

# Roma and the Transition in Central and Eastern Europe: Trends and Challenges

Dena Ringold

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# FOREWORD

Poverty among the Roma minority is one of the most challenging development issues facing the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. While living standards have declined for all population groups during the transition to a market economy, there are growing indications that conditions have deteriorated more severely for Roma than for others, and that Roma have been poorly positioned to take advantage of emerging economic and civic opportunities. Poverty among Roma is complex and multidimensional and is related to a broad range of factors, including poor health and educational status, limited chances in the labor market, as well as discrimination and unique aspects of the social organization of Roma society, which together contribute to their exclusion.

Addressing the challenges facing the Roma is central to the success of economic transition and is an integral part of the process of building cohesive and inclusive societies in the region. Fortunately, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are not alone in this journey. The Roma are a European minority, and consequently the European institutions, as well as nongovernmental organizations, have been increasingly active in supporting initiatives and providing assistance. In particular, the European Union accession process is focusing attention on the conditions of the Roma in Central and Eastern Europe, and increasing international involvement provides an unprecedented window of opportunity for tackling issues through programs and projects.

Relative to other international organizations, the World Bank is new to Roma issues, and this report represents our first significant contribution in this area. The report was written in the context of a broader study of poverty in the transition countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia and brings together the existing data to develop a picture of the poverty and human development challenges facing the Roma. It also draws upon new qualitative studies of Roma communities to bring the experiences and perspectives of Roma themselves into the discussion. Because of the complexity of the issues facing the Roma, policy approaches require attention from multiple perspectives, including human rights, opportunities for political expression and participation, economic opportunities, and access to social services. In this regard, it is hoped that the Bank's involvement in the economic and social development aspect of the topic will strengthen and complement the efforts of agencies working in other areas.

Johannes F. Linn  
Vice President  
Europe and Central Asia Region

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# Executive Summary

## Background

**W**hile Roma are considered to be among the poorest and most marginalized minorities in Central and Eastern Europe, information on their living conditions and the characteristics of their poverty is scarce, fragmented, and often anecdotal. Measurement problems are daunting and include undersampling in censuses and household surveys, privacy legislation in many countries that prohibits the gathering of data by ethnicity, the reluctance of many Roma to identify as Roma, and the incredible diversity of Roma groups and subgroups.

This report brings together the available evidence from primary and secondary sources, including household surveys and results of recent qualitative studies, to develop a picture of the human development challenges facing Roma, both in terms of their welfare and access to social services, and to identify gaps where further information and analysis are needed. The report focuses on five countries in Central and Eastern Europe: Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, the Czech Republic, and the Slovak Republic, and makes reference to other countries in the region.

The first chapter of the report provides the historical context and an overview of the methodological issues and main data sources; chapter 2 presents the available evidence on welfare status and living conditions, examining poverty, housing, employment, education, and health; chapter 3 looks at issues surrounding access to social services; and chapter 4 reviews the opportunities for Roma participation in the design and implementation of policies and programs and outlines policy implications.

### Origins

Roma are a unique minority in Europe. Unlike other groups, Roma have no historical homeland and are found in nearly all countries in Europe and Central Asia. The roots of the Roma in Europe are the subject of much debate. Historical records indicate that they migrated from northern India into Europe in waves between the ninth and

fourteenth centuries. Roma constitute an extremely diverse minority: there are multiple subgroups based on linguistic, historical, and occupational distinctions. While Roma in some countries are nomadic, other groups have settled over time, some during the Ottoman Empire and others more recently under socialism.

Some of the greatest changes to the lifestyles of Roma in Central and Eastern Europe came about during the socialist period. Across the region, governments made concerted efforts to integrate and assimilate Roma into mainstream society and to eliminate ethnic differences. Communist parties issued decrees and adopted policies that aimed at socioeconomic integration of Roma by eliminating nomadism and providing basic services, housing, and jobs. In some countries, employment rates among Roma men reached those of non-Roma. However, in education, enrollment levels of Roma never reached those of non-Roma children in any of the countries covered in this report. While assimilation campaigns had positive effects in improving educational attainment and increasing access to employment, their impact was damaging in other respects and laid the foundation for inequalities within society that have persisted into the post-socialist period.

### A Vicious Circle of Poverty and Exclusion

Roma have been more vulnerable to the social impact of economic transition in the region than other groups for

four broad sets of reasons. First, as Roma generally have lower levels of education and professional skills than other groups, they have had difficulty maintaining or competing for jobs in the new competitive market economies. Roma were often the first to be laid off from state-owned industrial factories, mines, or agricultural cooperatives at the outset of restructuring. As a result, they have faced significant hurdles to labor market reentry, and have been forced to depend on declining levels of social assistance, insecure jobs in the informal sector, or work abroad. Second, economic crises have exacerbated numerous social problems facing the Roma, including low educational attainment and poor health status.

Third, the economic transition in Central and Eastern Europe has had a profound impact on Roma housing. Roma historically were not landowners, and as a result restitution and privatization policies have further diminished the amount of land and housing available to Roma. Fiscal constraints during transition also mean that fewer state resources have been devoted to maintaining public housing stocks. Finally, the economic crises of many countries, combined with political instability and weakened state institutions, have contributed to an increase in the level of discrimination and racially motivated violence against ethnic minorities, including the Roma.

As a result, poverty among Roma is multifaceted and is related to a complex mix of historical, economic, and social factors, including the location of Roma settlements, low educational status, large family size, and poor labor market and health status. Although other vulnerable groups in the region face similar circumstances, given the lack of integration among some Roma communities and the added barrier of discrimination, the challenges loom large. Aspects of Roma culture and living conditions also reinforce stereotypes by limiting communication between Roma and non-Roma, and contributing to a vicious circle of isolation and marginalization.

Access to social services in the transition period has been challenged in the context of increasing need for social services and tight fiscal constraints. These conditions have led to the emergence of formal and informal charges for previously free services and an erosion in quality. Roma are particularly affected by increasing barriers to access, because they are at a higher risk of poverty, and also because they face unique circumstances that limit their ability to access services. Roma communities in geographically isolated areas may lack access to social service facilities and personnel. Similarly, because Roma frequently live in quasi-legal circumstances or remote areas, they may lack the documentation necessary for enrolling

in school and claiming social assistance or health benefits. The high prevalence of Roma in informal sector employment also limits their access to insurance-based benefits, including health care and unemployment insurance.

Cultural factors affect access and interactions with social service providers. Because of language barriers and low education levels, Roma may have difficulty communicating with teachers, understanding health professionals, and maneuvering through local government offices to access social assistance. Poor communication and negative stereotypes of both Roma and non-Roma breed mistrust and reinforce preconceptions on both sides. Related to this, the overall absence of Roma personnel involved in policy design and public services means that there are few individuals who can bridge cultures.

### **Addressing the Challenges**

The plight of Roma in Central and Eastern Europe has not gone unnoticed. During the past decade, numerous initiatives by governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and international organizations have been launched to address various issues related to Roma, from combating human rights violations and racial stereotyping in the media to promoting education and employment. Countries have made important steps in recent years in formulating strategies to improve the conditions of Roma and establishing institutions to develop and administer policies and projects. Perhaps most significant, Roma issues have become an integral part of the European Union accession process.

Roma themselves have become increasingly active and visible at the international level. Because of the lack of a national homeland and connections with a single nation-state, Roma have turned to international agencies and bodies as channels for discussing policies and advocating their policy agenda. A number of international Roma NGOs have been established, and international organizations have increased their involvement in Roma affairs.

Addressing the issues facing Roma is a challenging task that will take experimentation, creativity, and patience. There are no easy answers, and changes will not come overnight. The concluding chapter of this report identifies the ingredients for a strategy, including cross-cutting considerations for policies and possible options for approaches to address poverty and improve opportunities for Roma. Three core themes can be emphasized at the outset, namely the importance of participation, monitoring, and partnerships.



### *Participation*

One of the clearest lessons to emerge from experience of policies and programs directed at Roma during both the socialist and the transition periods is that participation of Roma is essential for any kind of policy or program to work. The recent past is littered with projects and programs that, however well intentioned, failed because they were designed and implemented without the involvement of the future beneficiaries. Ensuring Roma involvement in policy and project development rests on the existence of effective participation mechanisms. While Roma have been increasingly involved in civil society and various aspects of policymaking, there are still significant challenges to ensuring effective communication and involvement, including low educational levels among Roma, fragmentation among Roma groups, and the lack of effective channels for involvement in policymaking. In recent years, all of the countries in the region have introduced a variety of institutions for integrating Roma into policymaking at the national and local levels, and it will be important to watch these experiments closely to ensure their effectiveness.

### *Monitoring*

There is a rich body of experience with policies and projects for the Roma in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in

Western countries. As an example, a review of Roma-related initiatives in Hungary undertaken by the World Bank identified nearly 1,400 projects and subprojects implemented by government agencies and NGOs in the areas of education, health, housing, and employment between 1990 and 1999. Despite this level of activity, very few initiatives have been evaluated or monitored; and as a result, it is extremely difficult to identify lessons for policy and future interventions. As countries move forward, it is important to examine this body of experience to distill lessons for future work. A related priority is the need to build mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation into new and ongoing initiatives and to provide opportunities for exchanging information within and across countries.

### *Partnerships*

Finally, because of the complexity and multisectoral nature of the issues facing the Roma, effective policy responses will require a multilayered approach involving partnerships among Roma and international organizations, national governments, NGOs working at all levels of government, local governments, and communities. Roma issues are inherently cross-country, and countries and international organizations have much to gain from close collaboration.



# 1. Introduction and Background

## Context

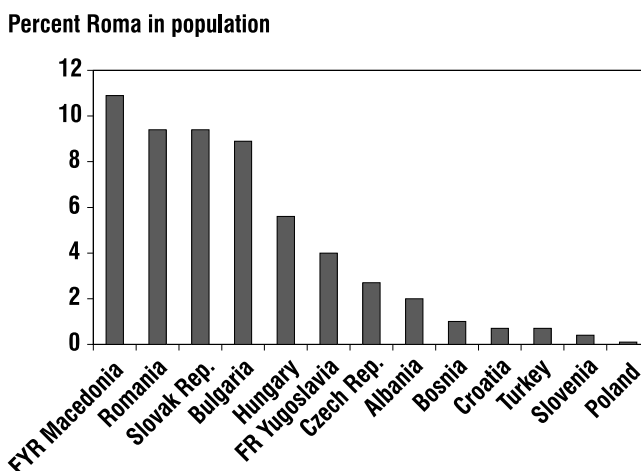
The situation of the Roma, or gypsies, in Central and Eastern Europe<sup>1</sup> is one of the most challenging issues to emerge during the transition from socialism. While living conditions have deteriorated for many across the region, perhaps no single ethnic group has been so consistently excluded from the opportunities brought about by the transition than the Roma. Poverty rates from recent World Bank poverty studies are striking. Based upon a 1997 household survey for Bulgaria, over 84 percent of Roma were living below the poverty line, in comparison with the national poverty rate of 36 percent (World Bank, 1999a).<sup>2</sup> Similarly dramatic, data for Hungary found that one-third of the long-term poor (households that were poor four or more times between 1992-97) were Roma, although they comprise about only 5 percent of the population (World Bank, 2000d).<sup>3</sup>

Roma are a unique minority in Europe. Unlike other groups, they have no historical homeland and are found in nearly all countries in Europe and Central Asia. From 7 to 9 million Roma are thought to live throughout Europe. Approximately 70 percent of this population live in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and of this group, nearly 80 percent live in countries that are currently in accession negotiations with the European Union.<sup>4</sup> In Central and Eastern Europe the share of the population that is Roma has reached between 9 and 11 percent of the population in Bulgaria, FYR Macedonia, Romania and the Slovak Republic (figure 1.1).

The collapse of the socialist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe created new opportunities for all citizens including Roma. For the first time in decades, minorities were able to express their ethnic identity, participate in civil society, and engage in previously forbidden economic activities. However, these gains have been offset by a dramatic reduction in opportunities in many respects. As has been

demonstrated most clearly in parts of South Eastern Europe, the transition unleashed underlying tensions between ethnic groups leading to outright violence, as well as both blatant and more hidden discrimination in public services, employment, and other aspects of daily life.<sup>5</sup>

**FIGURE 1.1. ESTIMATED ROMA POPULATIONS IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE**



Sources: Wheeler, 1999, from Roma population estimates: Liegeois, J-P., *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers*. Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 1994. p. 34. Total population data: *World Bank Atlas*, 1995.

These dynamics, combined with the widespread transformation of social and economic conditions that has taken place during the last ten years of the transition, have had a notable impact on Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. For most, transition has been a bitterly painful process. Throughout the region, the collapse of the socialist state led to an erosion of security in jobs, housing, and other services, and, in the absence of viable economic opportunities, the emergence of severe poverty. For a few, the advent of the free market and the opening of borders to neighboring states and the West has opened new employment options, frequently in the informal sector.

The transition has led to a rapid expansion of interest in Roma at the international level. In the first place, the dissolution of the Iron Curtain allowed for increased contact between the West and Roma in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Subsequently, concern over emerging evidence of human rights violations and seriously deteriorating socioeconomic conditions of Roma have raised the attention of international organizations such as the Council of Europe and the media. Perhaps most significantly, Roma issues have become an integral part of the European Union accession process.

Roma themselves have become increasingly active and visible in international circles. Because of the lack of a national homeland and connections with a single nation-state, Roma have turned to international agencies and bodies as a conduit for discussing policies and advocating their policy agenda at both the cross-national and country level. A number of international Roma nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have been established, and international organizations have increased their involvement in Roma affairs. The most salient example has been the establishment of a Contact Point for Roma and Sinti under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation's (OSCE) High Commissioner on National Minorities.<sup>6</sup>

Relative to other international organizations, the World Bank is new in its involvement in Roma issues.<sup>7</sup> This report was undertaken as an initial step by the Bank to understand the scope and magnitude of the challenges, raise issues for further analysis, and explore how the Bank's operations in poverty reduction and development could be more effectively designed to take into account these concerns. The report aims to inform the Bank, as well as policymakers and the NGO community in the region, about the topic and possible policy implications. It represents the initial phase of our thinking and inevitably raises many questions. On the policy side, the report is not prescriptive, but rather outlines a preliminary framework for a strategy

that will be further developed in close consultation with Roma, national governments, and partner organizations. As the final chapter of the report discusses, there has been a wide range of project and program activity in the area of Roma issues across Europe, and it will be essential to examine and build upon the lessons from this body of experience.

The report brings together available evidence from primary and secondary sources to develop a picture of the human development situation of Roma to identify gaps where further information and analysis are needed. Despite the severity of the issues facing Roma, information on living conditions and the challenges they face is scarce, often unreliable, and frequently anecdotal. Measurement problems are daunting, and seemingly simple questions such as estimating the size of the Roma population in various countries are extremely complex. Because of the dearth of existing information, the World Bank commissioned a number of background studies, which are drawn upon in this report. These included qualitative case studies of different types of Roma communities in Bulgaria and Romania, analyses of project interventions for Roma in Hungary, and literature reviews on health care in Hungary and the Czech and Slovak Republics.<sup>8</sup>

The report intended to discuss issues facing Roma in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe including the countries of the former Yugoslavia and Albania, but excluding the countries of the former Soviet Union. However, because of limited information and the size of the Roma population in the respective countries, most of the discussion focuses on five countries in Central and Eastern Europe: Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, the Czech Republic, and the Slovak Republic. This first chapter of the report provides historical context and background, as well as an overview of the methodological issues and main data sources. Chapter 2 presents the available evidence on welfare status and living conditions, examining poverty, housing, employment, education and health. Chapter 3 looks at the issues surrounding access to social services including education, health, and social protection. Finally, Chapter 4 discusses the institutions and channels available for addressing the challenges and outlines policy implications.

### **Methodology and Measurement Constraints**

Data on human development status in the transition countries of Central and Eastern Europe are plagued with problems and pitfalls. However, these issues appear almost insignificant in comparison with the challenge of measuring developments among the Roma. Seemingly straight-

forward questions, such as estimating the size of the population within a country, prove extremely challenging. Household surveys and censuses often do not distinguish respondents by ethnicity,<sup>9</sup> and even when ethnicity is included, a range of issues arise, including undersampling of areas where Roma are likely to reside, difficulties in locating and identifying populations that may not be officially registered, and problems with self-reporting. Roma may opt not to self-identify for various reasons, such as fear of discrimination (Druker, 1997; Liebich, 1992).<sup>10</sup>

Different approaches among surveys frequently yield contrasting results and impede comparability of data. For example, some household surveys ask respondents to identify their ethnicity, while others ask the interviewer to indicate the ethnicity; still others determine ethnicity by asking about the respondent's native language. The latter approach may underestimate results for Roma, as many do not speak Roma dialects. Still other obstacles exist to the analysis of administrative data, such as education and labor market statistics. In recent years, a number of countries have stopped collecting data by ethnicity for privacy reasons. For example, Czechoslovakia stopped collecting data on students by ethnicity in 1990, and Hungary in the 1993 school year (European Roma Rights Center [ERRC], 1999; Radó, 1997).

Yet another unique challenge of research on Roma is the legacy of biased research. A number of early studies of the Roma in the late nineteenth century in western European countries were racially motivated and sought to confirm theories about genetic inferiority (Fraser, 1995). A review of work on Roma health in the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic found more recent works with a social Darwinist and racially biased slant (European Centre on Health of Societies in Transition [ECOHST, 2000]). More recently, scholarship on Roma may suffer from the political nature of the issue. Roma leaders and activists have an interest in portraying the situation as worse than it may actually be, while government reports may gloss over issues and present a more favorable picture (Barany, 2000).

Analysis of ethnic minorities is a challenging task, which raises fundamental questions about ethnicity and identity. Some Roma may not consider themselves Roma or may affiliate with a different ethnic group. An ethnic Roma living in Hungary may feel more Hungarian than Roma, or vice-versa. For the purposes of this paper, Roma are defined broadly to include those who identify themselves as Roma and those who are identified by others as Roma. This is both because of the collection of data sources used and because of the policy focus of this paper—if policies impact

ethnic minorities, they may do so regardless of personal identity.

A further caveat is warranted regarding the difficulty of drawing conclusions about Roma in general. The diversity of the “community” is a distinguishing feature, which impedes generalizations at the regional and country level. As will be discussed below, there are numerous different subgroups of Roma. Researchers have identified 60 different groups in Bulgaria. In contrast, there are three main groups in Hungary. In addition to these ethnic differences, there is significant diversity among Roma settlements: rural-urban, assimilated-non-assimilated, homogenous-heterogeneous, as well as affiliations with different religious denominations. Some groups speak variations of the Roma language; others do not, and so forth. For analytical purposes, this report assumes some commonalities across countries and groups, but conclusions are necessarily tentative.

As this report relies on a patchwork of data sources, including data calculated directly from household surveys, administrative data, results reported from other surveys cited in the literature, and original qualitative research, the reader should proceed with caution. Many of the results may not be comparable across countries because of differing methodologies. Data sources are identified in the report when results are cited, and a more detailed description of the main sources by country is provided in Annex 1.

## Population and Location

Seemingly straightforward questions, such as estimating the size of the Roma population, are quite difficult and controversial. Estimates from different sources vary widely (table 1.1). The most frequently cited numbers are those of Jean-Pierre Liegeois, which are based upon the estimates of local experts, such as Roma community leaders and local government officials. From 7 to 9 million Roma are thought to live throughout the countries of Europe, with over two-thirds of the group living in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (table 1.2, box 1.1).

Roma populations are unevenly distributed across the region. The share of Roma in some of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe has become quite significant in recent years, reaching between 9 and 11 percent of the population in Bulgaria, FYR Macedonia, Romania and the Slovak Republic. These shares are likely to increase in the near future because of the high population growth among Roma and decreasing fertility among the majority populations.<sup>11</sup> The country with by far the highest number of Roma in Europe, estimated at nearly two million, is Romania. Large populations of between 400,000 and one

**TABLE 1.1. CONTRASTING ROMA POPULATION ESTIMATES**

Country	Year	Estimate	Source
Bulgaria	1992	313,326	Census
Bulgaria	1989	577,000	Ministry of Interior
Slovak Republic	1991	80,627	Census
Slovak Republic	1989	254,000	Survey of Municipalities
Slovak Republic	1980	199,853	Census

million Roma live in neighboring Hungary, Bulgaria, the Slovak Republic, Turkey, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). In Western Europe, the largest Roma populations are found in Spain (estimated at 750,000), France (310,000), Germany (120,000), and Italy (100,000).

