods.

“I know one Christian organisation, which deals with Roma. One priest organises camps. Children learn different crafts there and most important is that he works with them.” (Woman, 30, Kosice)

“I only heard that they would only give them some money and they would build the houses themselves or something like that.” (Man, 18, Kosice)

"I don't know, if it is a part of a government programme but I've noticed that they had published some CDs and Roma magazines and so on. I like that they are getting better manners. But I know a lot of church organisations, which help them, also here in Kosice." (Woman, 27, Kosice)

"I have only noticed that when there were those flood, that some money went there." (Woman, 26, Kosice)

Respondents in Poprad remembered the project of building the hygienic establishments in Rudnany settlement, the work of a priest with socially inadapted citizens in village Zakovce and the Roma children chorus in Kezmarok. Respondents had tendency to rate such activities positively.

"One American built some toilets and showers for the Roma in Rudnany, but I don't know what happened in there, if it is still there." (Woman, 39, Poprad)

"One priest lives with the gypsies, in Zakovce. He has a house there and also some ex-prisoners live there with him, and so. I would say that he meets their requirements. He works with them." (Woman, 32, Poprad)

"There is a Roma children society in Kezmarok, and there are the dirty gypsies. She started to work with them. She is a Roma, she taught them that if they want to be in the chorus, they must keep the hygiene, they must be clean, they mustn't smell. ... and she did a lot of work. She achieved a lot with the group. They are the best in Slovakia and they travel the world. So it is possible but they have to start to work on themselves." (Woman, 54, Poprad)

- **Respondents mostly concur that one of the Roma problems, which needs „acute attention” is the question of improving their educational level. Education is perceived as potential “channel” of integration of Roma or at least a partial solution to many problems of Roma in Slovakia. Respondents are critical toward the participation of the state and other organisations in solving the Roma issue.**

Respondents see the solution of the Roma issue mostly in improvement of educational level in the Roma community. This is where, as they believe, lies the reason of all the problems mentioned above. They believe that we should work mostly with children because you can form them, you “can still change them”. Some opinions have appeared that many Roma projects are suggested and developed without their presence and this is one of the reasons why they end up without a significant success, regardless of if they are developed by the state or other organisations. Respondents emphasize that the activity has to emerge from the inside of the Roma community or at least the Roma should be (more) involved in the Roma projects development to make these projects really reflect their need.

"The research should be done to find out what those Roma want. It is nice. Getting money, that's what they want. They get a flat and what will it look like? They get a flat and in ten years it will fall apart. I think that their thinking should be changed. Maybe via education but not via money. It doesn't last too long." (Man, 22, Bratislava)

"I think that those organisations are also very nice. It is a great idea but it always depends on them, if they decide for it. For example schools. I can't imagine how many of those little Roma will really complete their education. It always depends on their nature, if they decide to do something or not." (Woman, 19, Nitra)

"Provide those, who want, with education. Because Roma, who are thirty are analphabets. Simply let's give them a chance to educate themselves. Then some child centres. I wouldn't let those children go back to their parents; I know it sounds very strong. But when they come from school, they go back to the old tracks ... because their parents know nothing, they dope and so on. Simply, separating children and maybe we will be able to bring something good in them." (Woman, 30, Kosice)

“Definitely our government has been spending resources inefficiently for many years. These resources are spent non-addressly. Everything is too general. In fact, a big part of the money is lost. Only a little money goes to education. We can give them the moon, build houses for them but until we invest into pre-school education we will not achieve anything. Only education makes sense.” (Man, 47, Poprad)

- **Respondents have absolutely no information about the Decade of the Roma project. None of the non-Roma respondents in all the discussion groups has ever heard of this initiative. When we introduced⁴ main goals of this initiative to them respondents were mostly sceptical. They doubted mostly the implementation and effectiveness regarding the practical results of this initiative. Most of them had a feeling that it would again be “only waste of money”, because similar efforts have been here already but “they did not lead anywhere”.**

No respondent had ever heard of the Decade of the Roma before the discussion. When provided with some information about this initiative, the respondents said they consider them too general. As they declared, based on the basic information it is “hard to make an opinion” about such big project. However, the first reactions of the respondents to the Decade of the Roma initiative are mostly doubtful and rejective. Their doubts were addressed to implementability of the project as well as its long-term sustainability and mostly effectiveness.

“I would also say no, that they don’t have access. But what we’ve heard here was much too general. The access to this or that. It depends on the form, the way you want to do it.” (Woman, 22, Bratislava)

“I find it very funny, because these propositions are totally general and maybe if they came here and saw how we live here with the Roma, they would find out where the real problems lie. They only give some points, they declare that this is what we want to achieve and let the people, who work with it to try to find the way to make it work. I think it is not fair. It’s a degradation of work of those people. Even now they are trying to work better with those Roma and make their situation better.” (Woman, 23, Bratislava)

“If they wanted to put money into it, so be it, give them money but make them do it all the way to the end. I mean, ok, go ahead and give money to some young Roma to study but make them finish the study, make them learn something. Let us have some results for the money.” (Man, 26, Bratislava)

“It looks like some kind of programme announcement of our government to me. It’s also about a lot of talking before and then 4 years later we can see no results.” (Man, 18, Kosice)

“It’s a project again. Project is something big. I’m pessimistic about it. Why should somebody from other countries tell us what we should do? How many Roma do they have and how many are they here? Nobody tells us what to do with them. They must want themselves.” (Woman, 40, Kosice)

Moreover, more respondents have a feeling that most of the things, which the Decade of the Roma should bring, e.g.: access to school, healthcare, etc., “have already been here” but did not work out (e.g.: providing flats).

