

DECADE OF THE ROMA

ROMA GROUPS - SLOVAKIA

FOCUS GROUPS DISCUSSION

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CONTENT

| | |
|--|----|
| METHODOLOGY | 2 |
| SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS | 3 |
| SURVEY RESULTS | 8 |
| | |
| 1. SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY | 9 |
| 2. IDENTITY AS A ROME | 12 |
| 3. GREATER INTEGRATION IN THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE | 18 |
| 4. HELPING YOUR COMMUNITY | 22 |
| 5. THE DECADE OF THE ROMA..... | 27 |
| 6. AMBASSADORS OF CHANGE: VOICES TO TRUST..... | 31 |
| 7. MESSAGE CONCEPTS | 34 |
| | |
| APPENDIX | 38 |

METHODOLOGY

The investigation was done using the method of focused group interview (focus groups). Focus groups /Roma population/ were carried out between June 3 and June 7 in three cities (Nitra, Kosice, Poprad). Discussions were led by a trained moderator. Each group consisted of 7-9 participants.

SAMPLE

Three focus groups were conducted:

- in different locations
- to respondents selected: on sex (males and females); on age (18 – 30 years old, 31 – 60 years old); Roma 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 3 | Nitra | age: 18 – 30 / male | 8 |
| 2 | June 6 | Kosice | age: 31 – 60 / female | 7 |
| 3 | June 7 | Poprad | age: 31 – 60 / male | 9 |

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

- views of the direction of the country
- perceptions of experience with an attitudes toward discrimination
- perception of the government
- attitudes toward different aspects of reform
- views toward greater integration
- areas of resistance – which aspects of integration and reform would be most acceptable and least acceptable
- 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

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

- Regarding the direction of Slovakia Roma respondents are mostly sceptical. Such negative perception is connected mostly with every day more serious social problems of a part of Non-Roma but mostly Roma Slovak citizens. Another significant reason for this scepticism is a comparison of the present standard of living with the past – „before the year 1989“ when the state guaranteed jobs for everyone and took care of all citizens. Only a smaller group of respondents „believes in the future of Slovakia“, or rated the direction of Slovakia positively, mainly regarding the EU membership (inflow of foreign investments, building infrastructure, expecting better work opportunities, etc.)
- As the greatest problems in Slovakia, the Roma citizens identified mainly social issues such as low standard of living, poverty, unemployment, housing problems etc.
- Main responsibility for the above mentioned problems is mostly „in the hands of the state“. These opinions are related to the reforms in progress and also to the negative perception of the political situation in Slovakia – the politicians are not able to reach an agreement with one another and they follow their own interests – „steal for themselves“. On the other side, the perception of the responsibility lying mainly on the side of the state, has been „embedded“ in the respondents since the past – when „the state took care of everyone“.

IDENTITY AS A ROMA

- Respondents' perception of Roma identity is contradictory. On one hand, within the Roma community we can see some kind of internal segmentation of Roma to so called „decent Roma, i.e. the ones who want to work and live decently“ and „the non-adaptable Roma who only bring shame on us“. The respondents dissociate themselves from „the non-adaptable Roma“ and the isolation from the major society is typical for them - such as „the country Roma from villages“ or „Roma living isolated in a housing estate in a town“. On the other hand the respondents claim to be a Roma openly and are proud of that.
- The respondents reflect various prejudices on the side of the majority society and they mentioned „the colour of their skin“, which visually differs them from the majority, to be the main reason for prejudice. Their negative experience is mostly connected with various forms of prejudice e.g. on a bus, in a shop – where they are perceived as „potential thieves“ and also being discriminated - mainly when looking for a job. Moreover, the younger respondents perceive the problems with the colour of their skin in Slovakia much more – especially in comparison with the western countries, which are multicultural (black people, Arabs, etc.) and so the majority perceives them more positively.
- As the greatest problems of Roma population the respondents again indicated the social issues such as unemployment, low salaries, low social welfare/benefits, housing problems, and bad standard of living. A smaller group of respondents (mainly younger men) has also mentioned an insufficient

political representation or involvement of Roma in politics and their overall political disunity that is the reason why they cannot influence and follow their personal interests directly. A low level of education of Roma represents a significant problem and the respondents are aware of the linkage between the low educational level of Roma and the above mentioned problems.

- In comparison with the poor but Non-Roma citizens, the problems of Roma are perceived more significantly. The main reason for this are the already mentioned various forms of discrimination towards the Roma ethnic but also negative manners of Roma themselves. The respondents criticize excessive isolation of Roma community but they appreciate positive influence of the majority society, which sets positive behaviour examples for Roma. A group of young respondents links the problem of more significant poverty of Roma in comparison with Non-Roma with different values – „education is not a value for Roma“.
- The future of Roma is rated both positively and negatively. The pessimism of the respondents is based on the present overall bad standard of living, which „forces“ people to criminal behaviour and so makes the difference between Roma and Non-Roma citizens even bigger. Even though the respondents criticize Roma for such criminal behaviour, they have expressed a certain understanding – „what else can they do?! “. On the contrary, we have noticed a certain level of optimism mainly among men, who connect it with the membership of Slovakia in the EU – under the influence of the European policy the political representatives will make more effort in order to solve the Roma issue (younger respondents) as well as the education level of Roma will rise – e.g.: the Roma Department at the University in Nitra (older respondents from Poprad).

GREATER INTEGRATION IN THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE

- The tolerance issue of the Slovak majority towards Roma is closely linked with the perception of their own identity or their perception of prejudice and discrimination on the side of the majority society. They blame the negative influence of media or a „misleading“ presentation of Roma ethnic on the side of some political representatives for mild tolerance on the side of the Non-Roma citizens.
- Despite the fact that the relationship of majority society and Roma community is marked with various prejudices, the respondents admit positive experience in case of a „concrete interaction“ of Roma and Non-Roma population. The closer the interaction, co-existence of these two groups (the more they know each other) is the more significant decrease of prejudice or discrimination on the side of the majority Roma feel.
- When introducing two models of integration of Roma community, the model of „the closer integration of Roma into majority society“ was accepted unambiguously more positively, mainly due to a potential penetration of positive examples from the side of the majority. On the other hand, some respondents doubted the success of such idea and pointed out the problems mainly on the side of Roma community itself, where „non-integrated Roma force the already integrated Roma to return to the original way of life“. On the contrary, the idea of „isolation but equality of Roma“ didn't address the respondents or they mentioned some negative experience they had with a similar idea in the past – before the year 1989 (isolation of Roma at housing estates).

HELPING YOUR COMMUNITY

- As the social issues of Roma community are considered more significant in comparison with similar problems of majority population, the respondents expect the support will be directed at Roma citizens. Preferring supporting „a poor Roma“ to „a poor Non-Roma“ is then excused because of the already mentioned discrimination („colour of skin“) on one side and a certain passivity of Roma ethnic – „If a Roma is poor, they are on their uppers – a poor Non-Roma has a better chance to survive“ on the other side.
- The help from government, mainly in terms of finances, is expected or as the respondents believe the responsibility for the present state of Roma community is mostly „in the hands of the state‘ - but they don't feel they are getting anything. On the contrary, the respondents evaluate the activities and effort of the government to help Roma negatively – moreover, some of the restrictions they regard as „anti Roma“ (lowering social welfare/benefits). The reasons for the expected help from government are related to the discrimination of Roma as well as the opinions that the government uses the finances obtained from the European Funds to solve Roma issues, elsewhere. If they had such opportunity they would ask the president of Slovakia for help to solve their social issues (more work opportunities, better standard of living, etc.)
- In case of self-governments or municipal government, the respondents again expect help and negatively evaluate the passive attitude of towns. Particularly the respondents from Kosice criticize the municipal government for not solving the housing issue – mainly the „non-payers“ issue in Roma community. Some respondents have also negatively evaluated the so called „activation jobs“ assignment, which they find unfair – „the Roma will get absolutely the worst from the already trashy work“. Just like in case of the president, the requirements directed at mayors were related mainly to the social issues.
- Respondents believe that Roma community must be helped from the „outside“. Therefore it is expected both from the government (financial support, social workers' work), self-government (opening work opportunities) and other „external“ institutions. At the same time they emphasize the role of various Roma NGOs or non-governmental organizations dealing with the Roma issues.
- The respondents realize the necessity of being active, even though the main obstacles they find in disunity of Roma community itself, or its „non-adaptable“ members. They have also expressed fears regarding Roma community, which tends to „turn off“ even their own active members – „one active Roma cannot manage it all“. The respondents from Kosice can see the solution in the orientation towards education of children and mutual self-help. Younger respondents from Nitra pointed to the necessity of the Roma representation in the politics, mainly on the municipal level.

THE DECADE OF THE ROMA

- Awareness of the effort the state or any international institutions make in order to help Roma is rather on the general level only. The respondents mentioned mostly their association connected with the projects being funded mostly from the Euro funds.

- After introducing „The Decade of the Roma“ programme, the opinions of the respondents were a bit „confused“. On one side this programme – as an effort to help Roma – is in general appreciated and welcomed. On the other side the respondents expressed certain fears mainly of the majority public attitudes, which could term such help – a positive discrimination – i.e. favouring the Roma issues. Other respondents asked themselves questions related to the implementation – „how they want to do it? “ as well as the media presentation of this programme – „it depends how they will promote it in media“.
- Within the specified goals of the „the Decade of the Roma“ programme, the opinions vary mainly from the age of respondents' point of view. Whilst the older respondents rather appreciated the submitted programme goals mainly in the area of education and employment, the younger ones stated that such opportunities already exist for both the Roma and the Non-Roma citizens. The respondents (both younger and older) also pointed to the already mentioned positive discrimination in favour of Roma community and they evaluated it negatively. Their fears are connected not only with an unexpected negative attitude of the majority but they are also afraid of the help, which does not support the activity of the Roma themselves or the kind of help the Roma will get used to - „if Roma get used to it, they will be passive“, „they will expected something constantly“.