Due to the issues discussed previously, census data are controversial and generally thought to underestimate significantly the Roma population. Attempts to measure the population through household surveys are similarly problematic. The share of individuals identifying as Roma in the surveys is significantly less than conventionally accepted estimates. For example, in the household surveys for Romania, which are based upon a nationally representative sample, only about 2 percent of the population identifies as Roma, while the share of Roma in the total population is thought to be nearly 10 percent. The survey addresses ethnicity in two ways: first, through a direct question on nationality, and second, by asking for the interviewee's native language. The share identifying as Roma in both questions has been consistent each year in

**TABLE 1.2. ROMA POPULATION, 1991–94 (THOUSANDS)**

Country	Roma population	Total population	Percent of Roma
Albania	95	3,421	2.8
Bosnia	45	4,383	1.0
Bulgaria	750	8,459	8.9
Croatia	35	4,788	0.7
Czech Republic	275	10,323	2.7
Hungary	575	10,280	5.6
FYR Macedonia	240	2,191	10.9
Poland	45	38,446	0.1
Romania	2,150	22,761	9.4
The Slovak Republic	480	5,345	9.4
Slovenia	10	1,993	0.4
Turkey	400	59,461	0.7
FR Yugoslavia	425	10,675	4.0

Notes: Roma population estimates are midpoints of ranges.

Sources: Wheeler, 1999, from Roma population estimates: Liegeois, J.-P., *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers* Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 1994, p. 34. Total population data: *World Bank Atlas*, 1995.

### Box 1.1. Roma Populations in the Former Soviet Union

Relative to the rest of Europe, much less is known about Roma in the countries of the former Soviet Union. Again, census data provide a limited view of the size of the populations. The 1989 census, conducted before the dissolution of the union, counted 262,000 Roma in the USSR, with the largest absolute numbers in Russia and Ukraine (table 1.3). Estimates from Liegeois suggest that the actual population in Russia is closer to 425,000 and 55,000 in Ukraine.

**TABLE 1.3. ROMA IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE FORMER SOVIET UNION, 1989 CENSUS DATA (THOUSANDS)**

Republic unit	Total population	Roma	Percent
Total USSR	285,743	262	0.09
Moldova	4,335	12	0.27
Latvia	2,667	7	0.26
Belarus	10,152	11	0.11
Russia	147,022	153	0.10
Ukraine	51,452	48	0.09
Uzbekistan	19,810	16	0.08
Lithuania	3,675	3	0.07
Kazakhstan	16,464	7	0.04

the survey. Similar problems are found with the surveys for Bulgaria and Hungary used for this report.

Because of historical factors and the great variations in types of Roma communities (for example, assimilated-isolated, rural-urban), settlement patterns of Roma within countries vary widely. Populations are unevenly distributed across regions. In Hungary, the greatest share of the Roma population lives in the North, East and South Transdanubia regions (Kemeny and Havas, 1994). In the Czech Republic the majority are in northern Moravia, especially in the Ostrava region; Prague; North, South and West Bohemia, and around Brno. In the Slovak Republic most Roma live in Eastern Slovakia (ECOHOST, 2000).

### History

The roots of Roma in Europe have long been a subject of mystery and controversy. Historical records indicate that Roma arrived in Europe from northern India in waves between the ninth and fourteenth centuries, although the reasons for their migration into Europe and their paths in moving into the continent are unknown. Linguistic roots and limited documentation suggest that the Roma came first through Persia and the Caucasus through the

Byzantine Empire into southern Europe (Fraser, 1995), although some Macedonian legends place Roma in Europe at the time of Alexander the Great as early as the fourth century B.C. The first detailed references to Roma in Central and Eastern Europe are found in twelfth century records from the Dalmatian Coast area and records from Hungary (now the Slovak Republic), (Crowe, 1996).

The subsequent history of Roma in Europe is as varied as the countries to which they migrated. However, as diverse as the countries and Roma groups were, a theme of marginalization and discrimination has been common to the Roma experience throughout European history. Early on, during their first centuries in Europe, Roma were valued for their skills in metalworking, music, and other trades. It is not known why the tide turned to prejudice and persecution, which manifested itself in different ways across countries. As early as the twelfth century, Roma were traded as slaves in the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia (currently Romania). Anti-Roma policies were propagated throughout Europe. A renowned scholar on Roma notes that “[h]ad all the anti-Gypsy laws which sprang up been enforced uncompromisingly, even for a few months, the Gypsies would have been eradicated from most of Christian Europe well before the middle of the sixteenth century” (Fraser 1995, p. 130).

In Central and Eastern Europe the policies of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire had a significant role in shaping the characteristics of Roma communities. Under Empress Maria Theresa in the latter half of the eighteenth century, Habsburg policies sought to eliminate the Roma’s nomadic lifestyle and encourage integration. While these policies were loosened with the end of Maria Theresa’s reign, they were the first step toward the sedentarization of Roma, an important feature that still distinguishes Roma in Central and Eastern Europe from those living in Western Europe. Policies toward Roma under the Ottoman Empire were on the whole more relaxed and mostly allowed for free movement of Roma across borders; however there were occasional attempts at forced settlement, including an initiative against Serbian Roma in the 1630s (Fraser, 1995).

The Nazi era marked the darkest period of modern European history for the Roma. Like Jews, Roma were targeted with discriminatory legislation and, subsequently, extermination under the “Final Solution.” During the course of the “Devouring,” as Roma called the Holocaust, approximately one-half million Roma from across Europe were killed in and outside of concentration camps. The largest population losses were Roma from Yugoslavia, Romania, Poland, the USSR, and Hungary (Fraser, 1995).

### *The Socialist Period*

Policies adopted toward Roma in Central and Eastern Europe under socialism left behind a legacy that has affected the socioeconomic status of Roma into the transition period. Although the extent of measures varied across countries, the socialist governments made a concerted effort to assimilate Roma into society and to minimize ethnic differences within society. Communist parties issued decrees and adopted policies that aimed at socioeconomic integration by providing basic services, including housing and jobs for Roma.

The stringency of these measures varied across countries and time periods. Among the most repressive campaigns were movements in Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria that strove to erase ethnic divisions completely. In contrast, Yugoslavia allowed for retention of ethnic identity and gave Roma official status as a nationality in 1981 (Poulton, 1991). In Czechoslovakia in 1958, the government issued a decree proclaiming that Roma were not a separate ethnic group and embarked upon a violent campaign against nomadism, including plans for a “dispersal and transfer” scheme that would resettle Roma from areas with large Roma communities in eastern Slovakia to the Czech lands. The latter program was never fully implemented, and conditions were somewhat relaxed during the hiatus of the “Prague Spring” liberalization in 1968. During this period, Romani language teaching was introduced in the schools to facilitate integration. Assimilation programs were imposed with new vigor following the Soviet crackdown (Fraser, 1995).

In Bulgaria, all ethnic minorities, including Bulgarian Turks and Roma were targeted with “Bulgarization,” as the regime attempted to suppress cultural identities through forced assimilation. Minorities were forced to change their names to Bulgarian names and were sanctioned (through limiting access to social services), for not complying. In Romania, President Ceaucescu mounted an aggressive “systematization” program across the country in the 1980s that involved resettlement of entire villages and urban neighborhoods. While the campaign was not explicitly targeted to Roma, entire Roma settlements were destroyed (Crowe, 1995).

Assimilation efforts under socialism had a transforming impact on Roma in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Policies forced integration into the mainstream economy by providing employment, housing to settle nomadic Roma, and education. The impact of these policies was mixed. In education, for example, major strides were made in enrolling children in schools. In Czechoslovakia, a campaign increased the kindergarten

enrollment rate for Roma from 10 percent in the early 1970s to 59 percent by 1980. At the same time, the share of Roma finishing compulsory education increased from 17 to 26 percent, and literacy rates rose to 90 percent among adults. In Poland, an active education initiative enrolled 80 percent of Roma children in school the late 1960s. Some school promotion initiatives, for example, a Hungarian effort in the late 1980s, attempted to address underlying constraints to Roma school attendance by experimenting with Romani language teaching (Fraser, 1995).

However, these achievements represented a tempered success, as in many cases education policies adopted during the socialist era laid the foundation for inequities in education quality that have persisted in the post-socialist period. In many cases, Roma were channeled into segregated schools outside the mainstream system, which were often intended for children with mental and physical disabilities. For example, the education campaign initiated in Hungary in the 1960's focused on creating "special classes...within the national school system for retarded or difficult children" (Crowe, 1995). This led to a disproportionate number of Roma enrolled in special classes in schools. Similar practices were followed in other countries including Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria. The practice of enrolling Roma in special schools has continued following the transition and will be discussed further below.

Employment programs were also a mixed blessing. Some attempted to formalize traditional Roma trades. For example, the Polish government set up a program of cooperative workshops to support traditional crafts, such as coppersmithing. However, these low-paying and physically demanding jobs held little attraction (Fraser, 1995). Because of their low education levels and skills, Roma were employed in state-owned enterprises and as agricultural laborers on collective farms, frequently in the most onerous, unskilled positions. A study of the Hungarian labor force in 1985 found that one-half of Roma workers were unskilled, in comparison with 12 percent of the Hungarian population (Crowe, 1996).

As a whole, policies adopted under the socialist regimes did succeed in improving conditions and opportunities for Roma by increasing access to education, employment, and housing. However, these initiatives also created new divisions between Roma and the state. In the first place, the forced and often repressive nature of the integration campaigns fomented mistrust and tensions between Roma and public social services. This division was further reinforced by the complete lack of Roma involvement in policy development and implementation. Paternalistic state provision of "cradle to grave" jobs,

and other benefits also created a culture of dependency throughout society. The advent of transition and the loss of security in these areas have left many Roma, as well as others in society, feeling abandoned and alienated.

### Roma in the Transition

With the transition came new opportunities for ethnic minorities to express their ethnic identity and participate in society. In most countries, minorities were once again acknowledged as distinct ethnic groups. For example, in 1991 in Czechoslovakia, the new Declaration of Basic Human Rights and Freedoms adopted by the Federal Assembly in January 1991 allowed for free determination of ethnic identity. Roma political parties emerged in some countries, as have a diverse range of Roma NGOs. However the transition also brought new challenges and hardships. Political liberalization has allowed for the entry of extremist parties onto the political scene and the opening of other avenues for public expression of discrimination against Roma. Anti-Roma violence has been documented in the 1990s in all of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. While an in-depth discussion of the roots of these developments and the relations between Roma and the rest of society is beyond the scope of this paper, this section discusses a number of issues related to the characteristics of Roma as a minority.

### Diversity

A defining characteristic of Roma is their diversity. Researchers refer to a "kaleidoscope" and "mosaic" of Roma groups (Liegeois, 1994; Fraser, 1995). There are numerous subdivisions based on various crosscutting cleavages, including family groups and religion, many of which have little or no contact with each other (Wheeler, 1999). Because of their varied history in Asia and Europe, Roma participate in many different religions; there are Roma of different Christian denominations as well as Muslim Roma. In Bulgaria, Roma have traditionally been Eastern Orthodox or Muslim; however, in recent decades many have begun to attend Protestant and Pentecostal churches (Iliev, 1999). There are also geographic and historical groups, such as the *Slovensko Roma* from Slovenia, as well as subgroups based upon occupational categories. There are *Kalderashi*, former cauldron makers in Bulgaria and Romania; *Ursari* (bear-trainers) and *Kosnicari* (basket makers) in Bulgaria.

Roma may have multiple affiliations, such as with an extended family group, as well as a geographic and occupational subgroup (Liegeois, 1994). The number and diversity of Roma groups and subgroups differs across coun-



tries. The densest concentration of different Roma communities is found in South Eastern Europe, where there is greater variation in religious affiliation, dialect, and occupational specialization (Fraser, 1995). The degree of assimilation also varies notably across subgroups. In Hungary, the most integrated are the *Romungro* Roma, whose native language is Hungarian.

Use of the Roma language is still prevalent among some Roma communities, and there are numerous dialects. In Bulgaria half of the Roma speak Romani at home. This differs significantly across subgroups, ranging from 14 to 85 percent (Tomova, 1998). In the Slovak Republic and Hungary, a smaller share of the population reported speaking the Roma language at home. However, in both countries it was noted as a factor influencing children's school participation and performance (Ministry of Labor, 1997; Radó, 1997).

### Culture

Given the remarkable diversity of Roma communities, it is extremely difficult to generalize about the nature and characteristics of Roma culture. The available literature paints a fragmented and sometimes contradictory picture. However, it is clear that aspects of Roma social organization and values affect the interactions of Roma and non-Roma, the dynamics among Roma subgroups, and many aspects of their welfare. Cultural factors can influence the level of integration of communities, participation in civil society and political institutions, as well as the demand for public services and household behavior. This is an area where further research is needed to understand the underlying factors influencing the socioeconomic status of Roma across countries and communities, and to inform the design of policies and projects.

Despite the complexity of the topic there is consensus concerning the importance of the relationship between Roma and the "gadje" (or gadze), the Roma word for non-Roma. Roma define themselves as distinct and different from gadje. This helps to explain how Roma have maintained a separate identity across centuries, despite repeated pressures for integration:

Their ethnicity was to be fashioned and remoulded by a multitude of influences, internal and external, they would assimilate innumerable elements which had nothing to do with India, and they would eventually cease to be, in any meaningful way, Indians; their identity, their culture would, however—regardless of all the transformations—remain sharply distinct from

that of the gadze who surrounded them, and on whom their economic existence depended.

(Fraser, 1995 p. 44).

This distinction continues to impact the integration of Roma into society, their participation in civil society, and their use of public services. To varying degrees Roma communities have remained insular and separate from the rest of society. While some Roma communities have integrated, other traditional Roma communities and extended families are close knit, providing both security and protection from the outside world (Wheeler, 1999). In some cases, this division between the Roma and gadje worlds has reinforced stereotypes and mistrust on both sides, and has contributed to the exclusion of some communities. Roma may be reluctant to participate fully in education because of fear of losing their cultural identity. This dynamic likely influences other aspects of life, including employment preferences and use of health services. Conversely, the distance between Roma and non-Roma communities breeds mistrust and misunderstanding among non-Roma and contributes to negative stereotypes and discrimination.

The socially heterogeneous nature of Roma society and the numerous groups and subgroups also influences the level of integration of various Roma communities, their political participation, and relations among Roma communities. Distinctions between Roma groups may yield tensions in some cases. For example, traditional Roma groups may distrust or reject Roma who are viewed as more integrated. In Hungary, the more traditional *Vlach* Roma have few interactions with the *Romungros* Roma, and in Bulgaria the *Kalderashi* relate little to the poorer *Ierlii*, who they believe have abandoned their Roma traditions (Stewart, 1997; Iliev, 1999). Little is known about the complex hierarchy among Roma groups that is based not only on their level of adherence to Roma traditions but also to the prestige of clans and occupational groups, religion, and other divisions with society.

### Discrimination and Prejudice

With increased visibility of ethnic minorities in the transition period, came a surfacing of ethnic tensions. Discrimination, both explicit and implicit, confronts Roma in many aspects of life, including access to education, employment, housing, and public places. There are examples of Roma being barred from restaurants and hotels. Racial violence, including skin-head attacks and police violence, have also been on the rise during the transition period and have been documented in all countries covered in this study.<sup>12</sup>

Negative stereotypes of Roma are widespread throughout society. Recent United Nations Development Programme Human Development Reports for Bulgaria and the Slovak Republic quoted opinion surveys that found deeply negative perceptions of Roma to be pervasive. In Bulgaria, 78 percent of the population surveyed in 1999 said that they would not want to have Roma as neighbors, a figure well above that for any other ethnic or social group, including former prisoners (68 percent) (UNDP, 1999a). Similar results have been reported from surveys in other countries in the region.

The roots of such sentiments are difficult to determine, but undoubtedly stem from a combination of factors including history, difficult economic conditions, and feelings of social insecurity throughout society. As mentioned above, aspects of Roma culture and living conditions may reinforce stereotypes and contribute to a vicious circle of isolation and marginalization. Lack of integration and participation in civic life, including education, can breed misunderstanding and mistrust. Similarly, the poverty of many Roma communities contributes to resentment, as Roma are perceived as dependent on social assistance and consumers of scarce state resources.

### *Gender*

Roma women face dual challenges arising from their ethnicity and gender. The limited evidence that is available on the status of Roma women suggests they are at a significant disadvantage in employment and education.<sup>13</sup> Because of early childbearing (sometimes before age 15), and substantial family responsibilities, girls tend to drop out of school earlier than boys, and hence are less equipped for the labor market. Low levels of education also have implications for family health and the welfare of children. Women themselves have heightened health risks stemming from poor reproductive health, including high numbers of closely spaced births, inadequate prenatal care, and poor nutrition. There is also growing evidence that Roma women are increasingly involved in prostitution and are at higher risk of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS (ECOHST, 2000).

Gender roles are traditionally defined in many Roma communities. Women are largely responsible for overseeing the daily needs of the family. Roma women frequently have an added burden in a context in which men may be absent or travelling for work. In addition to having responsibility for raising children, it is women who most often interact with social service providers, including social welfare workers and physicians (Liegeois, 1994).

### *Migration and Refugees*

A distinguishing feature of the Roma in Central and Eastern Europe, in comparison with many groups in Western Europe, is that Roma in the transition countries are generally settled. There are exceptions: there are some traveling Roma in Central and Eastern Europe and settled Roma in Western Europe. The popular stereotype of the nomadic Roma caravan no longer holds true. That said, there is some evidence of increased movement of Roma in the region, following the collapse of the socialist regimes. This has taken different forms, from temporary movement within countries or across borders for employment, to migration and asylum seeking.

Estimates suggest that approximately 50,000 Roma left Central and Eastern Europe for the West along with other migrants in the early 1990s when border controls were relatively lenient. Migration slowed as countries began to close their borders. Beginning as early as late 1990, some Western European states, including France and the Netherlands, began to repatriate immigrants and deport asylum seekers whose applications were refused. (Reyniers, 1995). Increasing Roma migration has affected immigration policies between western and eastern European states. Due to increasing waves of Roma migration, many western European countries have suspended their visa exemptions with the Slovak and Czech Republics. The reasons for migration have been many. Some Roma sought political asylum to escape ethnic discrimination and difficult economic conditions, while others such as Roma from the countries of the former Yugoslavia, fled from conflict and crisis (box 1.2).<sup>14</sup>

**Box 1.2. The Roma of Kosovo**

The plight of the Kosovar Roma is one of the most pressing unresolved issues that has followed the 1999 NATO campaign in Serbia. As in other countries, there are different groups of Roma, including three main communities: Roma, Ashkalija, and Egyptians (members of the latter two groups may not consider themselves Roma, although in this text it is used as a collective term). While conditions, at the time of writing, are allowing most of the Kosovar Albanian refugees to return home, the situation for Roma remains unstable and uncertain.

Roma groups in Kosovo were caught on different sides of the conflict: while the Kosovar Albanians regard most groups as allies of the Serbs, others (the Ashkalija) were viewed by Serbs as traitors, along with Albanians. As a result, Roma were the victims of crimes and atrocities on both sides. The European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) has documented cases of expulsion and rape of Roma by the Serb police, as well as persecution and murder by the Kosovo Liberation Army (Cahn and Peric, 1999).

Prior to the conflict there were approximately 130,000 Roma in Kosovo. Estimates by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and others indicate that nearly 100,000 Roma fled during the refugee exodus. The large majority, perhaps as many as 70 percent, went to the neighboring countries of FYR Macedonia, as well as Serbia and Montenegro; still others fled to Western European countries including Switzerland, Germany, and Italy.

Conditions for many of the estimated 30,000 Roma who stayed in Kosovo during the crisis are mixed but remain critical for a significant share of the population. According to a recent UNHCR brief, security threats persist for Roma in some areas, including Gniljane, Urosevac and Pec. In contrast, conditions in Prizren were relatively improved. Roma are now able to move freely throughout the area, and there is an elected Roma representative on the municipal council. However, the situation is unstable even for Roma in these areas, and their mobility to other areas within Kosovo is limited.