⁴ According guideline: „I’d like to give you a little background on the Decade of Roma Inclusion and get your thoughts and reactions. In February, 2005 eight central European countries and a number of international institutions such as the Open Society Institute and the World Bank launched a “Decade of Roma Inclusion.” The effort is intended to improve the lives of Roma through better employment opportunities, access to education, health and housing. This effort is meant to stimulate activities in countries like ours that will advance the living standards of the Roma and ensure greater integration into our society. Each of the eight countries has a different action plan that identifies clear goals (e.g., improve education) and specific goals such as “All Roma boys and girls complete compulsory education.”“

"It seems to me that as if we were speaking about something that has already been here. But in fact they already have it so why should we make a project about something what they already have? Access to education, access to healthcare. They must realize it and use it. They also have a free access to education. Worse thing is that their school attendance for them means the first three grades and that's it." (Man, 25, Nitra)

"I think that they have been provided with all that once. And the result?" (Woman, 35, Kosice)

"Regarding housing, I think that we have given them a lot of housing already. I wouldn't go this way. I wouldn't give them money. They should try to build their own home." (Woman, 25, Kosice)

There have also been some more positive reactions of respondents but to some extent accompanied with doubts. The main ideas of the Decade of the Roma initiative have been evaluated as “a good idea” but the question remains how to “sow such a good idea into the fertile soil”, i.e. how to target the Roma, who show real interest in solving the problem. In a wider context there has been a question how can the project implementators invoke the interest of Roma. Repeatedly we hear about the problem of lack of interest on the side of Roma as the obstacle of a successful solution of the Roma issue.

“I think that it sound too positive. But if we really achieve it, that is a question. At first place, there must be a wanting on the side of those this project is directed to.” (Man, 20, Nitra)

“I am confused because there are the good ones and the bad ones here. For the good ones it is an excellent idea but who will find out, who the good ones are? And I wouldn't give it to the bad ones.” (Man, 19, Kosice)

“I think it is something very good but it will again target only a certain group of Roma, who will be addressed and the rest, which will not be addressed. It's hard to say how big the group will be.” (Woman, 39, Poprad)

“We should probably do something but the experience tells me that they will again get the money for nothing and such will be the result. The only thing we should support is the education of little children. This is where we should start.” (Man, 52, Poprad)

The question in which we are trying to find out the reaction to the amount of resources spent on the Decade of the Roma initiative, invokes mostly negative reactions and rejection. There have been concerns of misuse but also ineffective usage of the resources. There has also been a strong feeling “that once again some money will be wasted on Roma”. The respondents admit that their rejection can be based on lack of more detailed information about the Decade.

“I am against it. It would be just a waste of money. It would be half a billion in ten years.” (Woman, 27, Bratislava)

“We have heard only little information about how they want to do it. It depends what will be done in this programme, but it is still just a waste of money.” (Man, 28, Nitra)

“Based on my experience with using the capital in all spheres today I would assume they would use this money on something else.” (Man, 25, Nitra)

“They would have to make a good campaign. How they want to do it, informing about the methods and ways of using. And it would have to be something that would persuade me about its viability. If it was sophisticated then yes.” (Man, 58, Kosice)

“It will address only a few Roma, not all of them. It's hard to say if it's going to be successful or not. They lack adaptability. I don't want to say that it would be useless to do something for them but... It is a lot of money and we won't make white out of them anyway. It's not worth it.” (Woman, 39, Poprad)

“I have mixed feelings from that. We should try to do something with them, but... I have the feeling that the only ones who will again profit on it will be the leaders, who don't even go among them and lie to them.” (Woman, 54, Poprad)

Not even the introduction of more detailed goals of the Decade of the Roma initiative persuaded the respondents, on the contrary. Respondents have the feeling that almost all that these detailed goals offer, the Roma in Slovakia already have (e.g.: cheaper school lunch, scholarship at Universities, business loans). Moreover, there is a prevailing feeling that if such goals were implemented and were available only for the Roma, they would represent the positive discrimination tools. This could be in the more extreme case perceived as violation of principles of democratic society. All citizens of Slovakia should have equal chances regardless of their nationality or ethnic.

"I think that all these points are discriminating because they mean giving them better chances than the others. Everyone should have equal chances and the question only is if they can use them or not." (Woman, 25, Kosice)

"It is a non-democratic society then. Motivating only one part of the country harms the democracy of the other part. What is that all about?" (Woman, 27, Kosice)

"I don't understand why they should have more advantages than the white people. I think that there are many families like them, so why should they be given advantages? I know that there are many white families in such situation. It would be discrimination of the white people." (Woman, 32, Poprad)

The only more detailed goal that respondents "had mercy" with is "integration of some Roma culture elements into curriculum for all children". Many respondents agreed with presence of such element in the school curriculum. They have appreciated mainly the fact that in comparison with other presented detailed goals, this goal embraces the "connecting" moment because it is designated for all children, not only the Roma ones. Respondents think that "something like that could enrich both sides", it represents the possibility to learn something more about the Roma culture but it seems to be more fair toward the Roma, "they have to know all about our culture, so why couldn't we learn something about theirs?"