AMBASSADORS OF CHANGE: VOICES TO TRUST

- Awareness of Roma leaders or Roma community celebrities/personages varies mainly based on the age and gender of respondents. The younger respondents spontaneously named various types of celebrities – mostly from the music world, who appeal to them (based on their age) most at the moment. On the contrary, the answers of the older respondents were not so spontaneous – women (from Kosice) except for a few political activists were not able to name any other Romany celebrities/personages and the men (from Poprad) spoke more about the characteristics and qualities „an ideal Roma leader“ should have. So we can conclude that Roma leaders, who would be able to address also the older generation, are absent in Slovakia at the moment.
- Among the least sympathetic Roma leaders or celebrities/personages the respondents agreed on were K. Orgovanova (the mandatary of the Slovak government for Roma community), L. Fizik (the Roma Parliament civic association) and also A.Patkolo (the head of Roma initiative in Slovakia). The respondents do not consider them to be personages, who would be a benefit for Roma and Roma community or they find them untrustworthy. Moreover, some younger respondents find the opinions of these leaders too conservative, old-fashioned and so ineffective.
- The ideal leader for „the Decade of the Roma“ should be a medially known person. The respondents did not concur who the leader should address. Whilst the older respondents perceive this person in a wider context – he/she should address Roma as well as the majority society (they named famous Non-Romany actors), the younger respondents prefer a personage, who would represent and address mostly the Roma community (they named one Roma singer).

MESSAGE CONCEPTS

- The first impression test (individual rating) as well as the discussion showed that – despite certain differences in rating – in all three discussion groups the respondents prefer the messages “ C” and “ B”. On the other hand all three submitted messages are rated rather positively as their overall average value is above the 5 point border (on the scale 1-10 where 1 means that it is not at all persuasive and meaningful and 10 means that it is extremely meaningful).
- Message “ C. If the Decade of Roma effort is to have a positive impact on the lives of Roma here in Slovakia we Roma will have to play a prominent role in ensuring that the goals are achieved.” is perceived most positively. In the individual rating before discussion the message gained the best rating (7.0 points) whilst it was more positively perceived among men (in Poprad, Nitra) in comparison with the women (Kosice). Similarly, the most positive response for this message we have heard also during the discussions. The respondents perceived positively mostly the emphasis on the mutual co-operation of the Romany and majority community, which expresses the heart of the real help to the Roma.
- Message “ B. I believe the Decade of Roma effort will have a positive impact on the lives of Roma here in Slovakia because of the involvement of organizations like the World Bank and the Open Society Institute. “ Was the second most positively perceived message. In the individual rating before discussion it gained 6.9 points – whilst it had the highest rating in Kosice (among women). During the discussion this message was perceived more neutral or positive – the respondents often could not take a stand also because they were not aware of institutions mentioned during the discussion (the World Bank, OSI).
- Message “ A. I believe the Decade of Roma effort will have a positive impact on the lives of Roma here in Slovakia because governments have committed real resources. It’s not just ‘talk.’“ Was the least positive message. In the individual rating before discussion (it gained 5.7 points) as well as during the discussion this message was perceived least positive. According to the respondents it is mostly because it lacks the trustworthiness as the Slovak government does not guarantee a real help – „the government has already promised so many things...“.

SURVEY RESULTS

1. SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY

- Regarding the direction of Slovakia Roma respondents are mostly sceptical. Such negative perception is connected mostly with every day more serious social problems of a part of Non-Roma but mostly Roma Slovak citizens. Another significant reason for this scepticism is a comparison of the present standard of living with the past – „before the year 1989“ when the state guaranteed jobs for everyone and took care of all citizens. Only a smaller group of respondents „believes in the future of Slovakia“, or rated the direction of Slovakia positively, mainly regarding the EU membership (inflow of foreign investments, building infrastructure, expecting better work opportunities, etc.)

The criticism of our country's heading directly relates to the currently wrong life-situation of the interviewed respondents, as well as the other (mainly the poorer) citizens of the Slovak Republic and the related social issues as unemployment, low wages, expensive housing etc. But the respondents perceive those issues even more significant compared to the Non-Roma population, rating it as discrimination and neglecting social issues of the Roma ethnic.

“For example in the solution of the Roma issues - there are many such facts. And all fields for example - social policy, unemployment,...” (Man, 27, Nitra)

“It looks bad. The employment is not good here, and also the wages are low in Slovakia.” (Man, 23, Nitra)

“We are heading the wrong direction, since we have no money. We lack the money to raise our children. When I pay the gas and electricity bill from my maternity leave... there is no money left to feed the children. I have eight children and the ninth is underway.” (Woman, 40, Kosice)

“I think we are not going the right direction. For example - also the unemployment, this is not just our problem - there are also whites who cannot find a job.” (Woman, 34, Kosice)

“For our children - I see absolutely no good things for the future. I already have two grownup sons - they have no job, in spite of being apprenticed. It can be a problem to get employed, but they will not take a Rome. A Rome in Kosice has absolutely no chance to get a job.” (Woman, 40, Kosice)

“There is a trend in Slovakia, which currently is not so good, since they try those reforms and it is the poorest population groups which are completely down, completely on the ground. They have made the reforms and now how further. I Roma cannot get a job, especially a Roma woman, but why, if the Roma woman has a good qualification, so why should not she get a job, just because being Roma?” (Man, 31, Poprad)

Others (mainly the older respondents in Poprad and Kosice) also negatively rated the current heading of the Slovak government or the current standard of living of Slovakia's citizens compared to the past, i.e. before 1989. The respondents associate their "mourning" for the former sheen mainly with social "certainties" (security) or advantages provided by that regime to the citizens - „everyone had a right to have a job - the people were cared for“.

“Under the Communists, the Roma had jobs. They even had to work - if not, they went behind bars. And they really worked even if just such work, you know - they had not education. They were dustmen or they worked at construction sites. And now look, the white themselves are on the dust-lorries. Now I can hardly get a job. Under the Communists it was possible. You simply had to work - regardless of being a Rome or Non-Rome.” (Man, 23, Nitra)

“...when the Communists were in power, we were better off. We had jobs, we had flats... we had simply everything. There were also no homeless. Everyone had to work..” (Woman, 40, Kosice)

“It was better, since everyone had a job and worked.” (Woman, 51, Kosice)

“I am already retired. I had a job before and I really wanted to work. I had everything. Now not.” (Woman, 58, Kosice)

“Under the totalitarian (regime) we worked and our fathers did the worst jobs, but there were jobs and least - we feel not ashamed for that. Even today, if they would give us the job - we take digging, cleaning, demolition works, but they took even our jobs, that was paid and now we don't have it any longer..” (Man, 40, Poprad)

“As the 80ties came, there were jobs, there was no unemployment, they built houses, there were cars... this was the right heading that brought even for our children...this school attendance. Now it is as if fallen.” (Man, 59, Poprad)

The respondents rating the heading of the society positively, and appreciate and emphasise mainly Slovakia's integration into the European structures - i.e. the EU. In this connection, they pointed at the inflow of international investments, the infrastructure development (especially the building of motorways) as well as their expectations for increased employment and thus the moral improvement of the population's standard of living. On the other hand they admit the slower pace of the „expected“ changes, especially compared to other countries in the European Union. And those positive views were more frequent among men (younger as well as all the ones), i.e. from Nitra and Poprad.

“I think that we are going the right direction, motorways get built in Slovakia, investors put their money in and the employment rate improves. In my view - we are heading for the right direction, in foreign policy as well as at home.” (Man, 23, Nitra)

“Slovakia goes the right way, but slowly. It will integrate as the other countries into the big world as the European Union is, the development is slower compared to other more western countries.” (Man, 20, Nitra)

“I would say that Slovakia follows the other countries of the Union and that is good because we need some friends.” (Man, 59, Poprad)

“Really, what Slovakia has accomplished in the recent years with unemployment is the real plus indeed - because there are few countries, the state for example Peugeot, it manages to attract such investors - and this is good. The Czechs did not succeed, the Polish as well and the Minister pulled such investors to Slovakia... now as those companies came in, there will be more production, more money and we will finally be better off.” (Man, 38, Poprad)

- **As the greatest problems in Slovakia, the Roma citizens identified mainly social issues such as low standard of living, poverty, unemployment, housing problems etc.**

The respondents named spontaneously especially social issues, where (as mentioned before) those statements were inspired by their own bad social situation, although they perceive those problems also with other Non-Roma inhabitants. Among the most frequent issues they mentioned unemployment, the low standard of living - poverty, lacking money for housing. To a lower extent they indicated issues related to the health-care reform, relating again to finance or the respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the payment of medical fees.

"Housing, this is a big issue especially for young families, be it a Roma family or a white man - there is no difference. The flats are expensive for the young people and especially for the Roma people." (Man, 28, Nitra)

"It is really bad here in Slovakia, there is no work." (Man, 20, Nitra)

"It is also difficult to get a job if you want some. I am already 51 and I would like to continue in my job, but apart from the "activation money" – you have no chance." (Woman, 51, Kosice)

"Because we have no money. They have lowered down all the allowances. We have not enough money to raise the children." (Woman, 40, Kosice)

"I can't get a job." (Man, 43, Poprad)

"One just always has to pay something, when going to hospital, you have to pay such money that your head starts spinning ..." (Man, 28, Nitra)

"The health-care reform affects most the Roma, small children - because you have to pay for the health-care and the people were not prepared for that." (Man, 31, Poprad)

- **Main responsibility for the above mentioned problems is mostly „in the hands of the state“. These opinions are related to the reforms in progress and also to the negative perception of the political situation in Slovakia – the politicians are not able to reach an agreement with one another and they follow their own interests – „steal for themselves“. On the other side, the perception of the responsibility lying mainly on the side of the state, has been „embedded“ in the respondents since the past – when „the state took care of everyone“.**

Apart from the already mentioned social problems (low standard of living, unemployment, expensive housing, low wages etc.), negatively perceived were also political conflicts or the behaviour of the politicians to each other - especially the lacking goodwill and the ability to come to an agreement. This is one of the reasons why the main responsibility for the solution of the most significant problems in Slovakia is ascribed by the respondents to the government and its political representatives. Another reason is also that they just push through their own interests, regardless of the needs of the other citizens – "they steal just and only for themselves". The ascribing of the responsibility for the above mentioned problems has in the minds of the respondents a direct causality with the previous regime, when they were used to being ensured jobs etc. by the state.

"I would like to comment it so that Slovakia progresses, what is positive - even when the politics failed. If the politics and the government would not stagnate a little bit, if they would show more accommodation, openness - there wouldn't be so many problems. They fail to come to terms." (Man, 27, Nitra)

"I think that it is only the steering - the engine is bad." (Man, 20, Nitra)

"Today it is the government to blame. They care just for themselves. They do not see what's happening outside. Everyone of them just rakes toward himself." (Woman, 58, Kosice)

"If the government would give work to everybody, one could live - because even if you earn just a few bugs, it is enough to live on. There is no work, no money and one cannot really live." (Woman, 45, Kosice)

"The government has the money for villas, cars and for everything, they just simply chuck up us people. We do not need to eat, to dress our children... think. And they quarrel there. I think that it is the students to blame, because under the Communist we were definitely better off. We had work, we had flats and we had everything. There were no homeless people, since everyone had to work." (Woman, 40, Kosice)

"The responsibility for that is on the state." (Man, 40, Poprad)

"The government is to blame." (Man, 38, Poprad)

2. IDENTITY AS A ROME

- Respondents' perception of Roma identity is contradictory. On one hand, within the Roma community we can see some kind of internal segmentation of Roma to so called „decent Roma, i.e. the ones who want to work and live decently“ and „the non-adaptable Roma who only bring shame on us“. The respondents dissociate themselves from „the non-adaptable Roma“ and the isolation from the major society is typical for them - such as „the country Roma from villages“ or „Roma living isolated in a housing estate in a town“. On the other hand the respondents claim to be a Roma openly and are proud of that.