The majority of Roma refugees remain refugees in neighboring European countries. The concern for these Roma is that the host countries will be able to recognize when it is safe for them to return to Kosovo. While conditions have made it possible for Albanians to return home, the situation is not the same for Roma.

In addition to security, economic reconstruction is an essential ingredient for promoting the safe return of displaced and refugee Roma. Many Roma homes were destroyed during, as well as after, the conflict and assistance is needed for reconstruction. In addition, many homes that formerly belonged to Roma have been occupied by Albanians, further preventing the return of Roma. A concern articulated by international observers working in Kosovo is the low level of capacity among Roma to access the international assistance that is coming into Kosovo. Compared with the Albanians, Roma are not as well represented and more poorly equipped in terms of the project experience and basic English skills that are needed to collaborate with donor agencies.

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## 2. Welfare and Living Conditions

The transition from central planning has led to unprecedented changes in social conditions in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. While new opportunities have arisen for some, others have fallen into poverty.<sup>15</sup> By now it is widely appreciated that Roma are among those that have lost out the most during the transition process. At the outset of transition, most Roma were poorly positioned to take advantage of employment and education prospects in the market economy. Relative to others in society, Roma were undereducated and overrepresented in low-skilled jobs. As a result, Roma workers were frequently among the first to lose their jobs at the outset of restructuring.

This unfavorable starting position, combined with a range of intertwined factors, has led to a spiral of increasing impoverishment for many Roma. Low education levels affect many aspects of human development, including labor market chances and poor health status. In turn, the loss of employment and the restructuring process meant that Roma lost not only wage income, but also related benefits, including housing, and access to some social services. Deteriorating living conditions affect health, and poor health status impacts children's school attendance. These factors are at play for other vulnerable groups in the region; however, given the lack of integration among some Roma communities and the added barrier of discrimination, the challenges loom large. This section examines key factors contributing to aggregate welfare among Roma in turn, looking first at poverty, then housing, the labor market, education, and health status.

### Poverty

Roma are both poorer than other population groups and more likely to fall into poverty. Results from all of the available surveys, as well as growing bodies of qualitative assessments overwhelmingly illustrate that Roma are overrepresented among the poor. Despite methodological challenges and issues with data comparability across countries, the overall impression is the same. Even in countries with

significant shares of other ethnic minorities, Roma are more likely to be at the bottom of the income distribution.<sup>16</sup>

Measuring poverty is an inherently subjective task that is fraught with methodological complexities. There is no correct or "scientific" method for measuring poverty. Poverty is usually measured using an absolute poverty line related to basic nutritional and social needs, or a relative poverty line related to prevailing income levels, such as a share of mean per capita income.<sup>17</sup> Relative poverty measures are discussed here.

A significant obstacle is measuring welfare. There are well-known problems with measuring income, including the difficulty in capturing in-kind income and income from informal sources. Individuals may be reluctant to report income from informal activities in surveys for fear of having to pay taxes and other obligations. As a result, consumption, or household expenditure, is more frequently used as a welfare measure in assessing poverty levels. The incentive issues related to reporting consumption are less problematic; however, methodological questions remain, including what to include in consumption and the difficulties of recalling household expenditures. The analysis discussed here uses consumption measures for Bulgaria and Romania and income for Hungary.<sup>18</sup>

In Bulgaria, the 1997 household survey found that over 84 percent of Roma were living below a poverty line,

set at two-thirds of mean per capita consumption. This compared with the national poverty rate of 36 percent and 40 percent for ethnic Turks. Poverty rates for Pomaks, or Bulgarian Muslims (categorized in table 2.1 under “other”), are also higher than for Bulgarians, but remain significantly lower than Roma. Comparisons of a panel of households surveyed in 1995 and then again in 1997 indicated that only 0.2 percent of Roma households had never been poor during both survey years.<sup>19</sup>

The poverty profile by ethnicity indicates similar patterns in Romania.<sup>20</sup> The poverty line used in Romania was set at 60 percent of mean consumption, per adult equivalent, a different measure than was used in Bulgaria. For three survey years (1995-97) the poverty rate for Roma was significantly higher than for the other population groups, reaching 79 percent in 1997, in comparison with the national poverty rate of 31 percent. Between 1995 and 1997, poverty increased for the entire population and the gap between Roma and non-Roma poverty rates narrowed slightly (table 2.2).

Results from the Hungary household survey are similarly striking. Because of its panel format, the dataset allowed for analysis of the duration and frequency of

poverty across the years 1992–97. “Long-term poverty” was defined as those households that experienced poverty four or more times during the panel period, with the poverty line set at one-half of mean adult equivalent income (World Bank, 2000d). While Roma comprised only 4 percent of the sample, the analysis found that one-third of the long-term poor were Roma.<sup>21</sup> While 7.5 percent of the total population experienced long-term poverty between 1992 and 1997, 53 percent of the Roma population fell into this category.

Poverty in Central and Eastern Europe is correlated with a range of factors, including large family size, low education levels and high unemployment. The survey data allow for analysis to disentangle some of these factors in order to assess whether being Roma necessarily increases the risk of poverty. Multivariate analysis for all three countries found that being Roma significantly increases the risk of being poor, regardless of other factors (Ackland, 2000). In Hungary, analysis found that being Roma increases the probability of long-term poverty by 13 percent. Similar analysis for Bulgaria and Romania found that being Roma greatly increases the risk of poverty.<sup>22</sup> This finding is difficult to interpret, as it is a likely reflection

**TABLE 2.1. BULGARIA, POVERTY BY ETHNICITY, 1997**

	% of population	Poverty rate		Poverty depth		Poverty severity	
		Percent	Share	Percent	Share	Percent	Share
Bulgarians	83.6	31.7	73.5	8.5	62.1	3.4	52.6
Bulgarian Turks	8.5	40	9.5	12.8	9.5	5.2	8.2
Roma	6.5	84.3	15.2	46.6	26.5	30.6	37.4
Other	1.4	46.9	1.8	15	1.9	6.2	1.6
Bulgaria	100	36	100	11.4	100	5.3	100

*Notes:* The poverty line was set at two-thirds mean per capita consumption. The “poverty rate” (or “headcount ratio”) refers to the percent of the population that is below the poverty line; “poverty depth” is the average shortfall from the poverty line and measures the intensity of poverty; “poverty severity” is the average squared consumption shortfall as a percentage of the poverty line, and is more sensitive to inequality among the poor (see Ravallion, 1993 for details).

*Source:* Bulgaria Integrated Household Survey (BIHS) 1997, from World Bank, 1999a.

**TABLE 2.2. ROMANIA, POVERTY BY ETHNICITY, 1995 AND 1997**

	% of population (97)	Poverty rate				Poverty depth		Poverty severity	
		1995 (%)	Share	1997 (%)	Share	1995	1997	1995	1997
Romanian	89.8	24.5	87.4	29.7	86.6	6.1	7.3	2.2	2.7
Hungarian	6.8	22.8	6.1	28.4	6.0	5.7	6.7	2.2	2.3
Roma	2.3	76.4	5.4	78.8	6.3	28.2	33.2	13.1	17.1
Other	0.3	23.5	1.1	32.6	1.1	6.4	8.9	2.6	3.6
Romania	0.9	25.3	100	30.8	100	6.4	7.9	2.4	3.0

*Note:* The poverty line is 60 percent of adult equivalent consumption.

*Source:* Romania Integrated Household Survey (RIHS), 1995 and 1997, from Dhanji and others, 2000.

of unmeasurable factors including discrimination within society and cultural differences. The impact of these factors will be addressed further below.

### Housing

Because of the diversity of Roma communities and contrasting conditions across countries, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the characteristics of Roma settlements and housing. Many issues in housing are similar to those faced by non-Roma populations, particularly for communities and households that have integrated into non-Roma areas. However, Roma are confronted with unique problems. Housing policies of successive empires, socialist regimes, and recent governments, have led in many cases to regional and geographic isolation and segregation of Roma neighborhoods. This has, in turn, created problems with access to public services, and questions about land and property ownership. Compounded by discrimination from some surrounding communities and municipal governments, conditions in many Roma settlements have deteriorated significantly. Every capital city in the five countries focused on in this report has a well-known Roma slum where housing conditions are extremely poor.

Many of the socialist initiatives that sought to settle and integrate Roma provided housing along with employment. Current Roma neighborhoods in some areas have their roots in these original settlements, although it is unclear how many (Macura and Petrovic, 1999). Findings from a recent government housing survey in Hungary indicate that 60,000 Roma, or approximately 13 percent of Roma in Hungary, live in settlement type of environments

isolated from the majority population (Puporka and Zádori, 1999). This was confirmed in another 1994 survey that found that 14 percent of Roma lived in settlements (Kemeny and others, 1994). This spatial segregation results from a range of reasons, including the historical location of Roma neighborhoods, municipal planning, and housing preferences. Some Roma communities have chosen to live separately, while in other cases, discrimination creates barriers for Roma to moving into other areas.

In the countries of South Eastern Europe, which were formerly part of the Ottoman Empire, Roma *mahalas* (administrative units) are common in urban areas (box 2.1). Towns under the Ottomans were organized into mahalas, which were based upon the ethnic and religious composition of the inhabitants. While these divisions have largely disappeared, Roma settlements based upon these old divisions continue to exist. In the countries of the former Yugoslavia, Roma mahalas range from several hundred to several thousand inhabitants, while in Bulgaria some are as large as 15,000–20,000. In some cases Roma mahalas were originally built on the outskirts of towns, but as urbanization has proceeded and the towns have grown, these settlements may now be situated close to the center of some cities.

Another common type of settlement rooted in the socialist era is the neighborhood located near state-owned enterprises. In some cases these were one-company towns. As part of their integration or assimilation campaigns, the socialist governments provided housing for Roma along with employment. Rents were either free to employees or heavily subsidized. In the transition period, as many enter-

#### Box 2.1. Spatial Segregation within Roma Settlements

There are common patterns to the internal geography of some urban mahala neighborhoods. The Nikola Kochev district in Sliven, Bulgaria, provides a typical example. Approximately 4,000–6,000 Bulgarian Roma live in Nikola Kochev, a settlement that has been traced to the fifteenth century. The majority of the inhabitants are textile workers, descendants of some of the first workers in a textile industry that dates back to the mid-1800s.

The organization of the district reflects class distinctions within Roma society. The most well-off members of the Roma community live in direct contact with Bulgarians on the periphery of the settlement; a large share of the adults are employed, and most of their children attend school regularly and continue on through secondary school. There is a large share of elderly inhabitants in this part of the settlement, as many of the young people have moved on to apartments in other, more ethnically mixed parts of town.

Poverty increases further into the settlement, in an area nicknamed “the Jungle.” The inhabitants of this part of the settlement are poorer, with lower education status, and are less integrated. Most are unemployed. Conditions in the Jungle are extremely bleak; houses are often constructed from scavenged materials and lack water and electricity.

Source: Tomova, 2000.

prises have been closed or restructured and collective farms broken up, the inhabitants have lost their jobs and many of these areas have become impoverished and sunk into poor conditions.

Residential segregation of Roma in urban areas is high. Research in Hungary traced the growth of these areas to the migration of Roma from the countryside during the economic crisis at the end of the 1980s. Faced with growing unemployment, many Roma moved to Budapest in search of better opportunities. Over time, due to declining living conditions and poor access to municipal services, conditions in these neighborhoods have severely deteriorated and common side effects of slums have appeared, including drug addiction and an increased crime rate (Landanyi, 1993). While there has not been further research in this area since the transition, it is likely that the further deterioration of living conditions and employment opportunities has led to continued rural-urban migration during the transition period.

The transition process has created problems with the legal status of housing for Roma, in part because property rights were often not clearly defined under communism. Some Roma were evicted from state-owned apartments when housing subsidies were withdrawn, or when properties were privatized or returned to prior owners. Many Roma now find themselves living illegally in dwellings, either because they had no choice but to squat, or because the property rights on their building were transferred following the transition (OSCE, 2000). In other cases, illegal tenancy has been intentional. Because they lack income for rent or funds to purchase land, many Roma have become squatters. These developments have serious implications for access to social services, as residency and identification papers are frequently required for social assistance benefits as well as access to health and education. In addition, many Roma communities have tapped into public services illegally, channeling water or electricity into their settlements.

Housing options for Roma have also been limited by discriminatory practices of municipal officials and landlords. In some cases local governments have attempted to reduce illegal tenancy by moving settlements to the outskirts of towns.<sup>23</sup> In other cases, municipal officials have overtly banned Roma, as was the case in 1997, when two Slovak villages, Nagov and Rokytovce, prohibited Roma from entering and settling in the villages. These bans were challenged in the European Court of Human Rights and were subsequently lifted. There have been reports in other areas of municipal governments' buying land and apart-

ments in order to ensure that Roma will not be able to settle in them (OSCE, 2000).

Questions about the legality of property ownership have arisen with land as well. The process of land restitution that took place following the collapse of the socialist regimes has had a varied impact on Roma. Because Roma were not traditionally landowners, few were eligible to file claims. In some cases, Roma who worked on collective farms were entitled to receive land after the cooperatives were dissolved. For example, in Romania in 1989, legislation on the break-up of the Agricultural Production Cooperatives, allowed for land restitution. Previous owners were allotted land up to a limit of 10 hectares, and those workers who did not own land prior to collectivization were eligible for up to 0.5 hectares. Because of poor records and shifting administrative borders, in many cases the available land was insufficient to compensate all former farm employees. Case studies of Roma settlements found that in most circumstances Roma did not receive land, and in situations where there was enough land for those who were not previous owners, Roma were the last on the list of recipients (Rughinis, 2000).

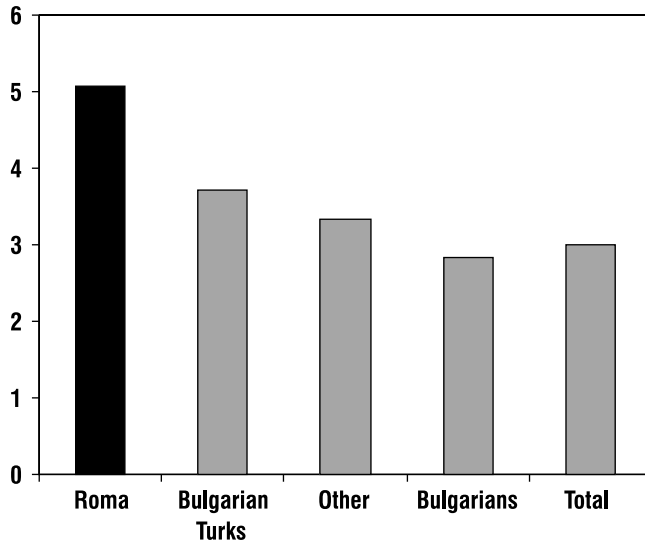
### *Housing Conditions*

Conditions in Roma neighborhoods are frequently poor and include problems of extreme overcrowding and lack of access to services. Some Roma slums have evocative nicknames, for example, "Abyssinia" and "Cambodia," extremely impoverished areas within Roma ghettos in Bulgaria. The household survey data show that Roma living quarters are smaller than those for other households, have larger household numbers, and are consequently more crowded (figures 2.1 and 2.2). In Romania, based upon 1998 household data, Roma dwellings were, on average, 20 percent smaller than those for Romanians, although their household size was significantly larger.

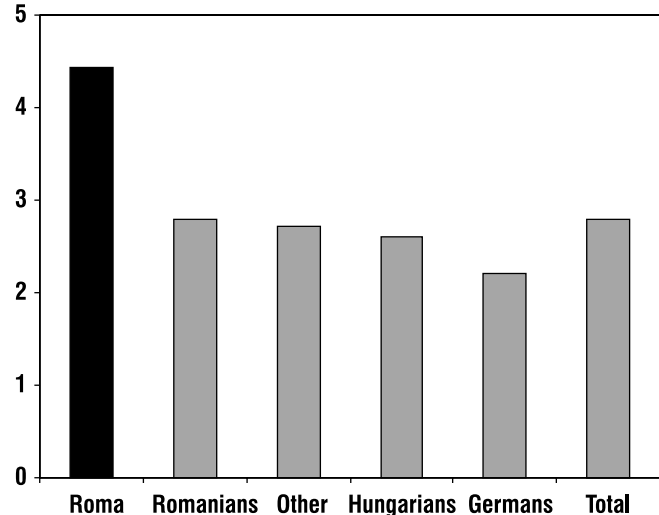
Lack of access to utilities, such as water, gas, electricity, and public services such as waste collection is a significant problem in many Roma neighborhoods. According to the household survey data, Roma are less likely to have access to water and sewage than other groups. In Romania, in 1998, only 24 percent of Roma had access to public water facilities within their housing units, in comparison with 46 percent of the total population. Similarly, a third of Roma households had no toilet facilities (indoor or outdoor), in comparison with 28 percent of total households. In 1997, 64 percent of Roma in Bulgaria used outdoor toilet facilities, which was lower than that of Bulgarian Turks (68 percent), but higher than for the total population (38

**FIGURES 2.1 AND 2.2. HOUSEHOLD SIZE IN BULGARIA (1997) AND ROMANIA (1998)**

Number of persons



Number of persons



Note: Household size refers to all individuals sharing a dwelling.  
Sources: BIHS, 1997, RIHS 1998.

percent). Access to an indoor water supply was also notably lower for Roma in Bulgaria. In 1997, 60 percent of Roma had water within their apartment or house, in comparison with 83 percent for the total population (see Annex tables 3–5).

Conditions have deteriorated severely among some Roma settlements. For example, in the east of the Slovak Republic, near the town of Kosice, set of apartment buildings inhabited by Roma called the “Lunik IX” settlement was described as follows: “[a] substandard flat with two rooms has to be shared by 20 to 30 people or more. In every room two families have to share kitchen and hygiene facilities. In some of the houses neither gas or water is working.”<sup>24</sup>

Cultural preferences of Roma communities affect conditions within Roma settlements, although it is difficult to generalize. Common impressions expressed by non-Roma across countries are that Roma do not take sufficient care of their dwellings and surroundings, and that they can be destructive of property and public spaces. Some of these perceptions may stem from cultural differences. For example, some Roma groups have taboos against having adjoining kitchen and toilet facilities (Pavis, 1998). As public housing initiatives failed to take into account the views and culture of Roma in designing housing programs, inhabitants have had little interest in the maintenance and upkeep of the buildings.

## Employment

Perhaps the most immediate and dramatic changes for Roma following the transition from socialism took place in the labor market. In Central and Eastern Europe, employment levels fell significantly during the early years of the transition as restructuring began and subsidies for large state owned enterprises were scaled back.<sup>25</sup> Because of their low skill levels, as well as discrimination in the labor market, Roma were frequently among the first to be laid off when labor-shedding began. These same factors have limited opportunities for Roma to reenter the workforce, and as a result, unemployment rates, and particularly long-term unemployment, among Roma are exceptionally high in many communities. It is not uncommon to find reports of unemployment rates of up to 100 percent in Roma settlements.

Roma have historically had connections to traditional occupations. Indeed many of the names of Roma subgroups are derived from associations with particular crafts dating back to the Middle Ages. Few of these connections still exist. Roma were traditionally not landowners and have had a limited tradition of involvement in agriculture. In Romania, a peasant class of Roma agricultural laborers did emerge in the sixteenth century under the Ottoman Empire. In the early twentieth century, many of the traditional occupations declined with industrialization. Crafts such as metal and woodworking faced competition from



manufactured goods and Roma began to shift into other areas of economic activity. In Romania, for example, Rudari communities in Transylvania, were traditionally woodworkers, began to be involved in trading textiles and seasonal agriculture.

### *Employment under Socialism*

Another significant occupational shift came with socialism, as Roma were compelled to move from self-employment and informal sector activity into full-time public sector jobs. Full employment and job security were defining characteristics of the socialist regimes. Employment was encouraged through guaranteed jobs, low wages, and a wide range of associated benefits and services, including housing subsidies, childcare, and health services. Unemployment was considered illegal in some countries, and sanctions could be imposed for part-time work, self-employment, or not working. For example, the right and obligation to work was legislated in the Czechoslovak Constitution (Ministry of Labor, 1997). In 1970 the Romanian government issued a decree establishing that “social parasitism” and other “deviant behaviors” were punishable with prison and forced labor (Rughinis, 2000).