"I would like to learn something more about them. They also have to know everything about our culture. I would be interested in that. Regarding the language, why not, if someone is interested in learning their language, I'm not saying it should be compulsory." (Woman, 27, Bratislava)

"If the children should live with them, it is good for them to know, who the Roma really are." (Woman, 24, Bratislava)

"It is ok, it would be good. And it is for everybody, not only for the Roma children." (Man, 20, Kosice)

6. AMBASADORS OF CHANGE: VOICES TO TRUST

- **Regarding the familiarity with Roma personages/celebrities or Roma organisations, it was important in which age category the respondent belonged to. The younger respondents were able to name many Roma personages from political life as well as many celebrities from cultural or sports life. On the contrary, the older respondents have only a little knowledge in this sphere. They could only name the personages famous from the political life.**

Familiarity with the Roma leaders is among the non-Roma respondents differentiated mainly based on their age. Younger respondents have named K.Orgovanova (the mandatary of the Slovak government for the Roma community), L.Fizik (the Roma Parliament civic association) and A.Patkolo (the head of the Roma Initiative of Slovakia). As celebrities younger respondents named medially very famous talents of present time – especially from the Slovak TV music show – Superstar, namely P.Koncek and J.Suchy alias Dziga Dziga. Among others they named some personages and “groups” from the Slovak cultural life such as a musician Berki Mrenica, Kmetoband (Roma music band) or the Romathan theatre from Kosice. Sporadically the respondents named also the world champion in bodybuilding A.Cibula or a character from the Mojsejovci reality show M.Danihel alias Guru.

“Klara Orgovanova and also the Roma Parliament and Mr.Fizik.” (Man, 29, Bratislava)

“I could remember of the head of the RIS – the Roma Initiative of Slovakia but I can’t remember his name. ...Patkolo.” (Man, 18, Kosice)

“For example in the “Slovakia is looking for Superstar” there was Dziga Dziga, he was kicked out at the beginning but Koncek, he made it to the finals but I don’t know in which round he finished. Everybody knew he was a Roma and he was successful anyway.” (Man, 26, Bratislava)

“They travel the world, such as the cymbalo orchestra. I can’t remember what they are called. ... Berki Mrenica or something like that.” (Woman, 27, Bratislava)

“I think that Romathan. It was a Roma theatre from Kosice. Romathan.” (Woman, 29, Bratislava)

“I know one sportsman and bodybuilder Adam Cibula. He was the European champion and I think that also a world champion. Then he was in prison.” (Man, 26, Bratislava)

“Or also Guru from Mojsejovci, he also claims to be a Roma.” (Man, 28, Nitra)

Older respondents named mainly Roma personages famous from the public (political) life such as K.Orgovanova, L.Fizik and also A.Patkolo. From the cultural sphere they also named the Roma theatre Romathan from Kosice. The activities of the Roma politicians as well as the theatre is more criticised than appreciated. In case of the above mentioned politicians, respondents believe that they only prefer their own interests to solving real problems of Roma. In case of the theatre, one respondent talked about the problems of disunity – they had a problem to agree and in the end they paralyzed the “project”.

“Fizik. Patkolo or Orgovanova ... Well, maybe at the beginning they helped a bit. But then they only pretended their interest in the community. It is useless to pay those functions.... Only when the elections are coming the media are full of them and their interest in solutions.” (Woman, 44, Kosice)

“Romathan, the theatre. Roma theatre could do something. But certain groups have met there, which as it shows now, can’t communicate... who will play which role and so on.” (Man, 58, Kosice)

- **When choosing an appropriate leader of the „the Decade of the Roma” initiative, respondents suggested candidates mostly from the artists, either Roma singers, musicians or non-Roma actors or singers. Many respondents think that a leader of the Decade could be a person, who might not be medially famous but has achieved significant successes in work with Roma (it could be both Roma and non-Roma). It should be a person, who is accepted on “both sides of the barricade”– by both Roma and non-Roma.**

Significant generation differences have appeared also when trying to make a list of famous people, who could become the “Face” of the Decade of the Roma. Older respondents could not imagine almost anybody, who could personify this type of initiative or they simply stated that it should be someone, who works with Roma. On the other hand younger respondents repeatedly mentioned a singer Peter Koncek alias Black P (TV show Superstar), musician Berki Mrenica, Roma band Kmetoband or the Slovak reality show star Milan Danihel alias Guru (TV show Mojsejovci). Respondents named also some non-Roma actors, who they remembered from film roles personifying a Roma, for example the actor Marian Labuda and the actress Zuzana Kronerova. Many respondents spontaneously mentioned also Ibrahim Maiga – a “black” singer from Africa, who lives in Slovakia.

“Peter Koncek from Superstar for example, he’s skilled and people voted for him despite the fact that he’s Roma.” (Man, 26, Bratislava)

“I don’t know if I say his name right, but I think that Berki Mrenica or so, the most famous Roma violin player.” (Woman, 22, Nitra)

“Maybe it would be good to bring to the forefront those Roma groups, somebody from their community, to have respect. Kmetoband for example. Or that guy from Superstar Dziga Dziga or Black P.” (Man, 18, Kosice)

“It would need a Roma. Someone like Guru from Mojsejovci. He’s alright.” (Man, 28, Nitra)

“I have seen one Czech movie once, with Marian Labuda as a Roma.” (Man, 27, Bratislava)

“Zuzana Kronerova because she played a gipsy in one movie.” (Woman, 22, Nitra)

“I would say that it must be someone, it’s hard to say, who would like to do it. I think it could be Ibrahim Maiga, if he was interested.” (Woman, 27, Bratislava)

Quite often there was an opinion that the “face” of the Decade of the Roma should be a person, who works with Roma and achieves significant successes in this work despite being medially unknown. It could be both Roma and non-Roma. It is important, however, that such person should be accepted by “both parties”.