Within the Roma ethnic, the respondents strongly perceive a certain internal heterogeneity or the existence of various groups living a different way of life - i.e. not identifying themselves as mutually equal or even condemning each other - „I do not belong to them – I do not live such a life“. This is maybe one of the reasons, why in the beginning of the discussion some of the respondents showed a tendency not to profess to the Roma ethnic or calling the Roma "them". The respondents also clearly expressed their difference to the so-called "asocial Roma" they feel themselves ashamed of. One of the main features of such "unsociable Roma" is their isolation from the majority population, what even deepens their already bad situation, as e.g. "rural Roma from the settlements" or "Roma living isolated at the housing estate in town". on the other hand, the respondents expressed positive emotions towards the Roma as an ethnic „I am proud to be a Rome“.

“They have bad manners, they have not great regard for anything, they simply think this way.” (Man, 28, Nitra)

“Some of them just don't know how to behave. They just make mess.” (Man, 21, Nitra)

“I myself, I am proud to be a Roma.” (Man, 20, Nitra)

“We are Roma, but we feel ashamed for them as well, because when in a bus, you can scent their odour and this is horrible, because we are not dirty.” (Woman, 34, Kosice)

“And there are many, really many of those which should be sent back again to those settlements and just such (Roma) would stay, who really belong here, really living here as we do so that they would not put shame on us.” (Woman, 40, Kosice)

“When they are together – i.e. when living together, there is just dirt and mess all around. They are cheeky and doing just harm.” (Man, 43, Poprad)

“...if here in Poprad 1010 Roma from the entire district register for housing, so... just imagine... there are 6000 Roma living in Poprad and what does it mean, a Roma never confesses to his own identity, this is the problem.” (Man, 40, Poprad)

- The respondents reflect various prejudices on the side of the majority society and they mentioned „the colour of their skin“, which visually differs them from the majority, to be the main reason for prejudice. Their negative experience is mostly connected with various forms of prejudice e.g. on a bus, in a shop – where they are perceived as „potential thieves“ and also being discriminated - mainly when looking for a job. Moreover, the younger respondents perceive the problems with the colour of their skin in Slovakia much more – especially in comparison with the western countries, which are multicultural (black people, Arabs, etc.) and so the majority perceives them more positively.

As to the question for the other inhabitants of Slovakia perceive the Roma, several respondents mentioned rather personal negative experience. The strongest reason for denial and prejudice against this ethnic is perceived to be the "colour of their skin", distinguishing them visually from the other population. Some of them (especially the younger respondents from Nitra) perceive the "skin colour issue" even more significant compared to others, especially western countries as e.g. the UK. They perceive those countries as multicultural, or as countries where people of various nationalities and skin colours live together (Negroes, Arabs etc.), where the majority population got used to them or accepted them more positively.

"It is more difficult as being a Roma elsewhere. The people are used...e.g. in England or in the West...they are used to different skin colour." (Man, 27, Nitra)

"Here in Slovakia, when Non-Roma see a dark skin colour... this is a different man than the others, but for all that it is the same man - a Slovak. I will stay a Slovak forever. In other European countries it goes not that way, because they got used to the Negroes, Turks, Asians and many other nations." (Man, 23, Nitra)

"Everybody views us in a different way, when they spot a Roma somewhere. Everyone behaves according to that." (Man, 21, Nitra)

"... they let one feel that you are different." (Woman, 51, Kosice)

"I feel here... like you know... as the last wagon in a train." (Man, 38, Poprad)

Most frequently mentioned were their behaviour in the bus or shop, where they are perceived as potential thieves „when they spot me, they hold their handbags tighter“ or various other forms of discrimination at gastronomic facilities - "they do not serve me at the restaurant or I have to wait for a long time" or when taking up new employees „they tell me by phone to come by and when I finally come, they tell me that they already have someone for the job“.

"At the bus, I stood at a woman with a handbag and she thought that I am about to steal her money. So she stared at me and squeezed the handbag tighter in her hands. I am completely uninterested in her handbag, when I work - so why should I steal money?! Just because she saw my dark hair - so I must be a thief." (Man, 21, Nitra)

"It is discrimination, always when you come for example to a restaurant, for example to take a seat - you are banned, you can't take a seat since they will not serve you and (they) leave you sitting there." (Man, 21, Nitra)

"We wanted to apply for a loan. So we went there, waited for about one hour.... we waited. We had all the required documents with us. We waited and were denied. My husband also wanted to buy a mobile phone but they did not want to sell him one.... the gentleman went out and told him outside the shop: „Yes, you're right. They do not want to sell to Roma“." (Woman, 34, Kosice)

"Because when you call somewhere, they ask: „are you Roma?“ Yeah, a Rome. So sorry, we do need any new employees - and that was it." (Woman, 51, Kosice)

"By phone to, when calling - yes they want some, but when you come there, you will not be accepted. The problem is that they lump us all together. They shouldn't, because they are also decent and a square ones among us." (Woman, 58, Kosice)

"A Roma is viewed by everybody as a criminal and scoundrel. The first thing coming into mind when spotting a Rome is that he will steal something from you or - God forbid - even kill you. It is not true, because not every Rome is a killer." (Man, 31, Poprad)

"When a Roma e.g. a shop, it is horrible, the shop assistants immediately start watching him... we are, a little bit... you know... under such a pressure." (Man, 59, Poprad)

"We went with my friend to have a beer, we sat down and the waitress came to us. You know what it is for us, when she comes and tells us to fuck off? How should we feel here in Slovakia?" (Man, 43, Poprad)

- **As the greatest problems of Roma population the respondents again indicated the social issues such as unemployment, low salaries, low social welfare/benefits, housing problems, and bad standard of living. A smaller group of respondents (mainly younger men) has also mentioned an insufficient political representation or involvement of Roma in politics and their overall political disunity that is the reason why they cannot influence and follow their personal interests directly. A low level of education of Roma represents a significant problem and the respondents are aware of the linkage between the low educational level of Roma and the above mentioned problems.**

The largest group of issues tempering the Roma are social issues - overlapping mutually or tying up to each other. Most frequently the respondents spoke of unemployment (not enough jobs), the low wages and housing issues (high prices of flats or rents), low social allowances or (in general) the low standard of living. Some of respondents also criticised the governmental representatives "solving" the Roma-unemployment issue exclusively by public utility works. There came up also views (with the older respondents – in Poprad and Kosice) that within those public utility works, there exist certain "preferred" jobs (interior works) and some "less preferred" jobs (working open-air). Especially those „less sought-after“ jobs are given mainly to Roma, degrading their human dignity even more or jobs they feel ashamed of. Another frequently indicated reason is education or the low educational standard of the Roma population and the related unemployment problem, thus also their low standard of living.

"It is mainly the education, everything depends from that, also that work, job... employment, housing ... so everything." (Man, 27, Nitra)

"The problem is the housing. If you live in a city, in such a block of flats, this isn't so visible, but I grew up in a gypsy colony and nothing has changed there over the recent 20 years. I feel really sorry that now, when the European Union gave the money now -should not be wasted... so let them have the sewage, running water" (Man, 40, Poprad)

"... to have a orderly life, so that everyone of us would have honourable work and also clothing, and clean and tidy household... the children going to school this all means real wealth to us." (Man, 40, Poprad)

"For example that Kaník (Minister of Labour and Social Issues) said that unemployment will continue to go down, but for what price? To push us into those public utility works, and reduce that unemployment in this way... is this (real) work?" (Man, 40, Poprad).

"... this approach of the majority towards us - because I have a son, who is apprenticed and nonetheless ... he will not get the job. He is an apprenticed tiler and now, after that disaster in the High Tatras... he works in the forest as a kind of lumberjack." (Man, 38, Poprad)

"I would like our children to have a good future. I just don't know, how to ensure it, if my husband is 35 and cannot find a job. You know, if he wouldn't work as a musician, I really don't know how we would get through. I am really afraid of the future of my children." (Woman, 34, Kosice)

"As to this activation payment, you know ... we could do the job also somewhere else for example, at the school's dining room etc. But they will not place Roma there... just to wash the dishes. I have a sister-in-law, who is white and she works at school. They accepted her immediately, and she got a better job - inside the building. She just is not ashamed - since she has not to work outside. You know, my son would feel ashamed of me at school, when I would collect the rubbish in front of the school." (Woman, 34, Kosice)

A small part, especially of the young respondents (from Nitra) sees the Roma's low standard of living in the insufficient advocating of their interests in the government or the inability of a political unification of the Roma themselves and in the fact that so far there are no Romani political representatives, who would really pursue and protect the real interests of the Roma in Parliament. On the other hand, the respondents are fully aware of the fact that one of the main reasons for their low representation in politics is their low dedication to level.

Another issue is also their „inferiority complex“, following from their bad financial situation, i.e. they do not have (cannot afford) the same things what the Non-Roma can afford, which are wealthier, and „they lack education and so they are unable to manage administrative issues... in town, at various authorities etc.“.

“In my view - the fact that the Roma are not able to unite politically... that we are still so crumbled. That what the Hungarians do - they have a strong political party. What I wanted to say by that is that there are more Roma than Hungarians - but if the Roma would manage to unite politically, this would make it easier to solve the problem, because they would participate in political power. Without the necessary laws it is also not possible - because the politicians lack the real will to help, they would rather press us down.” (Man, 27, Nitra)

“If only some representation. If only one would be in Parliament. At least a single Roma, but not such one as e.g. Klara Orgovanova, she advocates the Roma but she has no competencies, she has nothing actually.” (Man, 28, Nitra)

“They have this inferiority complex. This follows from their position, from their status. They simply do not understand that they lack the money just to get into a shop, to buy something other rich guys use to buy and they know that they cannot afford it.” (Man, 23, Nitra)

“It means that they do not have the education and they principally are even not able to get to town and to manage some administrative stuff.” (Man, 20, Nitra)

- **In comparison with the poor but Non-Roma citizens, the problems of Roma are perceived more significantly. The main reason for this are the already mentioned various forms of discrimination towards the Roma ethnic but also negative manners of Roma themselves. The respondents criticize excessive isolation of Roma community but they appreciate positive influence of the majority society, which sets positive behaviour examples for Roma. A group of young respondents links the problem of more significant poverty of Roma in comparison with Non-Roma with different values – „education is not a value for Roma“.**

The problems of poor Roma are perceived by the respondents as more significant compared to the problems of the other poor citizens. In their view, the main reason for this is discrimination or lower chances of the poor Roma population in comparison to the other although poor - but Non-Roma citizens, "because of the colour of their skin – it is easier for them to find a job".