In this context, employment of Roma was actively promoted through recruitment and assimilation campaigns. Along with the rest of the population, Roma were brought to work in the process of industrialization and collectivization of agriculture. Because of their low education levels, Roma were most frequently employed in low-skilled

manufacturing industries. There is evidence that a few Roma did illegally continue to work in their traditional trades. For example, in Romania, some Roma continued working as tinsmiths and brick makers, and engaging in small scale trading activities (Rughinis, 2000).

During the socialist period, employment rates for Roma in some countries did not differ greatly from non-Roma (box 2.2). In the Slovak Republic in the 1980s, 70 percent of working age Roma were employed (Ministry of Labour, 1997).<sup>26</sup> A survey of Roma in Hungary in 1971 found that employment levels of working age Roma men were slightly higher than those of non-Roma, with employment rates of 88 and 85 percent respectively (Kertesi, 1994). In other countries, such as Romania, the gap between Roma and non-Roma employment was wider. The situation for Roma women was quite different, as formal employment is not as common for women as men in Roma communities.

### *Developments in Transition*

Large scale restructuring in the early years of the transition period had an immediate impact on the labor market status of Roma. By 1993 employment levels of Roma in Hungary had fallen to 26 percent of the labor force and 63 percent for the population at large (Kemeny and others, 1994, figure 2.3). A study of Roma in Romania led to similar findings, indicating that in 1992, 45 percent of the Roma population over 16 was unemployed (Zamfir and Zamfir, 1993a). These trends have worsened during the

## **Box 2.2. Measuring Unemployment**

Reports of exceptionally high unemployment rates for Roma settlements of between 70 and 100 percent are common, but difficult to fathom, particularly in countries with active informal sectors. In these cases it is important to note how unemployment is measured and defined.

In general, there are two main instruments for measuring unemployment. First are *registration statistics*, which are based on the administrative records of the labor offices. Registration data are problematic, because they capture only those individuals who report to labor offices and do not reflect any kind of informal labor market activity. These data may significantly underestimate the long-term unemployed. Many countries place a limit on the duration of their unemployment benefits; once these have expired, people have no incentive to report to the labor offices. Registration data generally do not capture ethnicity.

Second are *labor force and household surveys*. These surveys ask about economic activity in general and can reflect both informal and formal employment. However, as was discussed in the first chapter of this report, survey data are limited in their ability to capture ethnicity.

Data included in this report are mainly from household surveys and other targeted surveys of the Roma population. Unless otherwise indicated, employment includes the share of the working age population (defined differently, depending on the country and source) that has worked for in cash or in-kind payment during a set period (either the previous week or month). In this case, informal employment is included. In contrast, unemployment refers to the share of the working age population that has not worked for payment.

transition period, as Roma have found it difficult to reenter the labor force, and the gap in unemployment rates for Roma and non-Roma has widened. In the Czech Republic, government estimates for 1999 suggested that 70 percent of the Roma were unemployed, in contrast with 10 percent of the total population (OSCE, 2000).

In Hungary labor force participation for Roma women has traditionally been much lower than for men, and it has fallen as well during the transition. A 1993 survey by the Central Statistical Office found that 17 percent of working age women were employed, in contrast with 63 percent for the total population (Kemeny and others, 1994).<sup>27</sup>

High rates of unemployment among Roma only tell part of the labor market story. Informal sector activity is an important source of income. The types of activities vary widely, from sometimes lucrative trade and work in neighboring countries, to more marginal subsistence occupations ranging from seasonal employment in agriculture to gathering and trading herbs and mushrooms and recycling used materials. Some Roma may prefer more flexible and entrepreneurial informal sector activities and self-employment to wage labor.

Popular stereotypes characterize Roma as lazy and not interested in work. However, survey data indicate that

Roma actively seek employment. In Bulgaria in 1997, 46 percent of Roma reported that they were looking for a job, in comparison with 19 percent of the total unemployed population. In Romania, 35 percent of unemployed Roma had looked for employment during the previous week, in comparison with 15 percent of the total population. Similar results were found for Hungary (Kertesi, 1994). However, more information on Roma values and attitudes toward work is required to understand these data fully. For example, as Roma are more frequently engaged in short-term informal sector activities and may have more than one job at a time, they may inevitably need to spend more time looking for work.

### *Discrimination in Employment and Wages*

There is growing anecdotal evidence that discrimination serves as a barrier to labor force participation for Roma. In the constrained environment of the transition, with an abundance of potential employees, and few jobs, some employers may resort to ethnicity for screening applicants. This can be both explicit and more indirect. For example, there have been examples of discriminatory job announcements in Hungary, such as a 1998 newspaper advertisement stating, “We will immediately hire a white-skinned, non-alcoholic bricklayer.”<sup>28</sup>

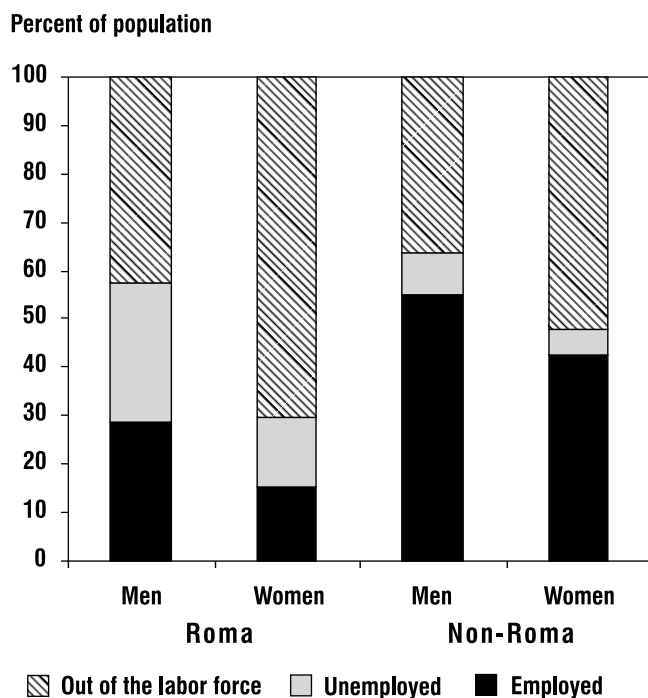
Similarly egregious are more subtle cases of employment discrimination. Roma have reported being turned away at job interviews, even though they were informed previously that there was a position open.<sup>29</sup>

If his Bulgarian name is Angel or Ivan or Stoyan or Dragan, he'll get all the application forms and be asked to come in. As soon as he does and they realize he's Gypsy, Roma, he's turned down, they drop their voices and tell him to come some other time. When your name's Bulgarian and they see you're a Gypsy, they throw you out!

*Roma, Dimitrovgrad, Bulgaria  
(World Bank, 1999c).*

Because of limited information on wages by ethnicity, the evidence of wage discrimination between Roma and non-Roma populations is difficult to gauge. A study for Hungary, based upon 1993 data, did find that wages for Roma were lower than for non-Roma for the same job (Kertesi, 1994). However, in further multivariate analysis, the study found that while discrimination explained a large share of the gap in employment between Roma and non-Roma, it was less important in explaining wage differen-

**FIGURE 2.3. LABOR MARKET STATUS IN HUNGARY, 1993  
(PERCENT OF POPULATION 15–74)**



Source: Central Statistical Office and Kemeny-Havas, 1993

### **Box 2.3. Occupational Shifts and Coping Strategies in Ciopeia, Romania**

Ciopeia is a small village in Hunedoara County, a former center for heavy industry and mining in Western Romania. Approximately 200 Roma live in Ciopeia. The community are Kalderashi Roma, a traditional subgroup that speaks the Romani language. Relative to other Roma and Romanian communities in the municipality, Ciopean Roma are well-off, and were before the socialist era as well.

Prior to the communist regime, Ciopean Roma were engaged in traditional trades including manufacturing bricks and buckets and selling hand-made soap. During the Ceausescu regime, many became employed in the large metallurgical factory in the area, “Calan,” and at the local butcher’s shop. Although it was illegal, some workers continued their traditional trades, and others began trading merchandise with nearby Serbia.

Following the revolution in 1990, many Roma were laid off as restructuring began at Calan. Since then, involvement in trade, employment abroad, and other informal sector activities have intensified. Many Ciopeans sell and barter second-hand clothing at flea markets in Hateg and Petrosani (towns 40 km away), and with neighboring villages. Still others have emigrated, or began short-term work abroad in Western Europe, most commonly in Germany, which has had favorable temporary asylum policies.

*Source:* Rughinis, 2000.

tials. Kertesi suggests that may be because most of the screening based on ethnicity takes place at the time of employment, when discrimination plays less of a role in determining wage levels.

#### **Education Status**

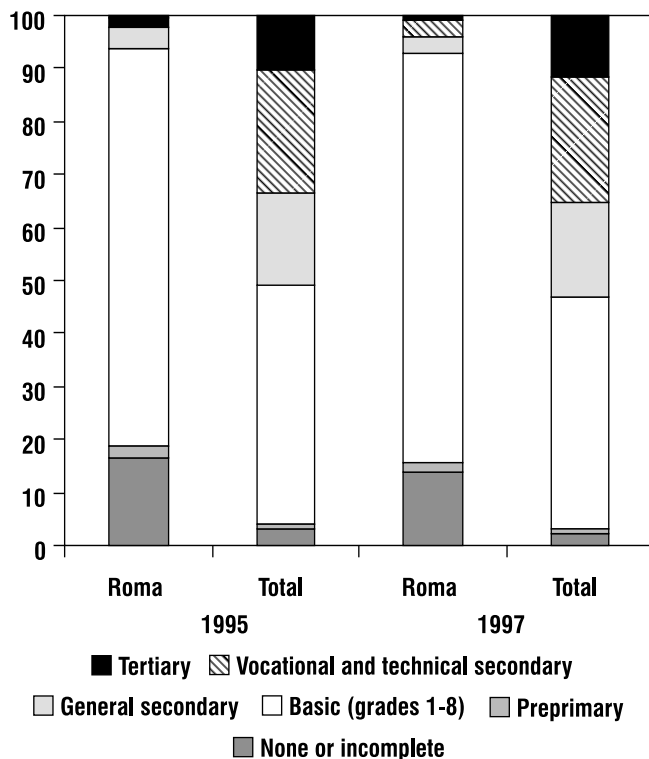
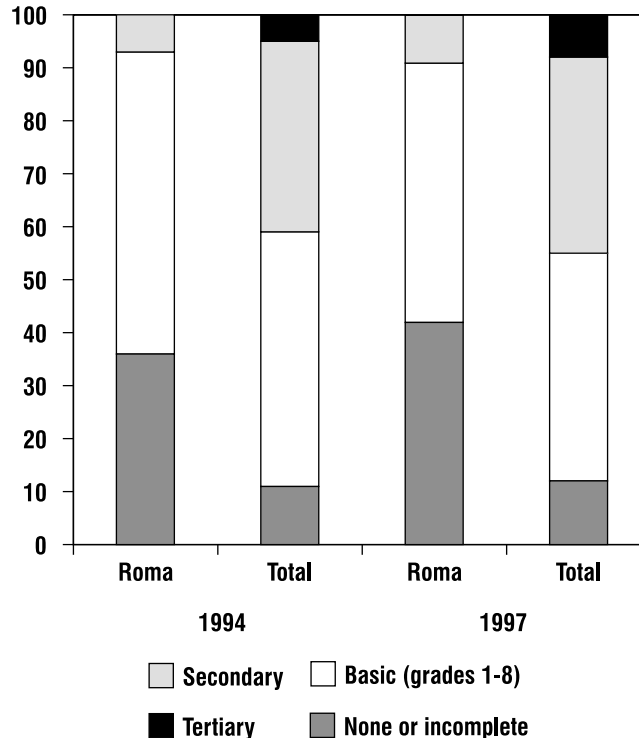
Education status of Roma has historically been low across Europe. While significant gains were made in enrolling children during the socialist era, the gap in the educational attainment of Roma and the rest of the population was not bridged in any of the countries for which data are available. Limited evidence suggests that access has eroded during the transition period, and children of basic school age are increasingly not starting or finishing school. These trends are consistent with national level developments in enrollments. However, data suggest that the decline in access among Roma has been deeper than for the rest of the population.

Gaps in access to education among the Roma are not a new phenomenon. It was not until the socialist regimes came to power in Central and Eastern Europe following World War II that large numbers of Roma were compelled to participate in public compulsory education. Education was a key element of the socialist assimilation campaigns and was viewed as an instrument of political and economic socialization that would facilitate the inclusion of the Roma into the full employment society. Despite the achievements in reducing literacy and increasing school participation, the efforts undertaken during the socialist era laid the foundation for inequities in education quality, as many Roma were channeled into separate or segregated schools outside the mainstream system.

#### *Educational Attainment in the Transition Period*

Gaps in education status persist in the transition period and are most evident in analyses of the educational levels of the population. Comparable surveys conducted in Hungary in 1971 and 1993 illustrate trends. In 1971, about 26 percent of Roma aged 20-29 had finished 8 years of primary school; this had increased to over 77 percent by 1993 (Kemeny, Havas, Kertesi, 1994). Despite these achievements, educational attainment of Roma lagged significantly behind the non-Roma population, with Roma much less likely to continue on to secondary and post-secondary education than the rest of the population (Annex table 8).

Household surveys for Bulgaria and Romania highlight a similar situation (figures 2.4 and 2.5). Although the data are not directly comparable between the countries because of differences in the definition of education levels, they do illustrate common patterns. In both countries, the share of Roma who do not attend school is much higher than that of the total population, and the share of the Roma who continue education beyond the compulsory basic education cycle is dramatically lower than the rest of the population. In Bulgaria only 6 percent of Roma had completed secondary education, in comparison with 40 percent of the total population. In both countries, the number of Roma who had completed university education was miniscule. Only two individuals sampled in the 1997 survey had completed university in Romania and three in the Bulgaria surveys. Trends at the secondary and post-secondary level reflect the legacy of socialist era policies, as students completing the secondary cycle in 1997 entered school at the end of the 1980s.

**FIGURES 2.4 AND 2.5. BULGARIA AND ROMANIA, HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINED, 1995 AND 1997 (PERCENT OF POPULATION GROUP)****Percent of population over 6****Percent of population over 6**

Sources: figure 2.4, BIHS; figure 2.5, RIHS.

It is not surprising that education levels vary notably within countries, between urban and rural areas, and across different types of Roma communities. In Hungary, for example, the 1993 survey mentioned above found that the share of Roma who had not completed primary education was 16 percent in Budapest, 24 percent in towns and 27 percent in villages, reflecting the different types of constraints to access in each of the areas (Puporka and Zádori, 1999).

Differences between types of Roma are also important. For example, the same survey found that the share of Roma with less than basic education was 23 percent for the Romungro Roma, whose native language is Hungarian; 42 percent for the Bayash, whose native language is Romanian; and 48 percent for the Wallach Romas; whose native language is Roma (Puporka and Zádori, 1999). A similar finding of variation across subgroups was noted in Bulgaria. For example, Roma from the Dzhorevtsi subgroup who are descendants of mixed marriages of Bulgarians and Roma generally have higher education levels than other groups (Tomova, 2000).

Information on educational attainment by gender is scarce and patterns are not clear. Results from a 1998 survey in Romania indicated lower levels of education for women than for men (Rughinis 2000). Women were less likely to have gone on to secondary school and university than men. The qualitative study for Bulgaria, conducted in 8 settlements in the country, illustrated a similar pattern; women were much less likely to have gone to school—29 percent had never gone to school or had dropped out before finishing grade 4, in comparison with 11 percent of men—and were also less likely to have continued on to upper secondary school (figure 2.6).<sup>30</sup> Evidence from qualitative studies suggests that girls drop out of school earlier than boys because of early marriage and childbirth.

Low education levels among Roma reflect problems of access to education. There have been increasing reports of declining school attendance among Roma children during the transition and this is reflected in the available data. While the education structure of the total population did not change significantly over the two survey years in Romania, for Roma the share of the population that had

not completed basic school education grew from 36 percent in 1994 to 44 percent in 1998. This development reflects decreasing trends in school participation among school age children, as the economic constraints to school attendance among Roma children have grown during the transition period. The barriers to school attendance are discussed further in the next chapter. Time series data on attendance are not available for Romania between the two years, but 1994 data on attendance highlight the gap between the Roma and the rest of the population. Of Roma children ages 7–14, 41 percent were not attending school, in contrast with 7 percent for the whole population.

Pre-primary attendance may have been most significantly affected during the transition period. In general, preschool and kindergarten enrollment rates have fallen across the region, as state subsidies for schools connected to enterprises were withdrawn and fees were introduced (UNICEF, 1998). Growing costs have discouraged parents from sending children to school. Data for the Slovak Republic highlight the deterioration; in 1990, 80 percent of Roma children aged 3–6 attended pre-school. This dropped by 60 percent in the 1991 school year, and by 1997 less

than 20 percent of Roma children were thought to attend (Slovak Ministry of Labor, 1997). In Hungary, where preschool is compulsory for all children at age 5, 11 percent of Roma did not attend school in 1997 (Radó, 1997). This is a serious development, as children who do not start preschool are less likely to attend primary school and may have more difficulty remaining in school. For Roma children, these issues are compounded by the fact that many do not speak the national language at home and, as a result, begin primary school at a disadvantage.

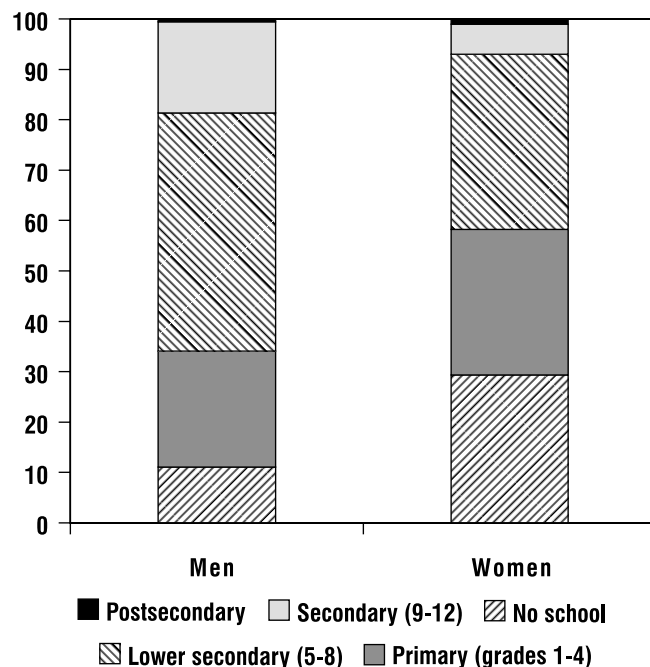
As illustrated in the breakdown of the educational status of the population, the gulf between levels of education is wider for Roma than non-Roma, indicating the challenges of moving from one level of education to the other. Limited evidence suggests that dropout rates have been increasing during the transition period, and disproportionately for Roma children (UNICEF, 1998). Informal estimates for Bulgaria suggest that most of the 45,000 students who drop out of school each year are Roma.

Dropouts are most common at the “breaking points” in the school cycle, when students transfer to new schools or when the educational cycle changes. The figures for Hungary illustrate this. While a total of 62 percent of primary students continued on to secondary school in 1995, only 9 percent of Roma did so (Radó, 1997). Findings from the qualitative study for Romania found that the share of Roma students in school dropped significantly after fourth grade, when students have more subjects and teachers. For grades 1–4, with few exceptions, students have one teacher for all classes; beginning in the fifth grade, students have a distinct teacher for each class and face a larger number of requirements. Related to this, the study found that the number of students’ repeating the fourth grade was higher than for other years (Rughinis, 2000).