“I can imagine my friend because she works with them, she understands them and she’s trying and I think that she would be far better than anyone else. She’s been awarded once. She got a rose from them. In some Roma community that is there. So I guess they appreciate her. She was awarded by them.” (Woman, 27, Bratislava)

“A person, who works with Roma. And has achieved good results. Somebody, who is sympathetic for Roma. You’re asking us but maybe they would be angry with our choice.” (Woman, 23, Bratislava)

7. MESSAGE CONCEPTS

- In total, the submitted concepts of messages evoked mostly contradictory reactions in respondents. It was obvious in questionnaire ratings of concepts before the discussion as well as in opinions, which were expressed in the following discussion⁵. Persuasiveness of the concepts on the scale oscillated around average – middle values, none of the concepts proved to be univocally persuasive. In the following discussion respondents expressed dissatisfaction mostly with ambiguous formulation of concepts resulting in low acceptability.

The results of the evaluation of the concepts before the discussion are ambiguous; however it shows that the submitted concepts of messages are perceived rather ambivalently. The reason for such claim is the final rating, which in case of all concepts oscillates mostly around average values. Also the standard variances are high, which tells us that respondents significantly differ in their ratings. None of the submitted concepts achieved a rating, which would persuade them unambiguously. (See Tab: MESSAGE CONCEPTS)

Final ratings must be understood in the context of former discussion. Respondents are mostly negative toward any “extras” that could further be “directed” to the Roma community in Slovakia. This fact has undoubtedly reflected in the concepts rating.

Tab: MESSAGE CONCEPTS

	A. In order to become a real part of Europe...	B. Helping the Roma advance and integrate...	C. Helping the Roma is a matter of simple economics...	D. If there is one thing we must do...	E. Helping the Roma is really about...	F. The way the Roma is really about ...	G. Having a large minority population...	H. Our country is on the road...
Average Bratislava	5.7	4.3	6.4	7.0	5.6	3.6	6.6	5.6
Standev (BA)	2.65	2.24	2.92	3.20	3.36	2.65	2.4	2.46
Average Nitra	3.6	3.5	6.0	6.6	7.6	2.8	4.4	5.3
Standev (NR)	1.85	2.33	3.34	3.46	2.39	2.76	1.85	2.25
Average Kosice I (18-30)	3.6	4.0	8.0	5.9	6.0	4.0	5.6	5.1
Standev (KE I.)	1.62	3.46	1.53	2.85	0.82	3.06	1.51	2.54
Average Kosice II (31-60)	2.0	3.4	3.9	5.7	5.0	3.3	4.1	4.6
Standev (KE II.)	1.66	2.35	2.76	2.4	2.29	2.49	2.98	2.07
Average Poprad	4.4	3.1	7.1	7.8	7.1	3.0	3.8	6.5
Standev (PP)	3.34	2.85	3.44	3.62	2.95	2.33	2.38	2.33
TOTAL Average	3.9	3.7	6.2	6.6	6.2	3.4	4.9	5.4
TOTAL Standev	2.55	2.54	3.09	3.07	2.63	2.56	2.45	2.3

Note: Scale 1-10, 1=it is not a persuasive argument, 10=it is extremely persuasive
The standard variance accounts for variability of respondents' ratings.

In the following discussions the respondents concurred in the feeling that many of the submitted concepts are formulated quite contradictory.

Here are the concepts messages rating in order from the most persuasive to the least persuasive based on the score the concepts got in the rating on the 10-point scale.

⁵ Before the discussion the messages were introduced to the respondents and then the respondents were asked to rate the concepts on the scale 1 – 10, where 1 means extremely persuasive and 10 not at all persuasive. The particular concepts were rotated in the groups.

D. If there's one thing we must do, **it is to help the Roma children so that they will have the opportunities to prosper in a way that our own children have.**

This concept is accepted most positively (6.6 points) but the respondents' ratings are quite ambiguous. In this case there has been quite high variability of the answers as we can see one of the highest standard variance of 3.07.

As persuasive this project is rated by those respondents, who think that Roma children are really discriminated in the access to education and so it is necessary to help them. These respondents also see the future of the Roma community in these children and so they find it easier to accept the idea of more intensive work with them.

"I think that this statement is persuasive and I think that Roma children face discrimination." (Man, 27, Bratislava)

"They grow up in a bad community, which affects them. It's not their fault. I like this concept because it is hard to change the older ones but we have a chance to change the children, because they are not so spoilt and influenced by that yet. I think that people would accept helping children much more than helping the unemployed adults." (Woman, 22, Nitra)

"Our children have bigger possibilities. We can't criticize the Roma children for not doing anything because they can't do anything they can't do. Our children at least can see their classmates, they can copy. But Roma children have no one to learn from. So I would agree with this, despite the fact that is again discrimination, it could have influence on the future. At least to show them the vision of the future. Because they must understand that they must want. We need to show them something like an idol, just like we do it with our children, a footballer for example. And the children will want to be like him." (Man, 18, Kosice)

The reason why other respondents rate this concept as non-persuasive is that they think the Roma children have equal chances with the non-Roma children. These respondents mind that at the background of this concept they can "feel" a sign of positive discrimination, which they principally reject.