“There are also Non-Roma with no education or being jobless - they are unemployed, but their chances are rather better to earn money somewhere abroad or elsewhere. This is not possible in those settlements.” (Man, 27, Nitra)

“... mainly the colour of the skin. When thinking of the Non-Roma, you know - even if poorer - but their chances to get the job are better. Such a Rome has few chances to be accepted for a job.” (Man, 28, Nitra)

“I see a difference there. In my view, they have their chances. A Non-Rome (woman) ... if she would come, she would be accepted and me ... they would not accept for a job. It is about skin colour.” (Woman, 34, Kosice)

Further they also point at various negative habits and manners of the Roma, which even deepen through their isolation from the majority Non-Roma population. In this connection several of them even indicated their own experience, when having left such an isolated community and getting "integration" into the community of Non-Roma citizens (mainly in housing), what they perceive to be a chance of improving also the standard of living of the other Roma. Those respondents are convinced that positive examples shown to them by the lifestyle/behaviour of the Non-Roma population forces the Roma - if being isolated from their community - to mimic that or similar behaviour patterns.

"I think that the Roma are there together in one block of flats. If they would get split (dispersed), one going to live there, and the other to live elsewhere - this would maybe make it easier to find a job - because they would change. If they are within the same block of flats or one settlement, or in one housing estate all flocked together, this makes it more difficult. He sees that that and that one does not work, so "Why should I?". If the same one would have to live among Non-Roma in a block of flats, he would change." (Man, 28, Nitra)

"It is like at the Luník IX housing estate, it is horrible - if there would be maybe two Roma per house-number, there would be no mess as it is the case today. But they would set up a gypsy-camp again and that is not good, because those Roma would not be given the chance to see how one should live." (Woman, 58, Kosice)

"I myself, live also in a social-flat, the people living there are almost only Roma. It is horribly dirty, no cleaning at all - mess everywhere, with cockroaches all around. If they would place more Whites there, the life would be better there." (Woman, 40, Kosice)

The reasons for the poverty of the Roma (apart from the already mentioned "skin colour" barrier) and the related various social issues - is also the values of the Roma ethnic. According to the young respondents (men from Nitra), the education problem is rather strong, since the Roma put not much value on that, compared to e.g. the value "family" or "many children".

"In the families, education is no priority. Education is not so emphasised there. And today we pay the bill for that." (Man, 27, Nitra)

"It is difficult, if for example a Roma sees education problems. If there are 600 – 700 people in the settlement - nobody is educated." (Man, 23, Nitra)

"It represents no value for the Roma, for most of them. Because e.g. if a Roma boy is 16 or 17... he has to feed his family." (Man, 23, Nitra)

- **The future of Roma is rated both positively and negatively. The pessimism of the respondents is based on the present overall bad standard of living, which „forces“ people to criminal behaviour and so makes the difference between Roma and Non-Roma citizens even bigger. Even though the respondents criticize Roma for such criminal behaviour, they have expressed a certain understanding – „what else can they do?! “. On the contrary, we have noticed a certain level of optimism mainly among men, who connect it with the membership of Slovakia in the EU – under the influence of the European policy the political representatives will make more effort in order to solve the Roma issue (younger respondents) as well as the education level of Roma will rise – e.g.: the Roma Department at the University in Nitra (older respondents from Poprad).**

As some of the respondents think, the problematic relationship of the Roma and Non-Roma population will even get worse and deepen. The respondents see the reasons for that mainly in the worsening standard of living, forcing the Roma into crime "they have no job, just low benefits and so they tend to stealing and other crimes". In spite of the fact, that the respondents indicated no to speak of themselves but rather of the above mentioned "asocial" (inadaptable) Roma (they do not identify themselves with), on the other hand - it was clear from their statements that they understand or even justify such behaviour.

"The things worsened because of the ever increasing gap between the Roma and Non-Roma, especially in the social field. This creates tension." (Man, 27, Nitra)

"It related to the situation that some - I mean not me particularly - have no job or get just low monthly benefits and then... they either go stealing or doing some else harm. They starve and... are simply forced to that." (Man, 21, Nitra)

"It was better under the Communists. In that time, you were not condemned, since everyone simply had to work, everyone had a job." (Woman, 40, Kosice)

"The young people today have no responsibility, for nothing - as they should have. I had to go the laundry, but he starts to take drugs or something else. A young guy wants to dress and if having a girlfriend, he wants to invite her for a coffee... but he cannot afford that. So what should he do? So he steals, or takes drugs... all for that big boredom." (Woman, 58, Kosice)

"In the past, it was unknown because there was that employment, everyone had to work that time, they did not take it as they do it today." (Man, 59, Poprad)

"It's getting worse - year by year." (Man, 31, Poprad)

"I disbelieve this, I already have an 18 years old son, a daughter of 12 and I really do not believe it will change in some five years, maybe my children will be better off by some 10%." (Man, 38, Poprad)

Another part of the respondents perceives the future of the Roma in Slovakia positively (we have noticed those view mainly among men). Some of them (younger respondents from Nitra) provided as a reason Slovakia's membership in the European Union, what makes the Roma more coherent (sticking together). In this connection they also think that the Slovak political representatives will be forced by the EU to do more for the solution of the Roma issue in Slovakia.

Other the respondents (older the respondents from Poprad) appreciated the increasing education level among the Roma – e.g. the Roma Department in Nitra.

"I see it positively as well, it will be more good. We will be in the European structures, the next generation will stick more together I think. They will participate in the power - so it will be better." (Man, 28, Nitra)

"... because the Slovak politics will not exist just on its own. The European politics will dominate. It can be only better in the future." (Man, 27, Nitra)

"What has changed significantly is the view on the education of the Roma. Each year since 1989, the Roma Department in Nitra releases about 50-60 university educated individuals, what is a tremendous success. This means that the ice is broken, I really appreciate it that at least the education system progressed, it is for the future of us Roma." (Man, 40, Poprad)

"I think that today the people are more educated and that the today's youth has a different thinking, they think a different way. We do know very well that our generation... we all live on our "old tracks" and that the youth of today creates for itself better prerequisites, they have a better communication, they participate in such things, to know, some time before they didn't even know what a computer is and today they do such things with it, many young Roma... as I can see.... just sits behind the computer and simply look up things hard to imagine. I firmly believe that we will be better off." (Man, 40, Poprad)

3. GREATER INTEGRATION IN THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE

- **The tolerance issue of the Slovak majority towards Roma is closely linked with the perception of their own identity or their perception of prejudice and discrimination on the side of the majority society. They blame the negative influence of media or a „misleading“ presentation of Roma ethnic on the side of some political representatives for mild tolerance on the side of the Non-Roma citizens.**

As to the question of the tolerance of the Slovak nation, just a small part of the respondents is optimistic (mainly younger respondents from Nitra). Those views are related to the comparison of the situation from the past, or in general - compared to the past, the current situation is rated slightly more positive. Some of them associate this optimism to Slovakia's membership in the EU, where a coexistence of Non-Roma with various other nationalities is commonplace and normal. This is supposed to influence positively also the thinking of the people in Slovakia. The other respondents (all the respondents from Poprad and Kosice) agreed that the views of the majority population onto the Roma community is currently associated rather with prejudice (please find more detailed information on the chapter "Identity as a Rome"), or those relations even worsened when compared to the past.

“So I remember times, when it was even worse than those seven years before. I think that they are not used to the fact that there is another race that there also dark people and other races besides the whites. When we got into the European Union and when the other nationalities of different skin colour start to come here regularly, they also will have to get used to it and the life must go on.” (Man, 23, Nitra)

“I was a boy, I was 8 or 9... and why managed the Communists to organise a cook-course for our moms and why all those things do not exist any more? There were kindergartens and our moms could go there for sewing, cooking and they felt better among the whites, because it was the whites cooking and tasting it.” (Man, 40, Poprad)

“It would surely bring the effect that the Roma would not be so condemned (prejudiced) as today. The today's majority society does not communicate with the Roma. You know, the communication between the Roma and Non-Roma is missing and if those two temperaments would better know each other, they would not condemn the Roma as they do now.” (Man, 31, Poprad)

A significant opinion-leading role on the Roma ethnic issue play the media. According to the respondents, the public opinions is deliberately "mislead", especially by the political representatives of the opposition parties. The respondents feel that those politicians are principally against the Roma and they show also no efforts to solve this issue. So - as already mentioned (chapter "Identity as a Rome"), Slovakia's membership in the EU is for some of them (the younger men from Nitra) a guaranty that the so-called „European polity“ will dominate also in Slovakia, which is more open and more tolerant to other minorities.

“... because there is such hidden intolerance e.g. in the media, in the statements of the politicians. One can feel such a hidden intolerance, such a hidden hatred. The politicians show no real effort to solve this situation. The Roma issue just gets supressed and just those political parties enjoy support, who want to do something against the Roma.... be it the National Party, Fico (Smer) or the HZDS. That time there was the problem with the looting of shops or this potato case... Fico also wanted to pass some "farmer act.” (Man, 27, Nitra)

“... because the Slovak Republic will not be alone and for itself. The dominating policy will be the European one. It can be only better.” (Man, 27, Nitra)

"Why do they show on the TV-set just those disgustingly dirty gypsies? Why do they not come e.g. to us?" (Woman, 40, Kosice)

"... that they show it on TV, those settlements and that worst things – so everybody will condemn the Roma, that they live that way. They should come where we live. So all the whites and all... will treat us. They lump us all together, and they should not do it." (Woman, 58, Kosice)

"They should write more about the Roma, but not just in the negative sense - but also in the positive one. Not just criticism, they should promote them also a little bit." (Man, 37, Poprad)

"Just take the news. So about six months ago I watched the news and they brought the information - that the gypsies have done (managed to do) something good and subsequently they brought that news on the Roma who has stolen something and that was the end. Everything is purpose aimed, it is manipulation." (Man, 38, Poprad)

- **Despite the fact that the relationship of majority society and Roma community is marked with various prejudices, the respondents admit positive experience in case of a „concrete interaction“ of Roma and Non-Roma population. The closer the interaction, co-existence of these two groups (the more they know each other) is the more significant decrease of prejudice or discrimination on the side of the majority Roma feel.**

The mutual relations of the Roma and Non-Roma population is (according to the respondents) - a question of getting used to each other and getting to know particular people. The more the citizens will get to know and used to each other, the greater will be the mutual tolerance and the more the prejudice and false generalisations for the entire group will diminish. According to the Roma respondents, this is the way of the Roma ethnic into the majority society - "... they see that the Roma is trying hard, he is clean, he acknowledges a greeting - so also the Non-Roma will accept them as equal".