Gaps in the education of Roma are not unique to Central and Eastern Europe. Schooling levels for Roma in Western European countries are lower than for other groups, although limited data are available. In Spain, which has the largest Roma (gitano) population in Western Europe, illiteracy among Roma is estimated at 50 percent for 2000. Enrollments in compulsory primary education have increased notably since 1990. However, data indicate significantly lower performance. In 1992, 35 percent of Roma completed primary education on time, 51 percent failed a grade, and 14 percent failed two or more grades (Martin, 2000). As a result, Roma are less likely to continue on to secondary school or university. Similar patterns of low attainment are found in other Western European countries (OSCE, 2000).

**FIGURE 2.6. BULGARIA. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF ROMA BY GENDER IN 8 SETTLEMENTS**

Percent of population over 17



Source: Tomova, 2000.

## Health Status

Data on the health status of Roma is scarce and fragmented. However, the information that does exist paints a bleak picture, pointing to significant gaps in health status between the Roma and non-Roma populations. Because of the data gaps, it is difficult to discuss trends in health during the transition period. On aggregate, Roma are estimated to live around ten years less than the majority populations in Central and Eastern Europe (Braham, 1993). Because of substandard living conditions, Roma communities are particularly susceptible to communicable diseases, including hepatitis and tuberculosis. Very little is known about the incidence of noncommunicable diseases among Roma. There are increasing indications that Roma have a higher incidence of health problems associated with unhealthy life styles, including drug and alcohol addiction and HIV-AIDS.

Data on life expectancy and mortality for Roma indicate significantly worse health conditions than for the rest of the population. Estimates derived from the Czechoslovak census data for the 1990s found that life expectancy for the total population was 67 years for men and 74 for women, while for the Roma the figures were 55 and 60 years (Kalibova, 1989, quoted in ECOHOST, 2000). In Hungary the life expectancy gap is estimated at 10-15 years. A study conducted in Pest County documented that Roma men lived 12.5 years less and women 11.5 years less than non-Roma inhabitants. Related to this, estimates of infant mortality rates show a similar gulf. In the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic, infant mortality for Roma was double that of non-Roma. In Hungary, infant mortality for Roma has declined faster than that of the total population, and the gap between Roma and non-Roma has narrowed. While infant mortality was 38 per thousand births for the total population and nearly 118 for Roma in 1970, this decreased to 17 for the whole population and 21 for Roma by 1990 (Puporka and Zádori, 1999).

## Demographic Trends

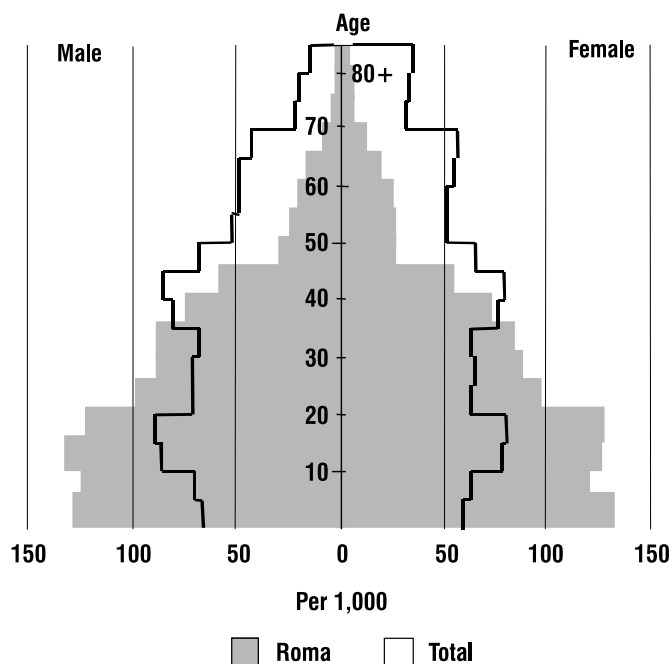
Roma have historically had significantly higher population growth than other groups. This has been, and continues to be, a sensitive political issue in some countries because across the region the size of the Roma population is growing much faster than the non-Roma population. In 1958, the Czechoslovak government issued a decree stating that Roma were not of a distinct ethnicity, but rather were a people “maintaining a markedly different demographic structure” (Fraser, 1995). Roma women marry at a

younger age and begin having children earlier than other groups. This has serious consequences for women’s reproductive health. The precise roots of high fertility among Roma are unknown, but likely result from socioeconomic factors, including poverty, low education levels, and cultural preferences.

Because of higher birth rates, the Roma community is significantly younger than other population groups. Data from two representative surveys of Roma conducted in Hungary illustrate this phenomenon (Puporka and Zádori, 1999).<sup>31</sup> In 1993, 39 percent of the Roma population was under 14 years old, while only 19 percent of the total population fell into this age group. In contrast, 19 percent of the total population was over 60, while only 5 percent of Roma fell into this category. Birth rates among Roma are much higher than those of other groups. Age pyramids from the 1991 Czechoslovak census illustrate a similar phenomenon (figure 2.7).

Evidence on demographic trends for Roma during the transition period is mixed. While overall fertility has declined significantly in Central and Eastern Europe, it is not clear whether this holds true for the Roma population as well. Evidence from Hungary suggests that fertility has dropped in some Roma communities (Puporka and Zádori,

**FIGURE 2.7. AGE STRUCTURE OF ROMA AND THE TOTAL POPULATION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC, 1991**



Source: Census data, from ECOHOST, 2000.

1999), while a study in Bulgaria found that birth rates were increasing among the poorer subgroups of Roma (Tomova, 2000). Regardless of these contrasting messages, the available data suggest that Roma families remain larger than those of other ethnic groups.

### *Reproductive Health*

High infant mortality and perinatal death rates for Roma are connected with the overall issue of women's reproductive health. Due to factors such as inadequate access to care, unhealthy lifestyles (including poor living conditions and nutrition), and high birth and abortion rates, Roma women are more at risk of complications during pregnancies than non-Roma women. A study conducted in Szabolcs-Szatmar County in Hungary in the 1980s found that Roma women were twice as likely to have difficulties in pregnancy, as well as premature births and low birth weight babies, than non-Roma women (Puporka and Zádori, 1999). Similarly, a study conducted in a district in the Slovak Republic in 1995-97 found low birth weights for Roma to be more than double that of non-Roma (ECOHST, 2000).

Maternal health is a serious issue. Because of low levels of awareness about health issues and impoverishment among many communities, Roma women face other health challenges, including inadequate nutrition and high levels of smoking during pregnancy (OSCE, 2000). The Hungarian survey mentioned above found that 63 percent of pregnant women were smokers (Puporka and Zádori, 1999).

Awareness about contraception varies across Roma communities. The qualitative study for Romania found that better off Roma women were more likely to use contraception (Rughinis, 2000). Another study, also in Romania, by Médecins Sans Frontières indicated that many Roma women preferred IUDs because they gave them more independence (cited in OSCE, 2000). As is the case throughout the former socialist countries, abortion is much more common than in the West and is an acceptable form of contraception. In 1997 abortion rates ranged from 63 abortions per 100 live births in the Czech Republic, to 135 in Bulgaria and 147 in Romania (UNICEF, 1999). Evidence from small-scale studies in the Slovak Republic and Bulgaria suggests that abortion rates are higher for Roma than non-Roma women (ECOHST, 2000; Tomova, 1998).

### *Communicable Diseases*

Poor living conditions such as overcrowding and lack of adequate sanitation facilities make Roma communities

more susceptible to infectious diseases than other groups. Reports of epidemics of hepatitis, tuberculosis, and parasitic diseases were common during and after the socialist period. Skin diseases such as eczema are also common. The last reported cases of poliomyelitis in Bulgaria, Romania, and FYR Macedonia all were in Roma communities (OSCE, 2000). In Bulgaria in 1992, 90 Roma children in the regions of Sliven and Sotirya caught polomyelitis. There were no cases among Bulgarians. In 1993 a diphtheria outbreak occurred in the same areas (Tomova, 2000).

In the 1990s a number of hepatitis A outbreaks were documented in Roma settlements in the Czech Republic and Hungary. In 1990, an outbreak was recorded in Brno in the Czech Republic, and in 1999 in central Moravia 40 children in a Roma settlement were hospitalized with the disease (ECOHST, 2000). Hepatitis B, a more dangerous form of hepatitis, has been found to have an even higher incidence in Hungary among Roma. Among pregnant women routinely screened for hepatitis B in Hungary, approximately half test positive and the majority are Roma (Puporka and Zádori, 1999).

Tuberculosis is on the rise throughout the region. A 20 percent increase was recorded in Hungary between 1990 and 1995. Tuberculosis risk is associated with poor living conditions, putting some Roma communities at higher risk. In the 1960s, a study in the western part of the Slovak Republic found that the prevalence of tuberculosis among Roma was higher than for the majority population (ECOHST, 2000). However, there are no indications currently that incidence is higher among Roma. Reports from physicians working in one of the main tuberculosis hospitals in Hungary found that Roma women were more susceptible to tuberculosis than men (Puporka and Zádori, 1999).

Another worrying trend has been outbreaks of measles among Roma in the Slovak Republic and Hungary, which may have been due to lapses in immunization coverage. Aggregate immunization rates throughout the region are high, reaching nearly full coverage. However, lapses in immunization coverage in Roma communities have been documented. In the Bulgaria case studies, 11 percent of households reported that their children had not been vaccinated, with the rate nearly 20 percent in the poorest sites, the Nadezhda ghetto in Sliven and the village of Sotirya on the outskirts of the city (Tomova, 2000).

### *Congenital Disorders*

Research on congenital disorders among Roma is sparse and frequently problematic. A review of literature on health among Roma in the Czech and the Slovak Republics

noted that some research was tainted by concepts of contagion and “social Darwinist” motivations. The studies focused on identifying race-based inferiorities among the Roma and had a greater concern for the health needs of the majority populations than for the Roma (ECOHOST, 2000). Nevertheless, the prevalence of genetic diseases among Roma is a valid concern, particularly since some groups of Roma have remained relatively isolated from the majority populations and a high degree of intermarriage has been documented in some communities (the extent of this is not known).<sup>32</sup>

### *Noncommunicable Disease*

Very little information is available on noncommunicable diseases among Roma. Across Central and Eastern Europe, mortality from noncommunicable diseases, particularly conditions associated with unhealthy lifestyles, such as poor nutrition, smoking, and alcoholism, is high (Staines, 1999). Some Roma communities may be particularly susceptible to these conditions because of lifestyles. The prevalence of smoking, alcoholism, and poor diets is reported to be higher among some Roma communities. Another study in Hungary found that smoking was exceptionally high among Roma, and particularly among Roma women. Another survey of students in a Roma school in Hungary found that 85 percent of students between 15 and 22 had tried cigarettes, and 45 percent smoked an average of a package of cigarettes a day (Puporka and Zádori, 1999).

Although little information is available, occupational injuries and environmental conditions are also likely to be sources of ill health among Roma. As the lowest-skilled jobs were also most likely to be the most hazardous, many Roma were employed in dangerous professions during the socialist period, including mining and other aspects of heavy industry such as working with toxic substances. While no statistics are available, the incidence of disability from workplace injury is thought to be disproportionately high among Roma. Similarly, exposure to hazardous materials and highly polluted regions is also an issue for Roma, as many live or work in the area of dumpsites, mines, and abandoned factories. A recent report described conditions in the eastern Slovak town of Rudnany, where 500 Roma were living in an abandoned iron and mercury mine. The area is known to be highly contaminated (Erlanger, 2000). Many Roma engage in recycling activities, including trading in scrap materials, which can be dangerous. In a highly publicized case in Hungary, Roma were supporting themselves by melting down batteries. This created serious pollution that was blamed for a child’s death from lead poisoning (Puporka and Zádori, 1999).

### *Nutrition*

Unhealthy diets are an important factor in poor health status across Central and Eastern Europe (Galloway and Rokx, 2000). Because of low socioeconomic status, Roma are more susceptible to unhealthy dietary habits associated with poverty and low public health awareness. A 1997 study of nutrition among children in the Czech Republic found that the nutritional intake of Roma was worse than that of Czech children. Roma did not eat enough vegetables, milk and dairy products, cereals and grains, and meats. In contrast, Roma children were found to consume four and a half times the recommended daily allowance of snack foods containing fat and sugar (ECOHOST, 2000). Malnourishment of children has adverse effects on growth and future development, and some evidence of stunting among Roma has already been documented. A study of the growth of children in the eastern part of the Slovak Republic found that Roma children developed more slowly than Slovak children of the same age (ECOHOST, 2000).

### *Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and Drug Abuse*

Other than anecdotal evidence, there is very little information on the prevalence of STDs and drug abuse among Roma communities. Prostitution and trafficking of women with Western Europe has been on the rise during the transition in Central and Eastern Europe (UNICEF, 1999). Women have resorted to employment in the sex industry as result of the dearth of employment opportunities elsewhere. Reported estimates for the Czech Republic suggested that out of the nearly 40,000 prostitutes in the country, some 25,000 are Roma women (ECOHOST, 2000). Prostitution increases the risk of STDs, including HIV-IDS for the Roma community at large. However, to date there is no information on disease incidence. In a study of Roma in Miskolc, Hungary found that Roma were uninformed about the risk of AIDS and the options for prevention (Puporka and Zádori, 1999). In Romania, a serious problem has been the high incidence of AIDS among children in institutions in Romania. Although no data are available, a large share are thought to be Roma.

Drug abuse is on the rise among some Roma groups. Information is scarce because although the number of addicts is thought to be high, Roma are generally less likely to seek help at testing and counseling clinics and are not counted (ECOHOST, 2000). The head of the Drug Prevention Center in Budapest estimates that 20 percent of the patients treated in his clinic are Roma. He categorizes Roma drug users into two groups, young children between 9 and 12 who are addicted to sniffing glue, and older



addicts, usually over age 19, who use hard drugs, including heroin, cocaine, speed, and LSD (Puporka and Zádori, 1999). Drug usage and trade may be most prevalent among

communities in border areas, as is the case in the Black Sea region of Bulgaria (box 2.4).

### **Box 2.4. Heroin Addiction in Varna, Bulgaria**

The Black Sea port city of Varna is the third largest city in Bulgaria. According to the 1992 census, 1.3 percent of the population were identified as Roma, but the actual number is thought to be significantly higher. Because of its location on the Black Sea, informal trading opportunities with neighboring countries are rife and recent evidence from the Maksouda Quarter, a Roma mahala on the western outskirts of the city, indicates a flourishing drug trade, particularly in heroin.

The Maksouda Quarter dates back at least 100 years to Ottoman times. Formerly a camp for nomadic Roma, the Quarter grew rapidly with the establishment of a textile factory at the turn of the century and additional employment opportunities provided by the Varna shipyards during the socialist period. The population reached 15,000 by the 1970s. Informal sector activity has been prevalent, even under the socialist regime because of the large numbers of foreign tourists in Varna who are attracted by popular beach resorts and opportunities for travel to other Black Sea border states. Among other ventures, currency trading, “trader-tourism” in clothing and other goods, and prostitution are common.

According to estimates by the police and doctors at the Varna Medical University, there were approximately 750 Roma heroin users in Maksouda in 1999. The users are predominately young between 13 and 35 years old, with two-thirds between 15 and 25. While a few began using heroin before 1989, the serious trade and use of heroin increased after the transition, which increased opportunities for travel. Drugs, including heroin, marijuana, and cocaine, are either bought abroad or brought in by traders from other countries, including Russia, Romania, the countries of the former Yugoslavia, and as far away as Iran.

There wasn't such a thing before. But when this democracy came, it began all of a sudden. It is mainly from poor families that became addicts. There are also some from rich families, but not so many.

*Milko, 40 years old.*

More recently, addicts have shifted from smoking and inhaling heroin to intravenous injections. While no cases of HIV have been reported yet, there have been hepatitis outbreaks among users. The university hospital in Varna has a clinic for substance abuse, and many users interviewed identified it as an important source of help and hope for breaking the cycle of addiction.

*Source:* Konstantinov, 1999.

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## 3. Access to Social Services

**T**hroughout the region the poor face challenges in accessing quality and effective social services. Although the socialist regimes succeeded in achieving high levels of access to education and health, underlying inefficiencies threatened the quality and effectiveness of service. Access in the transition period has been challenged in the context of increasing need for social services and tight fiscal constraints.<sup>33</sup> These conditions have led to the emergence of formal and informal charges for previously free services as well as eroding quality. Roma are particularly affected by increasing barriers to access, both because they are at a higher risk of poverty, but also because they face unique circumstances that limit their ability to access services in particular ways. This section discusses the main issues related to access to public education, health, and social assistance. However, some crosscutting constraints affecting access can be highlighted at the outset.

A number of issues raised in the previous chapter directly impact access to social services among Roma. Marginalization in housing plays a significant role. Because Roma frequently live in quasi-legal circumstances or remote areas, they may lack the documentation necessary for enrolling in school, claiming social assistance or health benefits. In Romania, a 1998 survey found that approximately 3.5 percent of Roma and 6.3 percent of Roma children were not registered, and thus lacked access to social services (Zamfir and Preda, 1998, cited in Rughinis, 2000). This resulted from a number of factors, including the expenses related to getting identity papers and administrative costs. Roma may also live in isolated areas outside the range of coverage of public services.

Factors related to language and culture also impact access and interactions with social service providers. Roma children may have difficulty starting school because of limited proficiency in the majority language. Similarly, parents may have trouble communicating with teachers,

understanding health personnel, and maneuvering through local government offices to access social assistance. Poor communication and negative stereotypes of both Roma and non-Roma breed mistrust and reinforce preconceptions on both sides. Related to this, the overall absence of Roma personnel involved in policy design and working in public services means that there are few individuals who can bridge between cultures.<sup>34</sup>

### Education

For long-term development, the problem of low education levels may be the most pressing issue facing the Roma. Lack of education creates barriers to employment, healthy lifestyles, and participation in civil society. There is a close link between education and the risk of being poor in Central and Eastern Europe. Households headed by university graduates are much less likely to end up in poverty than others, while those with primary and narrow vocational training are at higher risk (World Bank, 2000c). The constraints to education for Roma are manifold and intertwined, and stem from economic conditions, characteristics of Roma society, and the design of the education systems at large. In this section both the factors that constrain physical access to school and those which impact access to quality education for Roma are discussed.

### Poverty and Education

Poverty affects children's prospects, both of attending school and performing well. Children from poor families are more likely not to attend or to drop out of school than other children for a range of reasons, including financial and opportunity costs, imperfect information about the benefits of education, limited choice and poor quality of educational services, substandard housing conditions at home that impede learning and studying, and poor health status. Data from the 1997 Bulgaria household survey showed that enrollment rates for children in the bottom household expenditure quintile of the population were significantly lower than those in the top quintile (figure 3.1). Enrollments for Roma children were 33 percentage points lower than the total population. No Roma were represented in the top expenditure quintile.<sup>35</sup>

The economic context of the transition has increased the cost to families of sending children to school. The increasing prevalence of both official and unofficial fees for education has threatened the ability of families to send their children to school. While public education is ostensibly free throughout the region, severe fiscal crises and subsequent reform efforts have led to the introduction of fees for non-compulsory education (for example, pre-primary and ter-

tiary), as well as charges for school-related expenses such as textbooks, school meals, uniforms, and student activities. Unofficial charges have also become more common, including charges levied by parent-teacher organizations and informal payments to teachers for private tutoring (Vandycke, 2000).

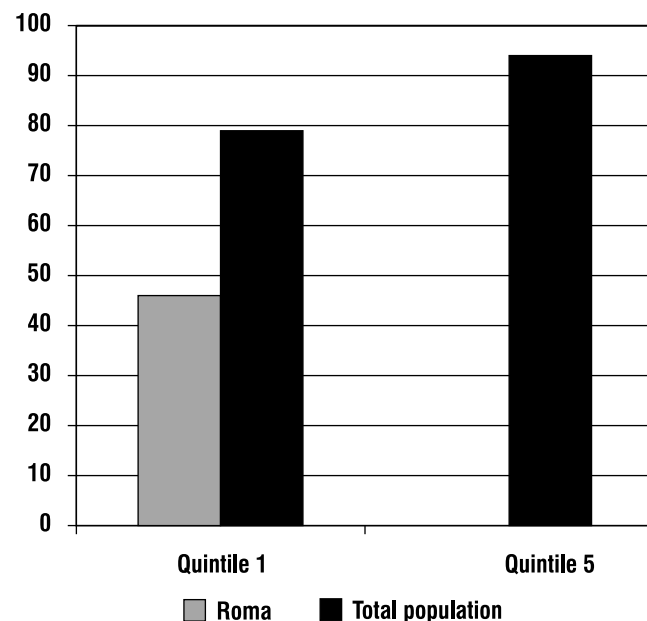
These developments have the greatest impact on poor families, who are ill positioned to pay for additional school related expenses as well as basic necessities such as clothing and food. Growing costs, particularly charges for preschool, may deter parents from sending their children to school in the first place, while recurrent expenses may lead older children to withdraw from attendance. Results from the qualitative fieldwork in Romania and Bulgaria found that Roma families had difficulty locating the necessary resources. Interviews found that parents were most pressed to provide their children with clothing, particularly shoes, which were not as readily available second-hand as clothes and food.