"As we said many times before, they have equal chances just like our children so I think that if they want it, they have it." (Woman, 29, Bratislava)

"They have those chances. They have a compulsory school attendance, which they don't use and of course they have opportunity to continue in their study on high schools." (Man, 20, Nitra)

"I don't like it because it's again about helping those Roma children and it is again about dividing the people." (Man, 27, Nitra)

"I think that those children have the chance. They have it just like any other white kid." (Woman, 49, Kosice)

E. Helping the Roma is really about **giving every person in our country the opportunity to achieve his/her potential.** This is the true meaning of freedom and the fall of the wall.

Just like the previous concept, also this concept saw quite high score – 6.2 points in the overall rating, which places it on the second place in the chart. We still should consider quite high internal variability of the answers – the standard variance in this case is 2.63.

This concept is persuasive mostly due to two key moments: “getting opportunity” and “developing potential”. These two moments embrace the principle of free decision about your life or using your exceptional talent. Also the respondents interpret this concept in this way. There has been an opinion that Roma “are just like us” but there’s no doubt that also Roma have “plenty to develop”. Respondents tend to associate the meaning of these words mainly with Roma children who, there’s no doubt, should have the possibility to develop their (special) talent. Again, just like in case of the previous concept, work with children is perceived meaningful and so also the submitted idea has a “flavour” of persuasiveness.

“I think that I would agree with it because if we try to work with the Roma children and provide them with the best possibilities to develop their personality, there is a great potential toward the future.” (Woman, 22, Bratislava)

“I would agree especially because of the words “get opportunity”. If they use or not, it’s up to them.” (Man, 25, Nitra)

“It is important to develop the potential in them. And then we’ll see what it’ll bring. Step by step, definitely not straight away.” (Woman, 26, Kosice)

“The meaning of freedom, even in the white community it is so, if you can’t do maths it doesn’t matter because you can do something else. Everybody is good in something else. Roma are a bit less intelligent but they have rhythm in their limbs, even before they start to walk. You can look abroad, they have those crafts, artistic skills in them, but in Slovakia, I don’t know maybe because of the treatment they get from the society, these skills are somehow suppressed.” (Woman, 27, Kosice)

The non-persuasiveness of this concept is based on the opinion that in this country there is no reason to believe that human rights are violated. So it is useless to offer them something that is taken for granted. We are getting back to the need of interest on the side of Roma: “everyone, who wants has the opportunity”, you only have to use it.

“I think that who wants will get the chance. There is no human rights violation, at least I think so. And if there is, let someone in Haag take care of that.” (Man, 28, Nitra)

C. Helping the Roma is a matter of simple economics. All taxpayers will continue to pay more in the future if we don’t do something now to truly help educate the Roma and move them out of lives of poverty, it will cost us and our children more in the long run.

Respondents rate this concept as rather persuasive; it scored 6.2 points in the rating. Unlike the previous concept its rating is internally more variable. The standard variance in this case reaches the value 3.09, which is the highest value in comparison with all other concepts. The most significant difference is in Kosice where young respondents gave the concept 8 points on average; older respondents gave it only 3.9 points on average.

The persuasiveness of this concept is, according to the respondents, based mostly on the seriousness of the situation and necessity to solve the Roma issue. They are also quite strongly influenced by the necessity of “preventive action” to avoid even worse problems.

“I agree with this statement. I can see that there will be consequences in the future.” (Man, 29, Bratislava)

“At least that feeling that if we help them now, there won’t be such problem, as they are now.” (Woman, 24, Nitra)

“It is a very clever sentence. From the future point of view it is necessary. It is the lesser evil.” (Man, 18, Kosice)

Respondents, who reject this concept, do not like its simplicity even the “first plan state” when pointing to the “simple economy of money”. At the same time they have a feeling that in certain meaning the main ideal of the concept is not very up-to-date because “even now they cost us fortune”.

“I think that this quotation is quite first planned. Maybe it would address many people but it is like something for something, it’s like doing business.” (Woman, 22, Nitra)

“It cost us a lot of money from our taxes. Common person doesn’t look at it this way. And if you sum up all the children that are seriously handicapped. If you consider all those orphanages...” (Woman, 40, Kosice)

H. Our country is on the road to prosperity. **We must make sure that this prosperity is shared by all.**

The rating of this concept oscillates somewhere around the middle value of the scale, particularly at 5.4 points (standard variance 2.30). This concept is most persuasive for respondents in Poprad (6.5 points); the least persuasive it was for older respondents in Kosice (4.6 points).

Respondents connected the persuasiveness of this concept with the emphasis on “unifying atmosphere” of the concept. It is perceived as “pure” expression of solidarity principles, participation of all “involved” ones, both majority and minority.

“What I liked about it was that the quotation didn’t divide but connected... I liked it because it is something like a slogan for a common path or something like that, I think it could address many people, not only financially but also for the good feeling that they are all involved, all the people are going one direction. This is what I liked about it.” (Man, 27, Nitra)

On the other hand they find it non-persuasive because it reminds them motives from the previous “socialistic” regime – “equally to everyone”, regardless of the performance. However, some respondents found this concept discouraging or almost “de-motivating” – “I will work and the others will enjoy the ride”. More respondents thought that such formulational idea creates a space for excusing the passiveness of Roma or their absence in efforts to improve the Roma status.