"This is the same as if you have in a block of flats just Non-Roma and just a single Roma moves in. In the beginning it is bad. They point at him, but after some time they get used to him. Because they see that he works, that he is helpful, clean, healthy... so the neighbours get used to him, taking him normally - as an equal guy." (Man, 28, Nitra)

"So I have such experience and I do work in a restaurant. I have very good white colleagues, but the problem is a little bit different. Before me, they gave the loan to whites, but when they saw that I am a Roma, I was denied." (Woman, 40, Kosice)

On the other hand, the respondents declared to feel certain limits on the part of the majority population as to admitting the Roma community or a Roma individual closer.

"For example in Eastern Slovakia, there is a Roma settlement - separated by police station from the Non-Roma. Here you can evidently see how separated (cut off) they are. The Non-Roma are in the minority here, the mayor is a Non-Roma and a police station splits this settlement. This means that they are completely separated from the outer world." (Man, 27, Nitra)

"If they know you there ... knowing that you live there for long already and that you have some background, so they will take you there... but you have to know someone there... but if nobody knows you, you have no chance." (Man, 38, Poprad)

- **When introducing two models of integration of Roma community, the model of „the closer integration of Roma into majority society“ was accepted unambiguously more positively, mainly due to a potential penetration of positive examples from the side of the majority. On the other hand, some respondents doubted the success of such idea and pointed out the problems mainly on the side of Roma community itself, where „non-integrated Roma force the already integrated Roma to return to the original way of life“. On the contrary, the idea of “isolation but equality of Roma“ didn’t address the respondents or they mentioned some negative experience they had with a similar idea in the past – before the year 1989 (isolation of Roma at housing estates).**

As already mentioned, the respondents would welcome an integration of the Roma into the majority population. The views arise from the convictions that this would change the lifestyle of the Roma or they indicated a positive influence of the majority population (positive "behaviour patterns (models), naturally communicated to the Roma.

Some of them agreed with this view, others remained sceptical as to the practical implementation, because they see too significant barriers also on the part of the Roma community itself, forcing the "integrated" Roma to return back to the Roma community, thus also to their former lifestyle and the "isolation" from the Non-Roma population. "...he is forced to return back to the settlement and stay there for the rest of his life". Just individually, voices came up rating the integration of the Roma ethnic rather negatively - ranging from fears of a full assimilation of the Roma - "there would be no longer gypsies in Slovakia".

“Roma live among Non-Roma there – the life is very good there and you can see that they are neighbours getting along good with each other. The households of the Non-Roma and those of the Roma are furnished in the same way. You know, it is a kind of pattern, orientation. They need such orientations... the Roma settlement. If the Roma are together in a single house, other relationships are on work and if someone would manage to get outside, the other would maybe envy him.” (Man, 27, Nitra)

“The Roma living in at the Lunik IX (housing estate), they should get dispersed, because all they live in one stack like the homeless, no hygiene, simply speaking... nothing and if they would live with Non-Roma, they would have to keep the same hygiene, they would probably sent their children to school, you know - they simply would see how they should live... from the Non-Roma.” (Woman, 34, Kosice)

“Because if they (the Roma) live with whites, so the probability is higher that they will keep the desirable hygiene. In the prefab blocks of flats, where they live just among Roma, it is very dirty, untidy and messy and so..” (Woman, 40, Kosice)

“And if one finally wants to separate from that Roma settlement, even if he wanted to leave to another village, the other, those Non-Roma will harass him, you know - they will simply force him to return. So he is virtually forced to be and live in that settlement... probably for the rest of his life.” (Man, 23, Nitra)

“I think that if the gypsies would disperse among the Non-Roma, they would certainly get assimilated, but would result in the disappearing of the Roma in them. It would be better for them, because they would improve their standard of living, but that nationality, this Roma pride, culture they would simply lose once and for all and they would finally become Non-Roma. No more gypsies would exist in Slovakia any longer.” (Man, 20, Nitra)

On the other hand, the idea of "equal approach" has not attracted the respondents at all. In this connection they have mentioned critical examples from the past - mainly from that period before 1989, when the Roma were isolated from the majority population even with the same material benefits, what also failed to improve their standard of living, or they "did not appreciate" this kind of assistance - "They got flats and devastated them completely after all".

"This would end in disaster. Then they would do what they want." (Man, 21, Nitra)

"I do not abuse the Roma, but why for example the state gave them the flats in Hôrka. I live there – Hôrka 1. I don't know whether you know it, but those flats are completely devastated. They even grew up a pig in the basement. It's their way of thinking. It is simply the thinking of people with no education. Everything is completely destroyed there." (Man, 20, Nitra)

"I even want not live to see that because if afterwards a bus would come to pick us up, this would be the worst thing possible." (Man, 38, Poprad)

4. HELPING YOUR COMMUNITY

- **As the social issues of Roma community are considered more significant in comparison with similar problems of majority population, the respondents expect the support will be directed at Roma citizens. Preferring supporting „a poor Roma“ to „a poor Non-Roma“ is then excused because of the already mentioned discrimination („colour of skin“) on one side and a certain passivity of Roma ethnic – „If a Roma is poor, they are on their uppers – a poor Non-Roma has a better chance to survive“ on the other side.**

As already mentioned, since the respondents consider the problems of poor Roma citizens more significant compared to the poor Non-Roma population, their views on the assistance are unambiguously orientated in favour of the Roma minority. The preference for helping the Roma is closely associated with the existing discrimination "by skin colour" especially when looking for a job - and this finally determines the overall standard of living, i.e. the poverty of the Roma. The respondents perceive especially the differences between a poor Roma and a poor Non-Roma, but they are not able to provide a concrete explanation or they even admit a certain passiveness of the Roma ethnic compared to the Non-Roma one.

“In my view, the difference is that the poor Non-Roma have better chances. A Non-Rome will get a job, but they will not take you.” (Woman, 34, Kosice)

“They should be helped, because the Roma must be lead by someone, you know? Because they will not manage it on their own to get their feet on the ground.” (Woman, 58, Kosice)

“I think that the state should provide more help to the Roma than to the Non-Roma, because if a Roma is poor, so it is really brutal, it is the lowest caste and if a Non-Roma is poor, he knows how to survive, he will manage to get a job somewhere.” (Man, 23, Nitra)

“A Roma... when hearing of lacking money... he will not go working.” (Man, 43, Poprad)

- **The help from government, mainly in terms of finances, is expected or as the respondents believe the responsibility for the present state of Roma community is mostly „in the hands of the state‘ - but they don't feel they are getting anything. On the contrary, the respondents evaluate the activities and effort of the government to help Roma negatively – moreover, some of the restrictions they regard as „anti Roma“ (lowering social welfare/benefits). The reasons for the expected help from government are related to the discrimination of Roma as well as the opinions that the government uses the finances obtained from the European Funds to solve Roma issues, elsewhere. If they had such opportunity they would ask the president of Slovakia for help to solve their social issues (more work opportunities, better standard of living, etc.)**

The general opinion is that the government should support the Roma financially even more - for several reasons. Some of them indicated the discrimination of the Rome, other think that the money provided by the state to the Roma comes from the EU, from various European funds.

The respondents told also that personally (as Roma) they do not feel much help or support from the government. On the contrary they criticised the insufficient efforts of political representatives to deal with Roma issues or even some measures adopted by the government they perceive as being aimed against them (e.g: the lowering of the social benefits). On the other hand, some of them (especially the younger

respondents from Nitra) expect this assistance in the future especially in connection with Slovakia's EU membership - "Brussels wagged the finger".

"This is not a problem of money, because the Slovak government lacks the money anyway. All this money comes from the EU for the solving of Roma issues. But what is missing here is the real will to do something with the money, but the current government must have the tendencies to do something, because Brussels wagged the finger." (Man, 27, Nitra)

"This is also in the programme declaration of the government, this Roma issue, but I really do not notice that something would have improved. I think that the majority of the Roma does not really feel anything. I think that this Kaník did wrong (he lowered the social benefits) and most of the Roma are bad off now." (Man, 23, Nitra)

"... the government is to blame. They just enrich themselves and care not for others." (Man, 20, Nitra)

"The state gave us nothing, it even took away. We have nothing." (Woman, 40, Kosice)

"And I do think that they should fix it, if not them... who sit in the Parliament, so I don't know who else could help us." (Woman, 40, Kosice)

"Do you know what the government did when the Roma left the country and they were good off abroad, they (the government) managed that the other government denied them as well. Before, it was possible, they managed the things in a way that the Roma could not succeed also abroad. Maybe they found some job there. I don't know, I don't have this experience ... but those going abroad praised it." (Woman, 34, Kosice)

"The money is in the Eurofunds, but at the social development fund, there are millions, so if they would spend some money for this idea, so this would certainly bring jobs. But there always sits someone, who just enriches himself, but if he would support such proposals, there wouldn't be this situation." (Man, 31, Poprad)

If they would be given the chance to ask the president of the Slovak Republic, several of them would tend towards some help in solving social issues as: housing, education, job opportunities - or employment. Of individual occurrence was the view calling for legislative change of the act, that would order all Roma to work as it was in the past - i.e. before the year 1989.

"That the president would help a little bit with the job, with the housing and the children also should get educated." (Man, 21, Nitra)

"If the president would change the law.. so that they would have to accept one to a job, as there are no longer companies, which are state owned. Everything is just private. People at the age of 30 or 40 have no chance as I think. Such a guy is too old to go to school again." (Man, 23, Nitra)

"Equality of citizens, so that we are no longer discriminated - especially in job access." (Woman, 34, Kosice)

- **In case of self-governments or municipal government, the respondents again expect help and negatively evaluate the passive attitude of towns. Particularly the respondents from Kosice criticize the municipal government for not solving the housing issue – mainly the „non-payers“ issue in Roma community. Some respondents have also negatively evaluated the so called „activation jobs“ assignment, which they find unfair – „the Roma will get absolutely the worst from the already trashy work“. Just like in case of the president, the requirements directed at mayors were related mainly to the social issues.**

The respondents criticise the town's self-government, because they perceive its activity as too passive when it comes to Roma issues. Especially the female respondents from Kosice criticise the town's approach against rent-dodgers or the not-solving of some housing issues (as cleanliness in the house, repair of the roof), since they consider this to be in the competence of the town. In a similar negative way the respondents rated (mainly the older ones from eastern Slovakia - Poprad and Kosice) the assignment of "activation works", which they consider unjust and discriminating against the Roma. In this connection, they declared also that those works make some of them feel ashamed. If being given the chance to ask the mayor of their town - the respondents would ask mainly for job opportunities or the solution of social issues.