After the winter comes, we won't send them any more—we don't have clothing and shoes.... There is no food also. And the children wouldn't stay: if we bring them, they stay one hour and then they come running home, because they are hungry.

*Woman in Covasna County,  
Romania (Rughinis, 2000).*

**FIGURE 3.1. BULGARIA 1997, ENROLLMENT RATES BY QUINTILE**

Percent of children age 6–14 attending school



Source: BIHS, 1997

Even if poor children are able to attend school, incidental charges may keep them from participating fully in school activities such as electives, and the quality of their educational experience may be lower than that of other children (Radó, 1997).

As household incomes have fallen, the opportunity costs of sending children to school have risen. Families may require children to work, either in the home or outside in the informal sector. The extent of this phenomenon among Roma households is not known, but there are many reports of children dropping out of school in order to work. Because of large families, Roma girls may stay home to take care of children and other household chores, while in rural areas children may work in agriculture or other common income-generating activities such as gathering and selling scrap metals and herbs. Children work most frequently in the informal sector and as a result may engage in illegal or dangerous employment. Interviews with principals in Bulgaria suggested that many children dropped out of school after completing basic education, in order to work (Tomova, 1998).

Parents' education levels play an important role in children's school attendance and performance (UNICEF, 1997; Vandycke, 2000). In this regard, Roma are at a greater disadvantage because of the gaps in educational attainment. This factor may affect school attendance in different ways. Parents with limited education will be unable to help their children with schoolwork in the same way that parents of other children can. In the Romania qualitative study, teachers reported that Roma children performed poorly because they did not do homework (Rughinis, 2000). Parents may also be less likely to participate in school-related activities such as parent-teacher committees. As a result, the communication between teachers and parents may be less frequent.

The dismal labor market situation for many Roma may lead them to discourage their children from school attendance. As discussed above, the transition had an immediate impact on labor markets, as the collapse of socialism led to the dissolution of state-guaranteed employment. The extent of restructuring led to widespread unemployment in many Roma communities and, given the lack of alternative opportunities, many are long-term unemployed and have dropped out of the labor force. Children may be discouraged from attending school if the value of education for employment and mobility is not perceived.

High levels of participation in the informal sector by Roma may also affect school enrollments. A school director in Bulgaria noted that many Roma were working as migrant workers, or travelling for trade:

Parents are either unemployed or are migrant workers and in such cases all their efforts are directed towards the immediate survival of the family instead of towards the education of their children, who are often left without any control. They travel everywhere. Some try to find seasonal jobs at the sea resorts—selling underwear, fruit and vegetables, and whatever one can think of; others work as musicians in pubs.

*School Director, Sliven,  
Bulgaria (Tomova, 2000).*

### *Cultural and Linguistic Factors*

Negative stereotypes of Roma attitudes toward education are common. In the qualitative studies, interviews with teachers, education officials, and non-Roma parents frequently expressed the sentiment that Roma were lazy and not interested in school. There is no evidence to suggest that

these perceptions are true, and studies for Hungary suggest the contrary, that given a supportive environment Roma students are no less motivated than other students (Radó, 1997; Orsos, 2000).

However, aspects of Roma social organization and culture do impact demand for education. For many Roma, education is the first and most direct encounter with the outside *gadje* (non-Roma) world. Many Roma parents may be protective and reluctant to send their children out of their family and community and fear assimilation (Gheorghe and Mirga, 1997). In particular, parents in rural areas where children have to travel outside their home village or settlement may decide to keep their children at home. The traditional hierarchical organization of schooling may also differ significantly from Roma society. A sociologist has noted that “[s]trict timetables, immobility, group discipline, and obedience to a single authority figure all conflict with Gypsy emphasis on immediacy, flexibility, and shared authority” (UNICEF, 1992 p. 22).

Because of low ages of marriage and childbirth among some Roma communities, girls face additional challenges to staying in school. A survey of Roma communities conducted in Bulgaria in 1994 found that 40 percent of Roma marry before age 16 and 80 percent before age 18. These findings were confirmed in more recent fieldwork (Tomova, 1998; Tomova 2000). Similar results were found in the Romania case studies where informal, nonregistered, marriages were found to be prevalent, since many couples marry below the legal marriage age (16 for women and 18 for men). Related to this is the issue of early childbirth, which makes it difficult for young mothers to stay in school.

Roma children starting school without full language proficiency are at a disadvantage relative to other students. In this regard, preschool education is a critical avenue for preparing Roma and other minority children for school. Preschool teachers in Slovenia noted that lack of familiarity with the Slovene language was common among Roma (Government of Slovenia, 1997). With the decline in preschool attendance, Roma children are likely to have additional difficulty integrating into schools. There are very few Roma teachers available to help children with language difficulties. As a result, students may be wrongly tracked into special schools and classes for children with learning disabilities and the mentally handicapped, or may become discouraged and drop out of school altogether.

### *Education Quality*

Access to education is also directly affected by the quality of schooling, as students may be deterred from attending school if quality is low. Uneven education quality also

impacts equity of education. There is evidence that the quality of education for Roma students is lower than that for the rest of the population. The following discusses aspects of education systems in the region that limit the quality of education for Roma including the prevalence of “special schools,” the segregation of Roma students within the school system, and inadequate teacher training and curriculum.

One of the most damaging legacies of the socialist era for the education of Roma is the tendency to channel children into “special schools” for the mentally and physically handicapped. This policy had its roots in the socialist legacy of “defectology,” which assumed that differences among students were due to disability rather than environmental conditions and, as a result, should be addressed as medical problems in institutions separated from the rest of society (Ainscow and Memmenasha, 1998). The legacy of this practice has been the persistence of a parallel system of schools that provide lower quality education and fewer opportunities in postbasic education and the labor market than mainstream schools.

Evidence on this practice is most widespread for the Czech and the Slovak Republics and for Hungary (box 3.1). Data for the Czech Republic are striking; estimates for 1997 indicated that 64 percent of Roma children in primary school were in the special schools, in comparison with 4.2 percent for the total population. In other words, Roma are fifteen times more likely to end up in special schools than the national average (ERRC, 1999). Similarly, in Hungary about half the number of students enrolled in special schools are Roma (Radó, 1997).

Regardless of the quality of teaching in special schools, students enrolled in these institutions are at a disadvantage. The curriculum is less rigorous and expectations are lower. A detailed report on the Czech schools notes that students in special schools receive fewer Czech language lessons per week and are not expected to read for comprehension until the fourth year, in contrast with the first year for students in regular schools (ERRC, 1999).

Opportunities for graduates of special schools are also limited. Even if children are able to overcome the low expectations enshrined in the curriculum, they are not allowed equal access to school leaving exams. In the Czech Republic, students leaving special schools are only allowed to enter technical secondary schools, which offer limited training in narrowly defined fields.<sup>36</sup> Students are then dually challenged on the labor market, as employers look unfavorably upon graduates of special schools, and technical training fails to adequately prepare young people for the labor market.<sup>37</sup>

There is growing recognition that the existence of special schools is a barrier to the integration and educational development of Roma children. However, the obstacles to change are notable. Not only does resistance to integration come from non-Roma parents and education officials, who fear that increasing the share of Roma children in a classroom will lower the quality of education for non-Roma students, but opposition comes from Roma parents as well. Special schools can be attractive to poor Roma families for economic reasons, in that school meals and—for residential institutions—housing is provided. In addition, special schools are viewed by some parents as safe havens, in contrast with mainstream schools, where discrimination by teachers and other students creates a difficult environment.

Even where Roma children are kept within the mainstream school system, they often are separated into separate classes or schools. This is frequently related to geographic factors if Roma families are clustered in one part of a town. However, there is also evidence of further separation of Roma. For example, in Brno, the second largest city in the Czech Republic, there is a large Roma population in the eastern part of the city. There are eight basic schools serving the area and the majority of Roma children attend four of them. Within these four schools, Roma are frequently taught in remedial classes separated from non-Roma (ERRC, 1999). Similarly, fieldwork in Romania found situations in which non-Roma parents would request that their children to be taught in classes without Roma students, and teachers would divide up classes to keep Roma separate (LazaroIU and LazaroIU, 2000).

I cannot say that the school no. 102 is professionally worse or better than others. All I know is that the children are worse. I saw their behavior. That’s why I ran away from 102, because all gypsies are there.

*Mother, Bucharest, Romania.*

There was also evidence in the qualitative studies that schools with high concentrations of Roma children are ill equipped and understaffed, particularly in the poorest areas. A school director in Bulgaria noted that “schools with Roma pupils are looked upon as if they are stepchildren” (Tomova, 2000). Similar conditions were noted in Romania (LazaroIU and LazaroIU, 2000).

The situation of schools got better. Romanian schools have computers, but the schools from the “Gypsy land” are catastrophic because

### Box 3.1. Entrance to Remedial Special Schools in the Czech Republic

Roma children end up in special schools for many reasons. A study of this process in the Czech Republic found that because of discrimination and the highly discretionary nature of the process, many more Roma children end up in special schools than the regulations should allow.

Children can be enrolled directly into special schools, or transferred from a regular basic school. By law, placement is based upon the recommendation of the school director in consultation with the parent and an educational psychologist. In some cases parental consent is not obtained, or is abused. Parents may not realize that they are authorizing their children to be shifted into a special school:

My daughter is in the second year of basic school. She is doing all right. One day in November 1997 her teacher came to see me saying, "We want to move her to another class which will be better for her." He gave me a piece of paper to sign. I should have read it but it was long and I didn't think a teacher would try to cheat us, so I just signed it....

The next day I got a letter saying that my daughter had been moved to a remedial special school.  
*Roma parent, Prague p. 43.*

Educational psychologists play a pivotal role in determining whether children will be sent to special schools; they recommend students for examination and administer the exams. These procedures were found to be highly discretionary. In some cases children were even recommended for transfer without undergoing the required psychological exam. The tests themselves are problematic; psychologists may use a number of different instruments, many of which are culturally biased. An independent group of psychologists is currently working on a revised version of the test that will be more appropriate for Roma children and plan to present it to the Czech Ministry of Education later this year.

Because of the documented widespread abuses, parents of 18 Roma children from the Czech town of Ostrava initiated legal proceedings against the government last year. The Czech Constitutional Court ruled in favor of the government. An appeals process opened in April 2000 before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

*Source: ERRC, 1999.*

they are located there and the majority of children are Gypsy. The school is falling apart. Nobody cares because there are Gypsies there. We have only three or four Roma teachers. The children of wealthy Gypsies go to Romanian schools. For example the teachers from school no. 4 are much better than the ones from school no. 1. We tried to solve the problem and since September we have a Roma inspector. Because gypsies were slaves for a long time, most of them are illiterate.

*Roma leader, Vaslui County, Romania.*

The division of Roma into separate learning environments need not have negative results. Some schools create special classes for Roma in order to address particular needs, such as language ability for young children. In many cases, the impact of these programs has been found to be positive in encouraging school attendance and integrating Roma into the school system. In Hungary a number of alternative schools, largely at the secondary level, have recently been established to support the education of Roma by providing a supportive learning environment (Orsos,

2000). These initiatives have increased access to quality education. However, it is when separation is based upon negative rather than positive objectives that quality is endangered.

Discrimination against Roma by non-Roma parents, children, and teachers contributes to low attendance and can both discourage children from attending school and affect the quality of education they receive in the classroom. Stereotypes about Roma and their attitudes toward education lower teachers' expectations about the potential of their students. Discrimination can be both explicit, as in the case of schools creating separate classes, or more subtle, for example, if parents discourage their children from interacting with Roma classmates. A study of the Czech system documented a number of cases in which Roma children had been abused by education staff. One parent from Prague noted that "The teachers who teach Gypsy children are fine, but the others are terrible. They chase our children out of the dining room and insult them" (ERRC, 1999). Fieldwork in Romania also reflected discrimination by teachers, ranging from ignoring student needs, to pejoratively calling them "gypsies," to being violent toward them.

Teachers are central to the quality of education, and discussions with Roma in the qualitative studies indicated strongly that parental and teacher support were key motivating factors for student attendance and performance. However, there was little evidence that teachers were sufficiently trained to handle Roma students effectively. A teacher in Hungary noted that “[u]niversities and colleges do not prepare us for meeting Roma children” (Orsos, 2000). Teacher training programs generally do not include training in areas such as multicultural education, managing classroom conflict, and other areas that would facilitate the social integration of Roma. There is also a lack of Roma teachers within the education system. While the presence of Roma teachers is not a precondition for quality teaching, teachers who understand the background and challenges facing Roma children and who are role models are an important factor in reaching Roma students.

Schools also often lack the necessary support mechanisms to help teachers face challenging classroom environments. Teaching aids, textbooks, regulations, and content and quality standards are generally absent (Radó, 1997). A teacher in Hungary noted the following:

There is nobody to turn to if I have a problem...Some of the tensions we feel are connected to a lack of knowledge about the history and customs of the Roma, about surviving traditions that influence their lives. We do not know their language. Nobody helps to fill this gap.  
(Orsos, 2000).

## Health

Factors influencing access to quality health care for the Roma are similarly complex. However, much less is known about the underlying roots and causes. Given the deep deficit in health status among Roma, and the indications that nascent health challenges are looming, addressing these barriers is essential. Low health status can reduce an individual’s capacity to participate fully in education and employment.

Access to care among Roma is affected by the overall effectiveness of health systems in the region. While the countries in Central and Eastern Europe inherited fully developed health systems from the socialist period, the effectiveness of these systems is impaired by serious underlying efficiency problems, as well as equity gaps.<sup>38</sup> Since the outset of transition, all of the countries in the region have embarked upon reforms in health, including systemic reforms of financing arrangements and institutional reforms of roles and responsibilities in service delivery.

These developments have wide-ranging implications for the equity of care for society at large and certain repercussions for Roma in particular. Data from the household surveys for Romania and Bulgaria showed that Roma who reported being ill were less likely to receive treatment than other population groups (Annex tables 9 and 10).<sup>39</sup> Barriers to access for Roma can be attributed to poverty and low capacity to pay for services, geographic isolation of Roma settlements, uneven allocation of health facilities and personnel, cultural factors, and communication problems between Roma and health sector personnel.

## Poverty and Health Care

Poverty and inability to pay for medical services is a serious obstacle to health care for poor Roma families. While public health care is ostensibly free in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, there can be costs, including, in some cases, formal charges for medications and hospital-related fees.<sup>40</sup> More prevalent are informal and illegal “under-the-table” payments for services. Informal payments are widely accepted in the region and have the greatest impact on the poor (Lewis, 2000). Informal payments increase the cost of care and may deter sick people from seeking treatment. However the specific impact on Roma is unclear.

Informal payments are most prevalent at the tertiary level, for hospital care. In the Romania case studies, all of the Roma who were interviewed confirmed that while they did not have to make informal payments to physicians at local clinics, they did occasionally have to pay at hospitals. In these cases, payments were generally viewed as acceptable and respectable (Rughinis, 2000). A similar pattern was found in Bulgaria. In the case study survey, half of Roma patients were asked to pay for medicines and supplies during hospitalization (Tomova, 2000).

Many Roma reported difficulties in paying for drugs. While most countries have programs that provide free medications to vulnerable groups, the effectiveness of these is limited by overall budget constraints. For example, in Bulgaria the program is financed by local government budgets along with other social assistance programs. Because of local budget constraints, municipalities may not be able to finance the program. This was the case in Kardzhali, a municipality in southern Bulgaria, which suspended its allocation for free medications in 1999 due to lack of funds (Tomova, 2000). In other cases, the scope of the program may be reduced by local government officials or health sector personnel, leaving open the possibility for discretion in allocating benefits.

Inability to pay combined with low awareness and mistrust of physicians can also impact the effectiveness of

care. In the qualitative study in Bulgaria, Roma noted that they would purchase a part of the medicine prescribed by the physician, and stop treatment when the symptoms disappeared, leading to sometimes chronic conditions. Physicians in Romania noted that some Roma do not follow their instructions and, as a result, return to the physician sick once again. In these cases doctors prefer injections which are easier to monitor (Rughinis, 2000).

Health financing reforms will affect equity of access to care amongst the poor. Since the transition, most countries in the region have introduced universal health insurance financed through payroll contributions. The aggregate impact on equity of the move to insurance is not known; however, there are interim indications of adverse effects. In particular, lack of clarity regarding contribution arrangements for those who are not employed in formal wage labor have left some uncovered. Because Roma are most likely to be working in the informal sector, or not at all, they have been vulnerable to these developments (box 3.2).

### *Geographic Isolation*

While physical access to health services is generally not an issue in Central and Eastern Europe, some communities, particularly those in remote rural areas, do lack access to care, either because of the absence of a health facility or

health personnel in the community, or because of lack of transportation to a neighboring town.<sup>41</sup> In general, the inherited health systems in the transition countries were extremely inefficient and characterized by overstaffing of personnel and overprovision of facilities. Relative to neighboring countries in Western Europe, the transition countries have more physicians and hospital beds per capita than other countries. However, poor planning and inefficient distribution mean that facilities and personnel are allocated so that they may not reach Roma communities.

Because of frequent geographic isolation at the periphery of villages and towns, Roma communities may be more affected by gaps in physical coverage than other groups. The 1997 Bulgaria household survey found that the reported average travel time of Roma to health services was 30 percent higher than that of the total population. Issues surrounding physical access to services may have increased during the transition period, with the closure of health centers, particularly those associated with state-owned enterprises, and increases in transportation costs. There are also reports of discrimination affecting the availability of health care, including ambulances that refuse to serve Roma areas. Shortages of health personnel in less accessible areas are also a persistent problem for many Roma communities (Rughinis, 2000, Lazaroiu and

### **Box 3.2. Equity and Health Insurance in Romania**

In Romania, which introduced health insurance in January 1999, confusion over payment responsibilities has led to equity problems. According to the new system, all Romanians are to be registered with a family physician in order to be eligible for medical care. For those working in the formal sector, contributions are made through payroll tax deductions, while the self-employed, including farmers, are to make contributions on their own. Those who are uninsured are to be covered by the state budget, with eligibility determined by registration for social assistance. However, because social assistance covers such a small share of the poor in Romania, many are not registered. There is evidence that both health care personnel and patients have been confused by the process and many have gone uninsured.

In Babadag, a municipality near the Black Sea, a doctor reportedly stopped providing subsidized medications to Roma patients because she had received written instructions to provide them only to those who were insured. The doctor noted that only one Roma household, a relatively well-off family that is engaged in cross-border informal trade, had paid the contribution for health insurance (approximately US \$20 per month).

Another serious issue with equity consequences is the ability of physicians to select only low risk patients. As a result, discrimination and screening of patients has left some Roma uninsured. A physician in Tirgu Secuiesc, a town in Covasna County in the Transylvania region explained:

I do not register gypsies as a family physician; I do not accept gypsies....They come here and ask for money, ask for medicines....They have a lot of nerve. You have to keep an eye on them when they enter here. I do not think they are poorer than other people. They go to Hungary with business; they probably have more money than we have. They go by car to ask for social aid.

*Physician, Covasna County, Romania.*

*Source:* Rughinis, 2000; Lazaroiu and Lazaroiu, 2000.



Lazaroiu, 2000). Weak incentives for physicians to practice in remote areas (a common phenomenon in OECD countries) leave some communities uncovered.

### *Cultural Factors*

Cultural issues impact utilization of health services among Roma and their experience with the services. Traditional views about health care have been strong among some groups; however, it is not known how much these beliefs continue to influence Roma utilization of health services. There are indications that beliefs affecting health care are prevalent among some Roma, for example, taboos against screening for cervical cancer among Roma women. In other cases, limited language ability or low education levels may reduce understanding of treatment protocols and lead to weak communication between health personnel and patients.