“It seems to me that the fact that we are all equal doesn’t motivate people much. There can’t be a group of people who will work and the others will only enjoy the ride. Just because they also “deserve” a good life.” (Woman, 29, Bratislava)

““We have to guarantee the benefits for every one from this prosperity”... but I don’t know why we should! It’s some kind of communistic opinion – everybody must benefit. Everyone who wants should get something from it. I wouldn’t agree with that much.” (Man, 28, Nitra)

“When we speak about the integration, we want them to be with us and to go toward the prosperity hand in hand. Not that I’ll give them and they will drink.” (Woman, 25, Kosice)

“I would only add one thing to it. All those, who did something for this prosperity. Who doesn’t work, shouldn’t eat. It is a weak argument if the Roma don’t do anything for the prosperity.” (Man, 58, Kosice)

G. Having a large minority population like the Roma living in such abject poverty and experiencing constant discrimination reflects badly on our country. I think our country can do better.

The average of the rating of this concept is on the middle level – 4.9 points (standard variance 2.45). This concept was relatively most positively accepted in Bratislava (6.6 point), on the other hand respondents in Poprad find it much less persuasive (3.8 points).

The reason of persuasiveness of this concept is, according to the respondents, mostly the information about big poverty of Roma and consequently a negative picture of Slovakia abroad.

“I think that the way the Roma are here, makes negative picture of Slovakia in the world.” (Woman, 25, Kosice)

“Well, it could be managed better. But how? If something is happening they point to Lunik IX. It is internationally famous now. They have no right to show only this kind of settlements in Slovakia.” (Woman, 40, Kosice)

“But the rest is true. The poverty is there, and it is also a big minority group.” (Woman, 26, Nitra)

Non-persuasiveness of this concept, according to many respondents, is evoked mainly due to the way the word “discrimination” was used. These respondents are convinced that Roma in Slovakia are not discriminated or at least not to the extent that is often presented (mostly abroad).

“I don’t think that they face constant discrimination.” (Woman, 26, Nitra)

“You can understand it in many different ways, “and they face constant discrimination”. Maybe someone will understand it that we don’t do anything against it. They face it, yes, but there are reasons for it. Everybody can understand the question in a different way. I don’t think they face constant discrimination.” (Man, 18, Kosice)

“I think that it gives negative picture of our country but we don’t discriminate the Roma the way the foreigners think.” (Woman, 25, Kosice)

A. In order to become a real part of Europe, we must take care of the people in our country who have been most discriminated against. It is a true sign of a modern country.

In case of this concept the average score was 3.9 points and also in this case we have recorded high internal heterogeneity in rating – standard variance 2.55.

The concept was persuasive for quite small group of respondents, who think that Roma in Slovakia face a real discrimination and “it is not ok”.

“Well for me it is a persuasive statement. I don’t know if the Decade can solve the problems of Roma... For me it is quite persuasive statement.” (Man, 27, Bratislava)

“Discrimination exists. I know the case when a Roma couldn’t get a job because he was a Roma. I think this is a sign that something isn’t ok in here.” (Man, 58, Kosice)

The most common explanation why this concept is not persuasive is the doubts of presence of real discrimination of Roma in this society. In the more extreme opinions there was a prevailing feeling that not Roma are the discriminated ones in here but on the contrary – from the advantages point of view members of majority society “must feel” discriminated.

They doubted also the information about “the sign of a modern country”, they speak about the USA as the country, which constantly struggles with the problems with minorities (e.g.: Afro-Americans, American Indians) and still nobody doubts that this country is modern. Respondents find also the comment regarding the “part of Europe” irrelevant, it is perceived “an overstatement”.

“It’s about the opinion that I don’t know if there’s discrimination in here. It is non-persuasive because of the discrimination.” (Woman, 29, Bratislava)

“The question is which part of country is more discriminated, because you can have a look at it from two sides. Roma or white, because all the advantages only to one group and to the others not, I think that it is discrimination for the other ones.” (Woman, 25, Kosice)

“It is questionable it is a sign of a modern country. In America they have had a lot of problems with black people there are also black districts. There are problems; white person wouldn’t go there at night. They have the same problems and it is a modern society.” (Man, 28, Nitra)

“It’s also not a thing, which will help us to become a part of Europe. It is an overstatement.” (Woman, 22, Nitra)

B. Helping the Roma advance and integrate is, quite simply, the right thing to do. This is an issue of human rights. We are an unjust society if we continue to treat them in the way that they’ve been treated here.

Almost all respondents find this concept non-persuasive in both the individual ratings and the discussion. Average rating of the concept is at the level of 3.7 points with the standard variance of 2.54.

This concept is persuasive thanks to the presence of the idea of integration, which is considered to be the right solution for solving the Roma issue. Also the motive of “change” in attitude – “different than till now” is persuasive because it represents better, more effective tools to solve the Roma issue.