"The mayor (primator) does not know what is going on in the village, and if going to prepare something, so it will be principally something against the Roma." (Man, 28, Nitra)

"I would ask the mayor for a job. Nothing else matters, just the job." (Man, 28, Nitra)

"I am there for three years already and they delay it again and again from year to year. No cleanliness and the roof has still not been repaired. They just promise all the time that they will paint the walls and lay rubber flooring. Nothing at all happened. As time goes, it is even worse and worse. The town-hall doesn't care about it." (Woman 51, Kosice).

"This government from the white house (municipal office) always promise us that it will be tidy, that we will have a care-taker and that it will be clean. They put in whites and the rent-dodgers will leave." (Woman, 40, Kosice)

"Yes, but the give us just this inferior work." (Woman, 34, Kosice)

"And they strongly differentiate also for jobs, because the white have friends there. And we come and (really) work while some others just come to sign the paper and get the 1 500 Sk as well. It is not the gypsy Roma doing that, but mostly whites ... because they have their friends at the Municipal Office." (Woman, 40, Kosice)

"One comes to the office to settle something and they will not even talk to you." (Man, 43, Poprad)

"To improve the conditions for those working outside within this activation activity, because I have seen that some of them, wearing the vests ... hide and ...they are right... it's a shame. So I wanted to file a proposal, so that the mayor could solve that and he simply told me that he has no time for that and that he will not talk with me about it. Thus... it is the communication what is missing here." (Man, 31, Poprad)

- **Respondents believe that Roma community must be helped from the „outside“. Therefore it is expected both from the government (financial support, social workers' work), self-government (opening work opportunities) and other „external“ institutions. At the same time they emphasize the role of various Roma NGOs or non-governmental organizations dealing with the Roma issues.**

Most of the respondents are convinced that help for the Roma population is necessary from outside, externally - „we need at least a push, an impulse“. The respondents expect help from the government (financial support, social workers supervising the Roma parents etc.) or some activity on the part of the town (creation of jobs, assignment of a coordinator etc.). High importance is ascribed to NGOs and Roma organisations, like citizen associations/foundations, doing enlightenment work in various Roma issues (hygiene, leisure activities for the youth, education of children etc.). Individually they also appreciated the work of the community centres.

"There are many many Roma associations that ... more or less... work and they try to help... this is such a plus. More Roma will get to know in this way ... where they should go and what they can demand. They do enlightenment work." (Man, 27, Nitra)

"This is simply like some "leader". This will show them the way and they really accept him. In most case it are community centres." (Man, 23, Nitra)

"I have proposed that those social workers would go regularly to them and help to live and to make regular checks. To check them each month how they do live, whether their children go to school." (Woman, 34, Kosice)

"The primator (mayor) or those mayors should give the gypsies a chance that e.g. 10 or 15 of them would set up an own business and that he would take care of the work they would pay. For example, I tell you to register your own business and take 10 guys and you will get assigned (dedicated) some money." (Man, 40, Poprad)

"Those spread over villages, the chairman of the municipal office and those deputies and so if they would assign at least one man for the settlement and that maybe one more would go with him to the village, to simply visit the colony and to monitor the bringing up of the children, they would help the fathers in job issues." (Man, 59, Poprad)

- **The respondents realize the necessity of being active, even though the main obstacles they find in disunity of Roma community itself, or its „non-adaptable“ members. They have also expressed fears regarding Roma community, which tends to „turn off“ even their own active members – „one active Rome cannot manage it all“. The respondents from Kosice can see the solution in the orientation towards education of children and mutual self-help. Younger respondents from Nitra pointed to the necessity of the Roma representation in the politics, mainly on the municipal level.**

The respondents are aware of the necessary activity and effort also on the part of the Roma community, but they indicated also the problem of disunity or the presence of the above mentioned "inadaptable" (asocial) members of the Roma community, showing no interest in improving the quality of their lives. Some of them even think that the Roma community itself does not support its members – pulling them actually back through its passiveness. Furthermore, especially the (female) respondents from Kosice proposed to focus on bringing up children in the family (to teach them the basics of hygiene as well as parent supervision of school attendance of their kids), if Roma with a higher standard of living would help other poorer Roma "in the settlements".

"But in my view it depends on both sides, because the Non-Roma side does not renounce to fear the Roma, because they do not know them. They do not communicate with each other and in most of the cases they see them in negative light. And we are expected do something for the improvement of our life... not to have those social problems and so on. Principally it is not possible without the help of the Non-Roma. This cooperation is necessary here." (Man, 27, Nitra)

"But the government will not fix it and the Roma themselves will not make it. They won't clean that mess they have made there. Whatever the government will be, they will not come and clean and wash for your – or dress you up." (Woman, 58, Kosice)

"And they do not fix it there... and one can say nothing, even when being a Rome. You cannot word up... since this would raise much ado. They say that it is not my business... so why do I care. Pay your own and do not stick your nose into our business. That is the answer. The town-hall will do nothing with it either, why should it?" (Woman, 51, Kosice)

“There is also another problem, six of them have a job and they would like to get connected to the power and gas mains... but nobody will allow this to them. Neither the mayor nor the village... because he would have to pay for them all. An the six will not manage to pull it financially – for all those 150 Roma.” (Man, 28, Nitra)

“If it could be accomplished e.g. as those in the settlements and those such clean Roma, who have a job and who work... and so those who have no jobs, could go there and be shown how to do it. Simply... teach them order, to teach them to live in the future, but I don’t know, whether it would be possible, because they live a horrible life there, but to do at least something with them.” (Woman, 34, Kosice)

“It depends on the family. When our parents or grandparents were clean, so we were clean as well. But e.g. those from the settlement had not those opportunities for building a house and so. They did not know that is due and what not. When you have a clean family from the very beginning, so you will raise your children this way as well. The bringing up of the children counts a lot.” (Woman, 34, Kosice)

“The parents must teach their children to go to school, to try hard.” (Woman, 40, Kosice)

The younger respondents (from Nitra) see an improvement in the communication with the town and in the own representation in the town's representation. The necessity of solving the Roma issue by political means, i.e. by their own representation among the deputies of the town-hall – would contribute to a better informedness and better mutual cooperation between the Roma and the majority community. But those very same respondents point at the same time sceptically on the low education level and unity of the Roma ethnic – i.e. the low chances of succeeding in politics even at the lowest level.

“This would be maybe the best, if at least one Roma citizen would be in the town's parliament, so that they would know of the things happening there. You know,... only those know that who sit there.” (Man, 23, Nitra)

“If only the unity would emerge. Not just such a typical Roma unity, where one leans on the other, but in the sense of doing something together. For example go into politics or to the town hall.” (Man, 27, Nitra)

“But nobody is educated there. You will be alone there and they even will not know how to sign... so what will they do there? Or they will not be able to read.” (Man, 28, Nitra)

5. THE DECADE OF THE ROMA

- **Awareness of the effort the state or any international institutions make in order to help Roma is rather on the general level only. The respondents mentioned mostly their association connected with the projects being funded mostly from the Euro funds.**

The awareness on the state's efforts to help the Roma or even on international level is rather general or the respondents declare to "have heard something", but they were not able to specify concrete activities. The answers point more at the funding resources or they specify financial aid provided by the EU (Eurofunds). One respondent also criticised the low transparency of the funds, thus the inefficiency of those projects - "The EU sends money but nobody really controls their spending".

Problems indicated by the government or by international organisations as the most urgent in connection with the Roma issues (access to education, improving the standard of living etc.) match with those provided spontaneously by the respondents (see chapter "Identity as a Rome").

"In Slovakia we have many associations and organisations assisting the Roma or which are dedicated to the Roma...and EU funds and so." (Man, 27, Nitra)

"It was on TV, in the news ... how they fight for the Roma, but nothing happens." (Woman, 34, Kosice)

"There is a lot of money, a lot of Eurofunds exists from the EU. We know that the money comes in, we have numerous citizen associations for the Roma but nobody controls the spending of the money so this is another problem, those Eurofunds... which are used and nobody knows for what." (Man, 31, Poprad)

- **After introducing „The Decade of the Roma“ programme¹, the opinions of the respondents were a bit „confused“. On one side this programme – as an effort to help Roma – is in general appreciated and welcomed. On the other side the respondents expressed certain fears mainly of the majority public attitudes, which could term such help – a positive discrimination – i.e. favouring the Roma issues. Other respondents asked themselves questions related to the implementation – „how they want to do it? “ as well as the media presentation of this programme – „it depends how they will promote it in media“.**

So far, most of the respondents came not across with the programme „Decade of the Roma“ – or have ever heard of it. There occurred just individual views on the knowledge of this programme. Even, if that programme is generally perceived positively, some of the respondents expressed their fears of the negative reactions of the majority population - „they will think, why should they be helped, they should help themselves“.

¹ According to the 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.""

Others cast doubts on the implementation mode - „is sounds good, but how do they want to accomplish it“ as well as on the media presentation of the programme - „it depends on how the presentation in the media will be“.

“I think that we have already talked about all that, but I don’t know what they want to do for that, in order to achieve an improvement.” (Man, 21, Nitra)

“It depends on in which light they will medialise it. If well covered in the media, so the light will be just positive. But if the media image will be bad, you know as failed... so it will be not good.” (Man, 27, Nitra).

“I think that some will be even against, those who dislike the Roma. Why should they be helped, let them suffer and live in poverty and so.” (Man, 23, Nitra)

“It would be bad again. They would claim that it is just the Roma getting the help.” (Woman, 58, Kosice)

“We Roma would be better off, if it would be really so.” (Woman, 40, Kosice)

“We would be very glad, if they would help us at last.” (Woman, 45, Kosice)

“They will say that again the Roma are being given something and they (the Non-Roma) get nothing.” (Man, 43, Poprad)

“That is the proposal, but the question is whether they will really do it?” (Man, 38, Poprad)

As to the question, whether the Roma themselves could contribute to this programme, there came mainly answers related to their own cooperation effort or a kind of “own wanting to participate in the change” – „they will not resist“, „they want to educate – they will show more initiative“.