As is the case with education, some Roma see health care as a *gadje* institution and regard it with fear and mistrust. Because some vaccinations induce fever as a side effect, parents may refuse vaccinations for their children because they fear the resulting fever and the child's crying (Rughinis, 2000). Similar issues arose in discussion with Roma in Bulgaria (Tomova, 2000). Roma generally view hospitalization, for any other reason than giving birth, as a sign of death and may avoid treatment (Fonseca, 1995).

Poor communication between Roma patients and doctors perpetuates stereotypes and breeds mistrust on both sides. The Bulgaria and Romania case studies found that some doctors and nurses have resorted to innovative, and frequently underhanded, strategies to encouraging immunizations, including making threats that Roma would have to pay for the services later if they don't accept them now, enlisting the police, and linking the distribution of in-kind social assistance with immunizations. A physician in Romania explained:

They have never been willing to let their children be vaccinated. We have to motivate them with methods adequate to their values. For instance we told them that a vaccine is very expensive, 60,000 lei, and we administer it for free now, [but] later they will have to buy it. We threatened some illiterate parents with false papers, telling them that they will have to pay penalties if they do not let their children to come for vaccination. (She shows us such a false penalty certificate, smiling) We put a lot of stamps on it...Sometimes we brought

policemen with us in the area to be more convincing. And it worked many times.

*Physician, Babadag, Romania (Rughinis, 2000).*

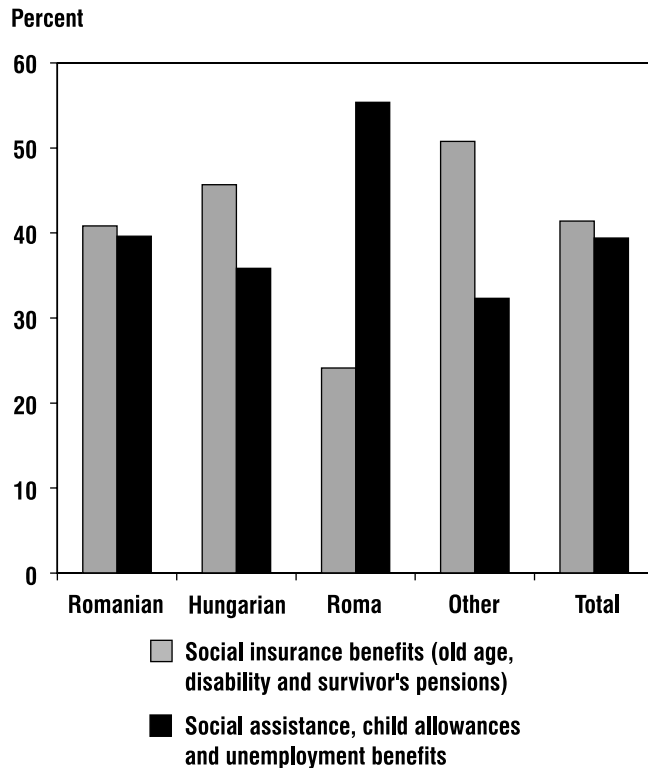
While possibly effective, these tactics likely perpetuated the mistrust between health personnel and Roma, and failed to address the underlying lack of information and understanding about the role of immunizations.

### **Social Protection and Employment**

Social protection programs have an important role to play in mitigating social risks for all vulnerable groups. Unemployment benefits and labor market programs can provide workers with temporary income support, and assistance with labor market reentry and social assistance cash benefits and services act as a safety net to help individuals and households cope with risks.<sup>42</sup> Because Roma are disproportionately among the long-term unemployed and poor, the popular perception in countries with significant Roma populations is that access to social assistance is not a problem for Roma. This is not always the case. As with education and health, Roma do face unique problems in accessing benefits, including lack of appropriate documentation, discrimination, and poor communication with service providers.

Perhaps more importantly, the quality and effectiveness of social assistance for Roma and all poor families in Central and Eastern Europe is constrained by the overall limitations of national resources and social protection programs themselves. While social assistance is a potentially critical mechanism for addressing poverty among the poorest households, problems with coverage, targeting efficiency, and benefit adequacy limit their effectiveness for all poor households.

Social assistance and unemployment benefits are more important for Roma than other groups. This is illustrated in data for Romania, which show that Roma households were significantly more likely to receive social assistance and unemployment benefits than insurance based pensions (figure 3.2). This reflects a number of different factors. As Roma are more likely to be unemployed and poor, they are more likely to have need for income transfers. In addition, their large family size makes it more likely that they are eligible for child allowances. Low receipt of pensions may reflect low participation in formal sector employment, lack of access to contribution based benefits, and lower life expectancy. In Romania, more Roma may have opted for severance pay following restructuring, rather than pensions, although further evidence is needed.

**FIGURE 3.2. ROMANIA: PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVING SOCIAL PROTECTION BENEFITS, 1996**

Source: RIHS 1996, from Dhanji and others, 2000.

### Social Assistance

The concept of targeted support for poverty alleviation is a new one in the region. Under socialism incomes were maintained through guaranteed employment and widespread subsidies on consumer goods, housing, and utilities. As a result, all of the countries in the region have introduced targeted cash benefits that aim to provide temporary income support to the poorest households. In most cases, this takes the form of a monthly benefit that is targeted based upon an income and assets test, or in some cases, indicators that are correlated with poverty (Andrews and Ringold, 1999). These programs are generally very small in scope (ranging from 0.1 to 1 percent of GDP in most cases), reach very few people, and provide minimal benefits.

As a result of fiscal constraints, coverage of social assistance benefits is extremely low in all of the countries where it has been adopted. The need for social assistance in the transition countries has escalated in a context of fiscal crisis, with rapidly declining resources available for social protection. In 1997 social assistance reached less than 10 percent of the households in Bulgaria and approx-

imately 12 percent of poor households.<sup>43</sup> In Hungary, social assistance reached 6 percent of all households in 1997 (World Bank, 2000d). In Romania, social assistance reached 2.5 percent of households in 1996. Evidence on coverage of Roma is mixed across countries. In Bulgaria in 1997, coverage was less than the average for the country as a whole, despite higher poverty levels among Roma. In Romania, data from the household survey found a similar result in 1997, but 1995 and 1996 data showed that receipt of social assistance among Roma was higher than for other ethnic groups (Dhanji and others, 2000).

Targeting social assistance benefits to the poorest households is an extremely difficult task. Errors of inclusion (non-poor households receiving benefits) and exclusion (poor households not receiving benefits) are common. Inclusion errors are high in some cases. In the cases where benefits are provided based upon an income and assets test, measuring income can be difficult, especially where informal sector employment is common.<sup>44</sup> Because of the large amount of informal sector employment among Roma, targeting may be particularly difficult in some circumstances. Although there is no evidence that targeting errors are more frequent for Roma, cases of poorly targeted benefits do reinforce the frequent perception among non-Roma that Roma who are not poor cheat the system to receive benefits.

Legislation on social assistance in all countries is non-discriminatory and all citizens are eligible to apply for benefits. However, even when national legislation on social assistance is inclusive, implementation at the point of delivery can be exclusionary. Roma face particular challenges in accessing benefits because of lack of appropriate documentation such as identity cards and proof of legal residence. In the Czech Republic, for example, all family members in a household claiming benefits must provide proof of permanent residence at a specific address in order to claim benefits (Visek, 1999). In other cases, discrimination may play a role. Decentralization of responsibility for delivering social assistance to local government officials, along with vague eligibility criteria in some cases, allows for significant discretion in the allocation of benefits (World Bank, 2000a).

The actual effectiveness of social assistance in lifting households out of poverty varies across countries. In most cases, benefits are too low and coverage too restricted to have much of an impact on poverty levels. In Hungary, social assistance lifted 4.5 percent of poor (ex ante) households who were receiving benefits out of poverty. Cash transfers other than targeted social assistance can have a greater impact on poverty.

Child allowances are an important source of support for poor families in the region, particularly because of the close link between poverty and family size (World Bank, 2000c). All of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe provide monthly benefits, although the design of the programs differs. In some countries the effectiveness of child benefits is limited by the way benefit levels are set. In Romania, for example, a supplementary child benefit provides additional benefits for families with two or more children; however, because of the benefit design, the amount received per child decreases for the third child. Simulations illustrated that providing an equal benefit for each additional child would have a significant impact in reducing poverty among large families (Dhanji and others, 2000). In 1998 in Romania, families with three or more children comprised only 5 percent of the total population, but had the highest incidence of poverty: 65 percent of families with three children and 84 percent of families with four or more children (or 17 percent of the total poor) were poor.<sup>45</sup>

On the other hand, decisions about setting benefit levels for all income transfers need to be carefully balanced with considerations of work incentives. Permanent cash benefits run the risk of discouraging beneficiaries from working at all, if the level of the benefit is close to what the individual could earn in the labor market. In this case, benefits effectively become a marginal tax on earnings and create a “poverty trap.” Again, this phenomenon may disproportionately affect Roma and other low-skilled workers, since the level of earnings they can expect on the labor market may be lower than that of other workers.

In the Czech Republic, the threshold for eligibility for social assistance benefits for families with two or more children exceeded the level of the average net wage in some regions in 1999, and was above the national average net wage for families with three and more children, clearly creating disincentives to work. In the context of transition, work disincentives are particularly difficult to manage, because socialism encouraged a “culture of dependency” in which individuals have expected to be provided for by the state. Countries have addressed work incentives in different ways. Some have adjusted the eligibility threshold to disregard a certain share of wage income, others have required participation in temporary public works or participation in job counseling services.

Another frequent concern regards the demographic incentive effects of social assistance benefits. It is argued that since the level of social assistance and child allowances commonly increases with family size, Roma are encouraged to have more and more children, which further increases their poverty and dependency on social benefits.

As discussed above, there are a number of reasons why Roma have more children than other groups. However, it is unlikely that benefits would have a significant impact for many reasons, including the low real value of benefits and rapidly changing economic conditions. Historically, attempts by governments in the region to increase natality through benefit provision have failed. In Bulgaria, for example, the socialist government adopted the “Act on Birth Promotion” in 1968, which provided for a range of child and maternity benefits. Aggregate fertility rates never increased following its implementation. Findings from studies on the effects of welfare on fertility in the United States are mixed and inconclusive (Moffitt, 1998), suggested that natality objectives are poorly met through tax incentives.

Regardless of the actual effects of social assistance on work and demographic incentives, popular impressions that cash benefits promote dependency further stigmatize social assistance and breed negative stereotypes. In countries where Roma are disproportionately represented among the long-term unemployed and poor, they have become closely associated with social assistance.

Most of them [social assistance beneficiaries] are gypsies. They can work, but they don't want to.

*Local government official, Covasna County, Romania (Lazaroiu and Lazaroiu, 2000).*

Some Roma are painfully aware of these views and note that popular perceptions of dependency perpetuate negative attitudes toward them and resentment that they are being supported by scarce state resources (Dimova, 2000).

### *Institutionalized Care*

Cash benefits represent only part of social assistance. Most countries in Central and Eastern Europe also provide a wide range of in-kind benefits and services, including soup kitchens, transportation subsidies, counseling, foster care, home care, day care, and subsidized medications for the elderly and disabled. One of the most damaging legacies of socialist safety nets was their overreliance on residential institutions for social care. Institutionalization was often the only option for elderly who were unable to live on their own, adults with physical and mental disabilities, and children in difficult circumstances due to poverty, ethnicity, disability, or other risk factors. In many cases the most vulnerable and marginalized members of society were placed in institutions. At least 170,000 children in the five

countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which are focussed on in this study, are thought to be in institutions. This number has increased during the transition and living conditions in these institutions have deteriorated significantly as budgets have shrunk and operating costs have increased (Tobis, 2000).

Although no reliable statistics are available, experts and officials agree that a disproportionate number of these children in institutional care are Roma. An estimate for Czechoslovakia in 1990 suggested that the figure was 50 percent. In Hungary in 1987, 50 percent of children in state welfare centers and 31 percent of children in institutes for the mentally handicapped were thought to be Roma (UNICEF, 1992). As is the case with the special schools, there are a number of reasons why children end up in institutions, ranging from actual disabilities to questionable assessments of special needs. Poverty is also an important factor, for some families in desperate conditions the provision of food and shelter for children in institutions is an alternative to deprivation at home. Many transition economies have begun exploring alternatives to institutions. Experience in Western Europe and the United States suggests that community-based services such as home care and day care services, and special education programs for children with learning disabilities can be more effective, efficient, and humane.

### *Employment Programs*

Because of their labor market status, programs and policies for addressing unemployment have been very important for Roma. Countries have adopted a range of both passive and active measures during the transition period. Passive measures generally include unemployment insurance or, for those workers laid off during restructuring, sometimes severance pay. Unemployment insurance is most frequently financed through payroll taxes and differs across countries in duration and level of benefits.<sup>46</sup> Issues impacting the effectiveness of unemployment benefits are parallel to those discussed above for social assistance and involve ensuring benefit adequacy and coverage, and balancing work incentives. For Roma, a specific issue that arises in the case of unemployment benefits is, again, their significant presence in the informal sector. Workers who have not paid payroll contributions for unemployment insurance will generally receive social assistance instead. Active labor market programs (ALMPs) are another potentially important source of support. Countries have introduced a variety of different programs including job search assistance, training and retraining programs, employment subsidies for employers, small business support, and public works, with mixed results.<sup>47</sup> Examples of targeted ALMPs for Roma will be discussed in the next chapter.

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## 4. Addressing the Challenges

The plight of Roma in Central and Eastern Europe has not gone unnoticed. During the past decade, numerous initiatives by governments, NGOs, and international organizations have been launched to address various issues related to Roma, from combating human rights violations to addressing racial stereotyping in the media and promoting education and employment. The level of activity varies significantly across countries. A recent World Bank review of Roma-related initiatives in Hungary identified nearly 1,400 projects and subprojects implemented by government

agencies and NGOs in the areas of education, health, housing, and employment between 1990 and 1999 (World Bank, 2000e).

Despite the eruption of activity in this area, very few initiatives have been evaluated or monitored; as a result, it is extremely difficult to assess their impact and identify lessons for policy and future interventions. Because of the pilot nature of many of the projects that have been implemented in Roma communities, project monitoring is essential. At a conference on Roma issues in 1992, the sociologist and Roma activist Nicholae Gheorghe emphasized that it “was important to keep in mind the experimental nature of policies and continue to evaluate them. Have they been successful elsewhere? Under what circumstances? Have they been successful within the region? What have been the non-economic costs associated with them? Are the Roma willing to pay these costs?” (Project on Ethnic Relations, 1992).

An important component of designing and implementing programs and policies for the Roma is the involvement of Roma themselves. This chapter discusses institutions and avenues for Roma involvement, as well as the involvement of international organizations, particularly the EU, in Roma affairs. It concludes with a discussion of the policy implications.

### Participation

One of the clearest lessons to emerge from experience of policies and programs directed at Roma during both the socialist and transition periods is that participation of Roma is essential for any kind of policy or program to work. This point was a key finding recently articulated in a report issued by OSCE’s High Commissioner on National Minorities:

Perhaps no principle is more essential to the success and legitimacy of initiatives to alleviate the concerns of Romani communities than that Roma themselves should be centrally involved in developing, implementing and evaluating policies and programs.

*(OSCE, 2000).*

The recent past is littered with projects and programs that however well intentioned, failed miserably because they were designed and implemented without the involvement of the future beneficiaries. This includes housing projects that built apartments that were unsuitable for Roma and social assistance programs that provided Roma with goods they did not want and would rather sell (Rughinis, 2000).

Ensuring Roma involvement in policy and project development rests on the existence of effective mechanisms for participation. While Roma have been increasingly involved in civil society and various aspects of policymaking, there are significant challenges to ensuring effective communication and involvement. Some of these have been discussed in this report, including low education levels and illiteracy, which diminish the potential pool of Roma leaders and voters, and mistrust and prejudices between Roma and non-Roma. The following section discusses Roma involvement in civil society and recent policy initiatives.

Across the region, political liberalization has led to a proliferation of civil society organizations, including NGOs, political parties, religious organizations, and various community associations. Many groups have been formed to address particular issues related to ethnic minorities, and a wide range of Roma organizations has been established in the region in recent years, many financed by external sources, including international Roma NGOs. A 1996 survey carried out by the Union of Bulgarian Foundations and Associations identified over 1,300 organizations that addressed ethnic issues and put Roma among their priorities (Iliev, 1999).

Like NGOs across the region, Roma NGOs are remarkably diverse in terms of size, objectives, organization, and financing. Roma NGOs exist at the international, national, and local levels. A recent review of Roma initiatives in Hungary identified between 60 and 70 independent Roma NGOs involved in social policy-related projects at the municipal level. In the early 1990s, NGOs in Bulgaria first emerged around specific Roma subgroups.<sup>48</sup> The *Ierlii* Roma from Sliven and Sofia and the *Burgudjii* Roma from Plovdiv were first to form NGOs, while more traditional groups refrained from forming associations and participating in political parties until later in the decade. Churches have also become more active within Central and Eastern Europe since the transition, and some have begun to sponsor and implement projects in Roma communities (Rughinis, 2000).

Roma NGOs, like Roma communities themselves, are diverse and often fragmented. In some cases, this limits the effectiveness of the Roma community in its dialogue with government officials and other potential partners (Project on Ethnic Relations, 1992). There are frequent reports of conflicts and difficulties in reaching consensus among Roma organizations. This may be a reflection of a number of issues, including their relative inexperience in the political sphere, divisions between Roma sub-groups, and characteristics of Roma social organization, including a lack of hierarchical structures within some Roma groups. In

Bulgaria, exploratory fieldwork on social capital among Roma found that civil society organizations including NGOs and traditional Roma social institutions were more formalized and prevalent among communities that were poorer and had settled prior to the socialist period. In contrast, the wealthier Roma communities that had settled more recently were more insular and reluctant to participate in NGOs and church activities (Iliev, 1999).

Local governments also have an important role to play in addressing Roma issues and encouraging community participation. Throughout the region, the role of local governments has changed substantially during the transition, as decentralization has been a natural outcome of the shift from centralization under socialism. Numerous challenges have emerged in the process of building effective local governments with accountability and the capacity to respond to the needs of the population.<sup>49</sup> Roma participate in local governments by running for elective office, utilizing public services, and interacting with local officials. Local governments are also potentially important sources of support for Roma NGOs and associations, and can facilitate the development and implementation of projects (box 4.1). However, local governments can also contribute to further exclusion of Roma. Even where national policies do not discriminate, implementation at the local level can derail original intentions.

Roma also participate in politics at the national level. Roma political parties have been established in many of the countries in the region. However, relative to their share in the population, they are significantly underrepresented within national parliaments. In the Czech Republic, there is one national Roma representative, and currently there are no politicians identifying as Roma in the Slovak and Hungarian parliaments. In Romania, the only representative identifying as Roma was elected to a reserved minority seat (OSCE, 2000). Representation is higher at the local level. In Bulgaria in 1999, a Roma party won 2 percent of the ballots in local elections.

In recent years, all of the countries in the region have introduced a variety of institutions for integrating Roma into policymaking at the national and local levels. Perhaps the most ambitious approach was taken in Hungary, where a system of minority self-governments introduced in 1993 allows minorities to establish councils at the local level, alongside elected local governments. The minority self-governments play a consultative role and have the authority to establish schools and other institutions (Project on Ethnic Relations).

Other countries, including the Czech and Slovak Republics and Romania, have established consultative

#### **Box 4.1. NGO–Local Government Collaboration in Kumanovo, FYR Macedonia**

Kumanovo is a multiethnic municipality in FYR Macedonia with approximately 95,000 inhabitants close to the border with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. According to 1994 census data, Roma comprised approximately 3 percent of the population. In 1997 a Roma NGO, the Roma Community Center (DROM), was established to improve conditions for Roma and foster interethnic cooperation. DROM's initiative in Sredorek, one of the largest Roma settlements in Kumanovo, provides an example of productive collaboration between an NGO and local government.