“I’m quite benevolent in this but I think that this society has a problem with it and we need to solve it and that the integration is in the right place.” (Woman, 22, Bratislava)

“I liked it because you could look at it also from different sides. We don’t want to treat them as we have done till now anymore, which means that we will treat them more reasonably and sensitively. I liked the quotation because it is that kind of quotation you can always get back to.” (Woman, 22, Nitra)

The most common reason for doubting the concept is the part about “unjust society”. Respondents find it outrageous. They do not think that Roma are treated unjustly in Slovakia, that they do not get any help. In this case they react as if they were “falsely accused” and they defend themselves – “it’s not true that we don’t help Roma in Slovakia, that we are unjust!”

“I think that this is least persuasive and mainly the fact that we don’t treat them right. That we are an unjust society toward Roma. Our society treats Roma too correctly.” (Woman, 24, Bratislava)

“Because it looks as if we were not helping them at all. I would rather say: we can’t treat them like so far anymore, because we can’t treat them like babies anymore. This is what I think. I don’t like that injustice in it.” (Man, 25, Nitra)

“I think that our society treats them in kid gloves. I feel it this way. Everyone has chosen their direction and way. At least the generation I belong to feels it this way. The people in my age really had the same conditions. The ones who had no interest stayed where they stayed. So there is something about that requirement.” (Man, 58, Kosice)

F. The way the Roma **have been treated in this country is simply wrong**. It makes me ashamed and I want it to change.

This concept was totally rated as the least persuasive; on average it achieved 3.4 points. Again we could see quite big differences in individual ratings before the discussion – standard variance 2.56.

As it seems this concept allows for various interpretations. The fact that Roma have not been treated right can mean that we have spent a lot of resources to solve the Roma issue inefficiently – the prevailing interpretation among respondents. In this context respondents feel that it is necessary to change the attitude toward the problem and only in this context respondents found this concept persuasive.

“Yes, we are ashamed. Nobody is asking when the Roma go to England, when they come there, if it’s really true. Or at least many times. Even the Slovak media presented it, that they don’t have schools.” (Man, 26, Bratislava)

“I think we gave them everything and that’s what I’m ashamed of. And I want to change it. Not to give them everything for free.” (Woman, 27, Kosice)

The concept is non-persuasive mainly for those respondents, who think that Roma in Slovakia “do not have such a bad life” or that Roma suffered “non-human oppression” in this country.

“They made it sound like if they were extremely oppressed in here, like in the concentration camps.” (Man, 20, Kosice)

APPENDIX

		Roma as a WHOLE	
Bratislava	Association 1	Association 2	Association 3
	Unstable	Creative	With little motivation
	Vicious circle	Not integrated	From other culture
	Culture	Language	Bigger number of children
	Openness, communicativeness	Problematic	Low level of education
	Loud	Without any effort to integrate into society	
	Criminality	Bad hygiene	Unemployment
	Laziness	Indifference	Sponger
	Dark skin	Jollity – they know how to have fun	Big – multi-member families
	Difference from the surroundings	Unwillingness to integrate	Life style
Nitra			
	Inadaptability	Dirt	Deception - pretence
	Inadaptable	Smell	Naturalness
	Inadaptable	Cohesive	Filthy
	Nomadic kind of life	Smell	Aggression
	Indifference	Pride	Temperament
	Musically talented	Discriminated	Indifferent, inadaptable
	Art (music)	Spontaneity	Calculativeness
	Inadaptability	Poverty	Having many children
Košice I. (18-30)			
	A group in Slovakia, which is preferred by some politicians	Chaos, dirt	Culture
	Temperament	Musically talented	
	Music	Dance	Singing
	Music	Prank	Cunningness
	Life style	Education level	Cohesiveness
	Unemployment	Criminality	Neglected hygiene
	Potential threat	Risk	Potential
Košice II. (31-60)			
	Laziness, alcoholism	Dirt	They would like to have everything for free
	Dirt	Naughtiness	They are only looking for benefits
	Inadaptability	Raising child badly	Insufficient hygiene
	Don't work hard	Dirty	Inadaptable
	Intolerance	Inadaptability	Don't work hard
	Intolerance toward the surroundings	Illiteracy	Hygiene
	Inadaptability	Unwillingness to be initiative	Expecting help, one-sided
	Smarmy	Careless, alphabets	Irresponsible
	Spontaneity	Laziness	Noisiness

Poprad			
	Temperament, lively	Laziness	Trickiness
	Dirt, smell	Money	Children
	Bad hygiene	Illiteracy	Uncivilised
	Unrestrainedness	Laziness	Abundance
	Inadaptable	Many children	Lack of interest in events – in a town, state
	Illiteracy	Inadaptability – weak adaptability	Inability to get a job
	Deception	Inadaptability toward others	High birth rate
	Other mentality	Don't work hard	Hygiene