“The Roma could contribute by refraining from resistance. In the end it will be their initiative.” (Man, 20, Nitra)

“I think that they will have to show some willingness, otherwise they will remain caught in that backwardness. When the project will be behind its start-up stage and when being implemented, so then we will see the effective results and depending on them they will also adapt.” (Man, 23, Nitra)

- **Within the specified goals of the „the Decade of the Roma“ programme, the opinions vary mainly from the age of respondents’ point of view. Whilst the older respondents rather appreciated the submitted programme goals mainly in the area of education and employment, the younger ones stated that such opportunities already exist for both the Roma and the Non-Roma citizens. The respondents (both younger and older) also pointed to the already mentioned positive discrimination in favour of Roma community and they evaluated it negatively. Their fears are connected not only with an unexpected negative attitude of the majority but they are also afraid of the help, which does not support the activity of the Roma themselves or the kind of help the Roma will get used to - „if Roma get used to it, they will be passive“, „they will expected something constantly“.**

Education

- „Lower kindergarten prices, school lunches for poor Roma children“ – especially the older respondents (Poprad, Kosice) would welcome that. The younger respondents (from Nitra) declared that a similar programme for „poorer families“ is already running.

- „Integration of cultural elements of the Roma into the curriculum of the children“ – several respondents rated this item as right and desirable - „This should have happened long ago already“, from the aspect of getting to know the Roma and the majority population each other - „the more we will know of each other, the lower the barriers between us will be after all“
- „Loans and scholarships, so that the Roma youth could study also at universities“ – it was again the younger respondents (from Nitra) advocating the view that such a possibility exists or that the Roma students get supported by various NGOs.

“It already exists, they have their booklets for free.” (Man, 23, Nitra)

“It would be excellent for them. So they would not be afraid to send their children to school.” (Woman, 58, Kosice)

“I think that the people could get frown upon that or be sceptical about it because it is another privilege for the Roma.” (Man, 40, Poprad)

“It is right and desirable in my view, because the children will learn that way something on their history. They will acquire some detailed knowledge. Principally, the more they will know of each other... it will principally reduce the barriers.” (Man, 27, Nitra)

“So they would know how the Roma lived. They would know more of them and not condemn them for being just dirty.” (Women, 34, Kosice)

“Something like this is already running – not just for the Roma but also for the Non-Roma. There is this possibility to get a loan or scholarship from some foundations or organisations.” (Man, 23, Nitra)

Employment

- „Small loans for the Roma, so that they could start their own business“ – while the older respondents rated this offer positively, as an "employment offer", the younger already came across with something like that – the town (the Labour Office) provides such loans to all unemployed applying for that. Some of them even named positive examples of Roma, which have used this offer and run their own business.
- „To adopt laws against employers for discriminating practices “ – this is a generally positively rated objective.

“Not just for the Roma, but it exists for all. I know a few Roma who have used this offer – they set up a shop – a grocery and they run well. They got the offer right at the Labour Office, it was something dedicated for the unemployed and they registered their business (living) when they took up the business. Now they have it for more than 4 years.” (Man, 23, Nitra)

“It would be good, if they could get that startup support, so they would make money and have a job and even employ others. They would also help the others, not just themselves. So I think that it's a good idea.” (Woman, 40, Kosice)

“You know, just give an impulse to the Roma, afterwards he would catch up and continue on his own. This would also prevent him from getting used to permanent assistance. He would get used to it and remain passive... doing nothing and just waiting for anybody else permanently helping him. You know, just to give him this initial impulse.” (Man, 21, Nitra)

Health Care

- „Free vaccines for Roma children“ – several respondents appreciated this objective and proposed particular vaccines as flu, jaundice etc.

“Yeah, this could be. If some do not have it, so yes. For example against flu and jaundice.” (Man, 21, Nitra)

“All the money we pay into the health care system, they should provide it to everyone, Rome or Non-Rome. One just pays and pays and when going to hospital after all... one has to pay amounts making your head spinning. Rome or Non-Rome, they should pay it for everyone.” (Man, 28, Nitra)

“It is a good idea, since the children need it.” (Woman, 51, Kosice)

6. AMBASSADORS OF CHANGE: VOICES TO TRUST

- **Awareness of Roma leaders or Roma community celebrities/personages varies mainly based on the age and gender of respondents. The younger respondents spontaneously named various types of celebrities – mostly from the music world, who appeal to them (based on their age) most at the moment. On the contrary, the answers of the older respondents were not so spontaneous – women (from Kosice) except for a few political activists were not able to name any other Romany celebrities/personages and the men (from Poprad) spoke more about the characteristics and qualities „an ideal Roma leader should have. So we can conclude that Roma leaders, who would be able to address also the older generation, are absent in Slovakia at the moment.**

The knowledge of Roma leaders is differentiated mainly by age. This question was quite problematic for the older respondents, since they were not able to name spontaneously such personalities. In this group – the women (from Kosice) named politicians or high public officials (Fízik, Orgovanova), rating them rather negatively or saying that they lack the necessary knowledge of the Roma community. Similar it was with the men (from Poprad), who provided general features and characterisations of a Roma leader, that would address them – as e.g.: a clean criminal record, respectability, the effort help also ordinary Roma or the ability to unite the Roma.

Just the younger respondents (from Nitra) named various types, they have called „Roma leaders“, where especially in the recent times, they felt addressed especially by well known personalities from the media as e.g. J. Suchy alias Dzigá-Dzigá (TV-show Superstar), P. Konček (Superstar) and I. Drasković (TV-show Milionový tanec). It seems that the respondents are impressed most by artistic personalities, which represent best also their temperament and other features they feel proud of. This also the reason why the other mentioned personalities come mainly from the „music business“, as e.g. Berki Mrenica (a Roma musician), Kmetoband (Roma band) or Kontrafakt (Roma band). Individually there were mentioned: Ch. Chaplin, the Roma bodybuilder A. Cibula (triple European champion), as well as K. Orgovanova (mandatory of the Slovakia's government for the Roma community).

“I know Berki Mrenica, Charles Chaplin. And now also Konček or Dzigá-Dzigá from "Superstar". Also the series "Milionový tanec" - Johnny Meco and the band Kontrafakt.” (Man, 23, Nitra)

“Adam Cibula. It is a Roma living in Switzerland, who was the chairman of the European congress or Roma congress.” (Man, 27, Nitra)

“Klara Orgovanova, Fízik, Patkolo.” (Man, 23, Nitra)

“Those Roma have music education in most cases. I think that this is most inspiring and the easiest for them. They have it in them: this dancing and singing. Now they are good in hip-hop, those are mostly gypsies... because they are simply the best in that. This Kontrafakt has actually a strong influence on young people, especially on gypsies. Those guys are idols for them.” (Man, 20, Nitra)

“This Fízik also wanted to do something for the Roma, but his success is very moderate.” (Woman, 51, Kosice)

“There exist maybe such organisers, but we do not know them. There is nothing we could know them from.” (Woman, 34, Kosice)

“There are many students but those will probably renounce being a Roma, because they feel ashamed for that. This could bring them disadvantages at work ... even his family cannot come to (visit him) his work, otherwise he would lose his job.” (Woman, 34, Kosice)

“He should be himself, he should not get influenced by anybody else and stand firmly behind his decisions. It would be good if such a guy would have a clean criminal record. Listen to the problems. He should not just go there where everything is right but there... where it is not all right.” (Man, 38, Poprad)

“A smart guy not deceiving the people, but someone who would help them.” (Man, 53, Poprad)

“It should be a person with some experience, someone who has something behind him in life and someone being able to attract people... so that together they would be able to do much more for the Roma, someone bringing people together.” (Man, 40, Poprad)

- **Among the least sympathetic Roma leaders or celebrities/personages the respondents agreed on were K. Orgovanova (the mandatory of the Slovak government for Roma community), L. Fizik (the Roma Parliament civic association) and also A. Patkolo (the head of Roma initiative in Slovakia). The respondents do not consider them to be personages, who would be a benefit for Roma and Roma community or they find them untrustworthy. Moreover, some younger respondents find the opinions of these leaders too conservative, old-fashioned and so ineffective.**

Among the personalities of the “Roma community” the respondents rated as not amiable were mainly political activists as e.g.: L. Fizik (Citizen Association Roma Parliament), A. Patkolo (Chairman of the Roma Initiative of Slovakia) as well as K. Orgovanova. The respondents perceive them as persons that have brought not positive change or they point just at the negative aspects in the Roma community or they even rate them as not trustworthy, because “they steal”. The younger respondents (from Nitra) consider their views as too conservative and in their final consequence as effective - „they have their views on the matters... how to accomplish them“, „at least officially they lead us but so far they have done nothing for the Roma“. In connection with the advocating of Roma interests in politics, there was provided also the view that „real leaders“ do not exist so far in the Roma community.

“Patkolo, Fizik – they just “rake” (shovel) for themselves. They belong to the older generation - Patkolo, Fizik, Klara Orgovanova and the others. After 1989 they got into those NGOs and now they are long enough there. Basically, they still advocate their old views on what should be done... you know, that unity is missing here – since everybody wants to do something different.” (Man, 27, Nitra)

“This is the issue that there are no real leaders so far,... the people do not know them so well.” (Man, 20, Nitra)

“K. Orgovanova – this person has done nothing for the Roma.” (Woman, 58, Kosice)

“Orgovanova – she is not really trying. I don’t know... as if she would feel ashamed for the Roma. She points just at the bad issues - those settlements with all that dirt, where all those “bad” things are. Why doesn’t she show some of the positive aspects.” (Woman, 51 Kosice)

“Patkolo – I’ll tell you how he helps us... he puts it in his own pocket.” (Man, 40, Poprad)

- **The ideal leader for „the Decade of the Roma“ should be a medially known person. The respondents did not concur who the leader should address. Whilst the older respondents perceive this person in a wider context – he/she should address Roma as well as the majority society (they named famous Non-Romany actors), the younger respondents prefer a personage, who would represent and address mostly the Roma community (they named one Roma singer).**

As to the leader for the programme "Decade of the Roma", the views of the respondents rather differ, especially by age structure. Initially, the older respondents (men as well as women, from Poprad/Kosice) hesitated in this question and they provided the names of well known people from the media, especially actors from the Non-Roma community, e.g.: M. Kramar, Vasaryova or M. Lasica. The younger respondents (from Nitra) named also people well known from the media, but belonging to the Roma community – the singer P. Koncek and individually also K. Orgovanova, who is an authority for the respondents or „a person that has already managed a lot for the Roma“.

“Koncek, because he is such best known Rome now.” (Man, 23, Nitra)

“If I would be given the chance to choose, so I would choose Kontrafakt, or not such person(nality) - Klara Orgovanova. It is simply a person “beaming” authority, she has already accomplished something in life, because there are very few Roma doctors in Slovakia – so about then of them.” (Man, 23, Nitra)

“We do not come together so... we are a small nation. Maybe an actor ... Maros Kramar.” (Woman, 34, Kosice)

“It should be some publicly well known personality because ... let’s be frank ... if there would be some Rome...nobody would really take it. But if it would be a media celebrity, who would be really interested in that issue, so it would be good promotion, I am sure about it. For example the actor M. Lasica.” (Man, 38, Poprad)

“I think that it should be Mrs. Vasaryova.” (Man, 40, Poprad)

7. MESSAGE CONCEPTS²

- The first impression test (individual rating) as well as the discussion showed that – despite certain differences in rating – in all three discussion groups the respondents prefer the messages “C” and “B”. On the other hand all three submitted messages are rated rather positively as their overall average value is above the 5 point border (on the scale 1-10 where 1 means that it is not at all persuasive and meaningful and 10 means that it is extremely meaningful).

“Those three things are like a beautiful rose ... it is just about preventing from fading quickly away.” (Man, 40, Poprad)

The first impression also shows that all three messages are rated too different – mainly from by age and region. The ratings of the older respondents from Kosice and Poprad are perceived as more controversial, compared to the ratings of younger respondents from Nitra. This is proved by the relatively higher differences in the ratings of the individual respondents (standard deviation of the ratings from Kosice and Poprad range 2,89 to 4,06). The respondents from Nitra have rated the messages more homogeneous (the standard deviation does not exceed the value 1,75).

| | A. I believe the Decade of Roma effort will have a positive impact on the lives of Roma here in Slovakia because governments have committed real resources. It's not just 'talk.' | B. I believe the Decade of Roma effort will have a positive impact on the lives of Roma here in Slovakia because of the involvement of organizations like the World Bank and the Open Society Institute. | C. If the Decade of Roma effort is to have a positive impact on the lives of Roma here in Slovakia we Roma will have to play a prominent role in ensuring that the goals are achieved. |
|----------------------|---|--|--|
| Average (Nitra) | 6,5 | 6,8 | 8,3 |
| Standev (Nitra) | 1,07 | 1,28 | 1,75 |
| Average (Košice) | 4,7 | 8,0 | 4,9 |
| Standev (Košice) | 3,90 | 2,89 | 4,06 |
| Average (Poprad) | 5,7 | 6,2 | 7,7 |
| Standev (Poprad) | 3,67 | 3,83 | 3,39 |
| TOTAL Average | 5,7 | 6,9 | 7,0 |
| TOTAL Standev | 3,09 | 2,89 | 3,37 |

² 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 that it is not at all a persuasive and meaningful statement and 10 that it is an extremely persuasive and meaningful statement. The particular concepts were rotated in the groups.

C. If the Decade of Roma effort is to have a positive impact on the lives of Roma here in Slovakia we Roma will have to play a prominent role in ensuring that the goals are achieved.

- **Message “C” is perceived most positively. In the individual rating before discussion the message gained the best rating (7.0 points) whilst it was more positively perceived among men (in Poprad, Nitra) in comparison with the women (Kosice). Similarly, the most positive response for this message we have heard also during the discussions. The respondents perceived positively mostly the emphasis on the mutual co-operation of the Romany and majority community, which expresses the heart of the real help to the Roma.**

In the individual rating, this message got a (in general) the best average rating in all three groups - 7,0 points. It was perceived significantly more positively in the males - in groups in Nitra and Poprad (average rating in Nitra 8,3 and in Poprad 7,7), compared to the female group in Kosice, where the rating was more neutral (average rating 4,9 points).

This message is also best perceived in the discussion, since it expresses the principle (essence) how the help to the Roma community should get accomplished. This message provides the best evaluation of the mutual cooperation of both parties – i.e. the active approach of the Roma community as well as the help by the majority population. „if this should work – so mainly through this statement“.

“So if the first one works (will come true) („A“) and the second statement as well („B“), so I give it („C“) nine points out of them, as 90% hope.” (Man, 20, Nitra)

“If the Roma want and show interest and they will also have to show interest in being really better off. So they have no other chance ... go back like forward.” (Man, 28, Nitra)

“I don't know, I just say ... Roma ... help yourself, since nobody else will help you.” (Man, 23, Nitra)

“From all the points I would give the most here, because it depends only from them. It is only on the Roma, how this Decade will finally look like.” (Man, 27, Nitra)

“This is right. When joining it so (he, one) knows what it is about and that it works better for them. He will understand what is going on. I think that this is right.” (Woman, 58, Kosice)

B. I believe the Decade of Roma effort will have a positive impact on the lives of Roma here in Slovakia because of the involvement of organizations like the World Bank and the Open Society Institute.

- **Message “B” was the second most positively perceived message. In the individual rating before discussion it gained 6.9 points – whilst it had the highest rating in Kosice (among women). During the discussion this message was perceived more neutral or positive – the respondents often could not take a stand also because they were not aware of institutions mentioned during the discussion (the World Bank, OSI).**

In the individual rating before the discussion it is the most positively perceived message (just tightly behind message „B“). In the individual average rating for all three groups it achieved the average of 6,9 points. This message (unlike the previous one) has been perceived most positively in the group from Kosice (average rating 8,0 points), compared to the groups in Nitra and Poprad, which got also a relatively positive rating (average rating in Nitra 6,8 and Poprad 6,2)

But this statement was perceived generally neutrally up to positively in the discussion. Several respondents were not able to provide the standpoint (approach) to that statement, for not knowing those institutions at all or they took that statement as too unpersonal. Individually there were comments about this statement – a particular respondent cast doubt on the funding of that project from abroad - „They obliged to provide funds but will they really?“.

“I don’t know... this foreign bank is very far away... so I see it fifty-fifty.” (Man, 20, Nitra)

“This decade came into existence because the World Bank and some Fund have agreed to create something for the solution of this problem in the whole of Eastern Europe ...they obliged to provide funds but will they really? It will depend again from that what the leader will finally carry through and what this will solve after all.” (Man, 27, Nitra)

“I believe a little bit, not very... but so... that the National Bank will involve more people... whom we should at least this.... when more people get involved.” (Woman, 34, Kosice)

A. I believe the Decade of Roma effort will have a positive impact on the lives of Roma here in Slovakia because governments have committed real resources. It's not just 'talk.'

- **Message “A” Was the least positive message. In the individual rating before discussion (it gained 5.7 points) as well as during the discussion this message was perceived least positive. According to the respondents it is mostly because it lacks the trustworthiness as the Slovak government does not guarantee a real help – „the government has already promised so many things...“.**

This message receive a less positive average evaluation – as to the points assigned before the discussion. In the average individual rating for all three groups it got an average rating of 5,7 points. In spite of the relatively positive average rating (above 5 points) in all three groups, it has been perceived least positive.

In the discussion, this message raised also rather negative reactions, because this message is seen by the respondents as not trustworthy. This distrust is associated mainly with the fact that the Slovak government represents no guarantee a positive change to the respondents – „there have been such government programmes also in the past already“, „the Government has promised a lot so far“. Moreover, some of the respondents put doubts on the political work of our government representatives also for the future – „this government may try hard... maybe ... but the next government may not“.

“I think that it is not just empty promises and that it could change in maybe 10 years.” (Man, 20, Nitra)

“The government has obliged to really dedicate funds ... but the government will fall. We have elections next year... so it is only a promise by the government. This has not been passed by the parliament... to make it a law, so the government may do something now... but it will be probably not this government to solve this issue in the future.” (Man, 27, Nitra)

“I would give it the golden middle (average), because believing what the government promises... not really... and the funds...rather not and in my view it is just empty promises. It will probably not come true.” (Man, 23, Nitra)

“The government has promised a lot so far... but it was all in vain... and if something improves, so not because of the government but because it simply improved somehow alone... not through the efforts of the government.” (Man, 23, Nitra)

“Just empty promises.” (Woman, 34, Kosice)

“You know, they tell it just into the sky. Just empty promises.” (Woman, 40, Kosice)

APPENDIX

LIST OF RESPONDENTS

Nitra

| | GENDER | AGE | EDUCATION | PROFESSION/ EMPLOYMENT | INCOME | MARITAL STATUS | No of HHM |
|---|--------|-----|------------------|---------------------------|--------|-------------------|--------------|
| 1 | man | 21 | primary school | unemployed | lower | married | 3 |
| 2 | man | 20 | primary school | manual worker | lower | single | 5 |
| 3 | man | 21 | primary school | manual worker | lower | single | 4 |
| 4 | man | 28 | primary school | manual worker | lower | married | 3 |
| 5 | man | 20 | primary school | manual worker | lower | single | 6 |
| 6 | man | 27 | secondary school | unemployed | lower | single | 2 |
| 7 | man | 23 | primary school | manual worker | lower | single | 5 |
| 8 | man | 23 | primary school | manual worker | lower | single | 4 |

Kosice

| | GENDER | AGE | EDUCATION | PROFESSION/ EMPLOYMENT | INCOME | MARITAL STATUS | No of HHM |
|---|--------|-----|------------------|---------------------------|--------|-------------------|--------------|
| 1 | woman | 34 | secondary school | unemployed | lower | married | 5 |
| 2 | woman | 40 | primary school | unemployed | lower | married | 9 |
| 3 | woman | 58 | primary school | pensioner/disabled | lower | divorced | 1 |
| 4 | woman | 40 | primary school | unemployed | lower | married | 7 |
| 5 | woman | 51 | primary school | unemployed | lower | widow | 1 |
| 6 | woman | 40 | primary school | maternity leave | lower | married | 4 |
| 7 | woman | 45 | primary school | cleaner | lower | married | 9 |

Poprad

| | GENDER | AGE | EDUCATION | PROFESSION/ EMPLOYMENT | INCOME | MARITAL STATUS | No of HHM |
|----|--------|-----|----------------|---------------------------|--------|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | man | 53 | primary school | unemployed | lower | married | 2 |
| 2 | man | 40 | primary school | manual worker | lower | married | 4 |
| 3 | man | 37 | primary school | pensioner/disabled | lower | married | 4 |
| 4 | man | 31 | primary school | unemployed | lower | married | 6 |
| 5 | man | 43 | primary school | unemployed | lower | single | 8 |
| 6 | man | 40 | primary school | unemployed | lower | partner | 5 |
| 7 | man | 38 | primary school | manual worker | lower | partner | 6 |
| 8 | man | 59 | primary school | manual worker | lower | married | 10 |
| 9. | man | 31 | primary school | manual worker | lower | single | 4 |