		The Roma I know	
Bratislava	Answer 1	Answer 2	Answer 3
	Both honest and liars - unstable	Impulsive (emotions), musical talent, skilfulness	Without motivation, even racist
	They suffer for their parents but the same applies to their parents	It's a different culture I don't understand	Roma tells you one thing but mean another thing ...
	Openness	Lack of interest in education	Feeling of "injustice"
	Communicativeness, openness in positive meaning	Criminality, drug abuse	Lack of will to get education
	Aggressive, both the ones from towns and villages	Thieves	They don't work and show no effort to integrate in the society
	In my neighbourhood they often let the others know they are there – mostly by noise, dirt and criminality	They cause damage to their surroundings and the people in their surroundings	
	Many children who can't "integrate" among the village/town inhabitants	Unemployed, who gain wealth as no one else (particularly here)	Inadaptability
	Low level of education – repeating the class ...	They work – at least seasonally	Decent
	Alcoholism	Surprisingly diligence but also will	Pleasant simplicity – not worrying about unimportant things
Nitra			
	Exception – one of those who want to be different from the rest	Too friendly – show us what you have at home, won't you sell it?	Big noise, often vulgar language
	Comfort	Naturalness	They lie
	Violence toward the others	Not to work, only earn money	Unjust
	Bullying white children	Thefts	Aggressiveness, violence
	They are educated with good manners – they want to work and lead a decent life		
	Intelligent	Skilful	Discriminated (I only know one family)
	They live their life spontaneously – from a day to day	They have habits they don't want to get rid of	They are people like us
	Inadaptability on both sides – ours and theirs	Lack of interest in surroundings	Wealthy – poor
Košice I. (18-30)			
	decency	Ambitions	Friendly (ability to help)
	Cleanliness	Singing	Children
	Showing respect to the others	Objectiveness	Fear
	There is one family in my neighbourhood. I have known them for 20 years. They are decent, clean and aren't quarrelsome		
	Effort to integrate - minimum %	Criminality	Dirt
	Hats off for the two educated Roma I know	Inadaptable character of their behaviour	

Košice II. (31-60)			
	Lunik IX mess	Travelling for free	Their noisiness when more of them meet
	Luník IX – disgusting housing, dirt	Lack of interest in work (it is easier to beg, ...)	Illiteracy, laziness
	I fortunately met only the adaptable ones but they were also quite noisy (mainly in privacy)		
	If I show friendship to a Roma, he can be very pleasant and loyal		
	Diligence	Communicativeness	Cleanliness
	Diligence of the employed ones	They want to catch up with the others	They try to be helpful at work – some of them
	The same I wrote above but also:	Openness	Internal unity
	Caring for children	Trash bin pickers	
	Inadaptability	Mess	Alcohol
Poprad			
	Lively	Trickiness	Caring for little children
	Many children	Noise	Inadaptability
	Caring for children	Decency	They can manage their finances
	Adaptability	Effort to integrate with the non-Roma	Caring for children
	Clean	Diligent	You can get on well with them
	Wherever they come they are noisy, they smell – due their bad hygiene	They can't use the money they get	
	Tolerant	Students of Universities	Adaptable
	Diligent	They care about themselves	Clean

LIST OF RESPONDENTS

Bratislava

	GENDER	AGE	EDUCATION	PROFESSION/ EMPLOYMENT	INCOME	MARITAL STATUS	No of HHM
1	man	27	university	teacher	higher	single	2
2	man	22	university	informatics	higher	single	4
3	man	26	university	public servant	higher	single	2
4	man	29	university	social worker	higher	single	3
5	woman	29	university	agriculture	higher	single	1
6	woman	23	university	policeman	higher	single	2
7	woman	24	university	biologist	higher	single	2
8	woman	22	university	student	higher	single	3
9	woman	27	university	teacher	higher	single	2

Nitra

	GENDER	AGE	EDUCATION	PROFESSION EMPLOYMENT	INCOME	MARITAL STATUS	No of HHM
1	man	25	secondary school	educator	average	married	2
2	man	27	secondary school	business	average	single	4
3	man	28	secondary school	informatics	average	married	7
4	man	20	secondary school	student	average	single	5
5	woman	24	secondary school	waitress	average	single	2
6	woman	22	secondary school	teacher	average	single	3
7	woman	18	secondary school	student	average	single	4
8	woman	19	secondary school	student	average	single	4

Košice (18-30)

	GENDER	AGE	EDUCATION	PROFESSION EMPLOYMENT	INCOME	MARITAL STATUS	No of HHM
1	man	18	primary school	student	lower	single	3
2	man	20	primary school	student	lower	single	4
3	man	18	primary school	student	lower	single	4
4	woman	30	secondary school	maternity leave	lower	married	3
5	woman	25	secondary school	waitress	lower	single	2
6	woman	27	secondary school	clerk	lower	single	4
7	woman	26	secondary school	nurse	lower	married	3

Košice (31-60)

	GENDER	AGE	EDUCATION	PROFESSION EMPLOYMENT	INCOME	MARITAL STATUS	No of HHM
1	man	58	secondary school	operator	average	married	2
2	man	58	secondary school	administrator	average	married	2
3	man	32	secondary school	manual worker	average	married	3
4	man	59	secondary school	chemist	average	married	4
5	woman	40	secondary school	educator	average	married	4
6	woman	38	secondary school	clerk	average	married	4
7	woman	49	secondary school	liquidator	average	married	3
8	woman	35	secondary school	accountant	average	married	4
9	woman	44	secondary school	representative	average	married	4

Poprad (31-60)

	GENDER	AGE	EDUCATION	PROFESSION EMPLOYMENT	INCOME	MARITAL STATUS	No of HHM
1	woman	49	secondary school	clerk	average	married	1
2	man	52	secondary school	caretaker	average	married	4
3	woman	35	secondary school	accountant	average	divorced	2
4	woman	54	secondary school	cultural worker	average	married	3
5	woman	39	secondary school	educator	average	divorced	3
6	man	59	secondary school	janitor	average	married	2
7	man	47	secondary school	technical worker	average	married	4
8	woman	32	secondary school	personnel manager	average	married	4