Sredorek is a poor settlement characterized by high unemployment rates, low access to education, and poor health status. Prior to 1998 there was no water or sewage system in the settlement. DROM opted to focus its activities in infrastructure development and started with the installation of two public water fountains with the support of the Open Society Institute in Budapest. The local government granted permits for the work and ultimately provided financial support. The president of DROM explained the importance of this partnership:

The local government of Kumanovo had very rarely showed any interest for building or financing any projects in Roma settlements. Because of this we wanted to make the municipality aware of the current problems in Sredorek and inform them about how much work needs to be done...The second reason is that we hoped to motivate the local government to create a budget item that would finance projects of nongovernmental organizations in the future. Thirdly, we wanted to make the local government think about Roma settlements in Kumanovo in the long term.

Following the pilot activities and negotiations with the local government, DROM began an expanded project that aimed to provide water, sewage, and telephone services for 53 households in Sredorek. Work was undertaken by the public water supply company with the participation of many members of the Roma community. The majority of the financing was provided by the local government with support from the Open Society Institute. DROM worked closely with the water supply company and local government to ensure that households were able to afford the new services. The partnership established between DROM and the municipal government laid the groundwork for ongoing collaboration between DROM, the local government and other NGOs. Subsequent projects are under way in Kumanovo to extend public services further within Roma settlements.

*Source:* Demirovski, 2000.

bodies at the national level to shape policymaking related to minorities. In the Czech case, an Interministerial Commission composed of Roma and non-Roma representatives of government agencies has been established to advise the parliament. In Romania, the Council of National Minorities, tied to the parliament, includes representatives from minority organizations that are represented in the parliament. The strength of these bodies varies across countries, and some even operate without a budget. In most cases it is too early to gauge how representative these institutions are and their impact (OSCE, 2000).

Many of the countries have also recently adopted national policy strategies on Roma issues. In 1997, the Czech government developed an action plan on Roma issues that covered education, citizenship, and anti-discrimination measures, as well as employment. In Bulgaria in March 1999, the government adopted "The Framework Program for Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society." This document represented the culmination of an unprecedented process of consultation and consensus

building both between the government and the Roma community, and within Roma NGOs themselves. The program was endorsed by 75 Roma NGOs and entails strategic guidelines in the areas of anti-discrimination policy, economic development, and social services (OSCE, 2000).

The Hungarian government has also adopted a strategic plan on Roma, the "Medium-Term Framework," which was developed in coordination with the National Roma Self-Government and the Office for National and Ethnic Minorities. The strategy includes broad measures on social policy, as well as anti-discrimination measures. As for the institutions, it is too early to assess the actual impact of these policy strategies and action plans, although they have had an important role in increasing the level of dialogue between the Roma community and national governments, and raising core policy issues. Examples from Western European countries such as Spain and France, which have experience in this area, can provide useful lessons (box 4.2).

### Box 4.2. The Gitano Development Program in Spain

Experience from Spain is an illustrative case for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe that are experimenting with different models of participation and institutions for integrating Roma into policymaking. In 1988, the Spanish government adopted the Gitano Development Program (GDP), which established political and legal equality for Roma and outlined a series of measures to improve living conditions and promote social integration.

Primary responsibility for the GDP rests with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MLSA) in collaboration with three coordinating bodies: an inter-ministerial committee, a Commission for Monitoring and Evaluation composed of the MLSA and representatives from regional governments, and a Consultative Commission of Roma NGOs and associations. The Consultative Commission is responsible for formulating proposals under the GDP and overseeing projects. Projects under the GDP are required to be jointly financed by regional governments.

The success of the GDP has been limited in a number of respects. First, the Roma community and the government have questioned the extent to which the Consultative Commission is representative and objective. The NGOs on the commission are selected by the government and are also the recipients of GDP project grants. This lack of transparency and conflict of interest in allocating funds have been understandably controversial. In response, the government has begun to refine the criteria for NGO membership on the commission to improve its representation. Another significant constraint on GDP projects is the lack of monitoring and evaluation. Projects are implemented through regional governments that frequently lack the administrative capacity to monitor and oversee projects and to provide feedback to increase their effectiveness.

Sources: Martin, 2000; OSCE, 2000.

### International Involvement and EU Accession

International involvement in Roma affairs has increased notably in the last decade. The European institutions, particularly the European Union (EU), the Council of Europe, and the OSCE have been very active in different areas. Various United Nations agencies, including UNICEF and UNHCR, been involved in Roma-related issues in their different areas of competence. The International Organization for Migration has also been active in issues related to the movement of Roma between countries. Substantial support has come from international NGOs—in particular, the Open Society Institute of the Soros Foundation and its network of local foundations, which has been a pioneering force in supporting initiatives to support Roma.

In the early 1990s, the predominant focus of international attention to Roma issues was on immediate human rights concerns, including protection from discrimination and persecution, and legal representation. Partly this responded to the most urgent concerns of Roma themselves, but it also reflected pressures from European governments concerned with the preservation and promotion of human rights. In recent years, however, the focus has increasingly turned to issues related to economic development and social conditions. Many in the Roma NGO community, as well as international actors, have come to view these issues as intrinsically linked to the overall status of Roma within society.

### EU Accession

More recently, the process of EU accession has been an important impetus focusing international attention on Roma issues in Central and Eastern Europe. Accession involves an in-depth process of discussion with each client country to ensure that each country's laws are consistent with EU legislation, as embodied in the laws and regulation of the *acquis communautaire*. In March 1998, the European Commission (EC), the executive body of the EU, began detailed accession negotiations with five countries in Central and Eastern Europe: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia. Following the EC's Helsinki Summit in December 1999, full negotiations were also launched with Romania, the Slovak Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, and Bulgaria.<sup>50</sup>

Roma issues emerge under the political criteria for accession as part of the sub-chapter on "human rights and the protection of minorities" that was adopted at the 1993 Copenhagen European Council. In its most recent country progress reports, issued in October 1999, the EC specifically identified the conditions of Roma as a priority issue for all Central and East European applicant countries with sizable Roma communities, including the Czech and Slovak Republics, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Slovenia. Common issues raised included widespread discrimination and prejudice, police brutality, harassment and violence, and problems with access to social services and



employment. The reports also highlighted positive steps toward addressing some of the issues, including the structures mentioned above: the adoption of the Framework Convention in Bulgaria, the establishment of the Inter-Ministerial Roma Commission in the Czech Republic, and the medium-term action program in Hungary. These criteria are conditions for accession, and countries will not be admitted to the EU without demonstrating that appropriate reforms have been undertaken.

Also at the Helsinki Summit, the EU voted to adopt “Guiding Principles” on Roma developed by the Council of Europe’s Specialist Group on Roma-Gypsies, as part of the accession process. The principles include general recommendations on the institutional framework for policy development and within policy areas, including education, housing, employment and health. The Specialist Group is a consultative body of the council that consists of representatives from countries (including eastern and western Europe), NGOs, academia, and international organizations. Approximately one-half of the members of the group are Roma. The process for monitoring implementation of the guidelines and accession criteria as they relate to Roma, beyond the regular progress reports of the commission, has not been established.

To support the negotiations on the *acquis*, the EU provides substantial financial and technical support to the applicant countries. EU support comes through its program. In 1999, the program included approximately 10 million euros of grants for Roma-related projects in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and the Slovak Republic. Projects are focused on education programs and addressing discrimination, and differ in size and scope. In Bulgaria in 1999, funds were programmed for initiatives to increase school enrollments and train Roma to work in public administration. In 1999, the largest Roma-related program was planned for education initiatives in Hungary.<sup>51</sup>

### Policy Implications

Addressing the issues facing the Roma is a challenging task that will take experimentation, patience, and close collaboration between Roma communities, the international community, NGOs, and national governments. Initiatives need to be designed and adapted to local circumstances, as well as the varying conditions and needs of different Roma groups. This section first discusses some general issues that are relevant across sectors and then identifies some more specific policy options that are relevant to the different social policy areas.

### Cross-Cutting Issues

*Addressing poverty through economic development.* In the first place, addressing the challenges facing the Roma in Central and Eastern Europe is inherently linked to the overall success of the transition process and the objectives of economic development and poverty alleviation. Economic growth can be a driving force in reducing poverty and creating economic opportunities. In this context, the primary objective for countries in the region remains implementing policies that promote and sustain growth while maximizing social welfare outcomes. This includes sound macro-economic policies as well as micro-level policies to support labor market flexibility and assist households in coping with income risks.

Related to this, improvements in expanding access to quality social services for Roma are linked to the overall effectiveness of the education, health, and social protection systems in each country. Throughout the region, countries have embarked upon systemic reforms across the social sectors to improve the efficiency, equity, and relevance of public services. In many ways, the inherited systems were ill suited to the reality of a market economy, and one way in which they have proven ineffective is their ability to reach all vulnerable groups, including the Roma. Addressing systemic issues through reform and improving access and quality social services is a priority that will improve conditions for the entire population.

*Filling information gaps.* This report has highlighted the critical lack of basic information pertaining to Roma. To address this, countries need to look carefully at their statistical instruments (for example, censuses and household surveys) and administrative data to assess how they can better capture information on Roma and other minorities that will be useful from a policy perspective. This is an area where multilateral coordination, advice, and guidance can be important for ensuring comparability of data. More information on international practices, particularly in addressing the privacy issue on ethnic identification, is needed. Related to this, the outcomes of targeted public policies and NGO initiatives require close monitoring, and results of program evaluations should be used for ongoing policy development. Mechanisms should be in place for disseminating lessons across regions and countries.

From the perspective of information on poverty and welfare, there are gaps both at the country level and in particular subject areas. Further information is sorely needed on the conditions of Roma in the countries of the former Yugoslavia. The review of the Western literature on Roma

that was undertaken for this report found very little information on Roma in these countries, despite the large estimated share of Roma in countries such as FYR Macedonia. From a sectoral perspective, regular and comparable information on household welfare and living conditions on Roma, in addition to data on education and health status, are needed across countries in order to identify community needs, assess effectiveness of programs, and develop and refine policies and strategies. Of the policy areas, health has perhaps been the most neglected to date, and instruments for monitoring health status and communicable diseases are particularly critical.

*Promoting integration while allowing for cultural autonomy.* Policy and project design need to be sensitive to Roma culture and the desire of communities to maintain their cultural identity. In the first place, this objective can be ensured through participation of Roma in policy and project development.

*Overcoming discrimination and combating stereotypes.* Discrimination provides a formidable obstacle to the social integration of Roma. Many of the initiatives mentioned above by governments and NGOs have addressed discrimination in different ways, through increasing interaction between Roma and non-Roma communities, media monitoring, and law enforcement training. Education is an important vehicle for overcoming cultural barriers through multicultural education and inclusion in the curriculum of the history and culture of ethnic minorities. Training of teachers and other personnel working in social services can be an important mechanism for addressing discrimination within public services.

*Experimenting with integrated approaches.* Policy and project responses can also be designed to address multiple issues. Educational programs can address health issues, housing projects can provide employment opportunities, and social assistance programs can support school attendance. Integrated approaches may also be more effective in meeting project goals. A recent article on education programs in the United States concluded that those initiatives that supported families as well as schools were more effective at raising educational outcomes than initiatives that only supported schools (Traub, 2000).

*Increasing the participation of Roma in social service delivery.* The near absence of Roma personnel working in education, health, and social protection limits the accessibility of services to Roma communities. Roma service

providers can facilitate interaction between Roma and public institutions and help address cultural barriers. Roma can also serve as community leaders and provide role models for children. Some countries have moved to address this void by creating scholarships for Roma at the post-secondary level in fields such as medicine and social work.

*Choosing targeted versus untargeted programs.* A critical question in all areas is whether policies and programs should be explicitly directed toward Roma, or broadly based for poor communities or the population at large. There are no correct or easy answers, but the consequences of both should be considered carefully in program design. Untargeted programs are attractive for their administrative simplicity and broader public appeal, and may facilitate integration and social cohesion within communities. On the other hand, untargeted programs may be ill suited to reaching the poorest and most isolated Roma. Living conditions for Roma and non-Roma may differ quite significantly within a geographic area, and as a result, targeting a whole village or district may not be the most strategic approach. In this regard, targeted programs can be effective in addressing the specific needs of Roma communities, such as language teaching and outreach activities in health.

However, targeted approaches are not without their own risks. In some cases Roma-specific programs may be divisive within a community and breed resentment that some groups are receiving special treatment to the disadvantage of others. Similarly, without effective monitoring of objectives and outcomes, targeted programs can be instruments for maintaining existing patterns of segregation and exclusion of Roma.

### *Education*

Because of the central role of education for securing improvements in welfare and economic status, education has been a priority focus for government and NGO involvement. More project activity has taken place in this area over the past decade than in any of the other sectors. The review of social sector projects in Hungary found that more than 40 percent of resources allocated to Roma projects during the past decade were for education (World Bank, 2000e). Initiatives in education take various forms and intervene at different points within the education cycle.

A priority starting point is *reducing barriers that keep children from starting school*. Many children are discouraged from starting school because of difficult economic circumstances at home and cultural differences, including language. Economic constraints can be addressed through

the coordination of social assistance and education policies to alleviate the cost of education to poor families. Several options exist, including school feeding programs (which can supplement nutrition while encouraging school attendance), policy measures that link provision of child allowances to enrollments, and scholarships for low-income students.

*Preschool programs* are important bridges for preparing children for the classroom environment and overcoming language and cultural differences. A number of countries have experimented with targeted preprimary initiatives to facilitate school attendance and performance. The Open Society Foundation has supported the “Step-by-Step” program, modeled on the United States’ “Head Start” initiative, in Roma and non-Roma communities. In 2000, 8,180 Roma students in 17 countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the countries of the former Soviet Union were enrolled in Step-by-Step programs. Step-by-Step takes an integrated approach that provides training and support to teachers, as well as involves parents in the classroom. Parental involvement at all levels of education should be explored and fostered, including bringing parents into the classroom as teacher’s aides, participation in parent-teacher associations, and regular parent-teacher interactions.

Initiatives that *reduce the number of dropouts and facilitate continuation to secondary and tertiary education* are also critical. However, there is little experience in this area. Creative mentoring programs and extracurricular activities that provide tutoring and supplementary educational activities have been introduced in some countries. More recently, in Hungary and the Czech Republic, secondary schools that target Roma children have been opened. Schools like the Gandhi School in Pecs, Hungary, and the Romani High School for Social Affairs in Kolin in the Czech Republic integrate Romani studies, including language, history, and culture, into the curriculum. While it is not feasible, or necessarily desirable, that all Roma be educated in separate schools, successful elements of the approaches taken in these schools, including a multicultural curriculum, teacher training, and parental involvement, can be incorporated into mainstream public schools (box 4.3).

*Improving the quality of education* for Roma students can have positive effects on school attendance and educational outcomes. A key element of this is reducing negative discrimination within school systems and, in particular, diminishing the role of special schools and institutions for Roma. Practices of channeling Roma students into special schools in the first place need to be reviewed, as do policies that limit the future opportunities of special school graduates. Special education should be reformed to address true

learning disabilities and special needs of at-risk children. The issue of special schools should be considered within the overall shift away from child welfare institutions toward more effective and humane community and family-based solutions.

*Teachers* play a central role in defining the quality of education for all students and need to be adequately trained to deal with the challenges of a multicultural environment. Ongoing support mechanisms that help teachers on the job are also critical. Particular training could include Roma history and culture, conflict resolution, and classroom management. A number of countries have also experimented with Roma teacher’s assistants and mediators who can assist in the classroom environment as well as provide a link between Roma communities and schools. A variation of this has been recently introduced in Romania, where the Ministry of Education has appointed Roma education inspectors in each of its 41 counties to monitor education for Roma. The effects of this project are not yet known.

### *Health*

Relative to the other policy areas, much less is known about the health issues facing Roma communities. In this context, *improving monitoring of health status* is an important priority. In particular, more effective monitoring of communicable diseases such as tuberculosis, hepatitis, and HIV-AIDs is critical.

Another primary challenge in health care is *improving the availability of health care* to isolated Roma communities. Policies that expand access for remote rural areas and urban communities can include incentives for physicians (for example, through provision of housing), community health workers, mobile health units, and improved availability of transportation and communication.

*Public health interventions can be designed to overcome cultural barriers to accessing care.* Some countries have experimented with Roma mediators to engage in health promotion activities within Roma communities, and to facilitate interactions between Roma and health care professionals. This can be particularly important for overcoming resistance to basic care such as immunizations. Information campaigns are also critical for addressing many emerging health risks, including substance abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, and conditions associated with poor nutrition and hygiene. Other potential initiatives can include improved dissemination of public health information through the media and schools, and coordination with organizations such as churches and NGOs within the Roma community.

### Box 4.3. Alternative Secondary Schools in Hungary

There have been a number of recent experiments in Hungary with alternative approaches to secondary school education that aim to help Roma children bridge the gap between basic and secondary school, and improve their performance and future opportunities. Roma are much less likely to start and complete secondary school than other children. A 1993 survey of Roma in Hungary found that only 1 percent of Roma took the final examination for secondary schools and only 13 percent received training as skilled workers.

A recent review of alternative approaches commissioned by the World Bank looked at six different schools, most of which have been established during the past five years.<sup>52</sup> All of the schools are private and receive support from a range of local and international foundations and NGOs, as well as state budget subsidies. While the majority of students in each of the schools are Roma, not all of the institutions explicitly target Roma children.

The type of education provided by the different schools varies greatly. In some cases, the schools provide vocational training, such as the “Roma Chance” Alternative Vocational Foundation School in Szolnok, the Don Bosco Vocational Training Center and Primary School in Kazincbarcika, and the Budapest Kalyi Jag School. Others, such as the Jozsefváros School and the Collegium Martineum in Mánfa, support students enrolled in secondary schools through extracurricular activities and classes and, in the case of the latter, dormitory accommodation in a supportive home environment. Finally, the Gandhi School and Students’ Hostel in Pecs is a six-year secondary school (or gymnasium) that prepares students for university education.

The schools differ in the extent to which they emphasize the Roma background of their students in their curricula and approach. In most of the schools, the strengthening of Roma identity and community and the preservation of traditions are an explicit and integral component of the mission of the school, and teaching includes classes in such topics as Roma language, history, and art. Others, such as Don Bosco, focus on building the self-confidence of students through professional training and support for entering the labor market. There are also differences in the extent to which the schools address the underlying socioeconomic disadvantages of students. Some, such as the Collegium Martineum, target disadvantaged students and address the economic barriers to school attendance by providing housing and other support. Most of the schools involve parents in the educational process. However, this proves difficult in many cases because of low education levels of parents.

Because the schools are very new, evaluation of their effectiveness and outcomes is not yet possible. Preliminary evidence has been mixed. For example, more than half of the first class entering the Gandhi School dropped out. However, in comparison with the national rates for Roma, this is an achievement, and dropout rates have declined for subsequent classes. Discussions with teachers, school directors, parents, and students indicated overwhelming support for the schools and highlighted the importance of their common characteristics, including a recognition of the capacity of Roma children to succeed, given a supportive environment, and the need for a broader approach to education that supports students at home, in their community, and in school.

*Sources:* Orsos and others, 2000; OSCE, 2000.

*Health services* need particular attention. Outreach can raise awareness about a range of issues, including women’s health. Reproductive and family health care issues help overcome common cultural taboos, such as fear of screening for cervical cancer. Some of the Phare projects are addressing women’s health issues in different ways. In the Slovak Republic, a team of NGOs is piloting a course on hygiene and child development for Roma mothers. There are examples from countries in other regions of successful initiatives for improving women’s health through community groups and education.

#### *Housing*

Because of the wide diversity in the types of settlements and communities where Roma live, housing is a complex area that requires close coordination between central and local governments and communities. *An important priority in housing policy is the presence of effective legislation and enforcement mechanisms to prevent discrimination and clarify property ownership.* In many slum areas and settlements, unresolved questions regarding the ownership of buildings and residency rights blur responsibilities for upgrading and maintenance, and block incentives for res-

idents to invest in and maintain properties. A UNDP program in Bucharest worked toward legalizing occupancy for households in a neighborhood where property ownership was not clear. The municipality assumed the management of the properties and allowed residents to apply for rental contracts (Rughinis, 2000).

Equally important considerations in housing are *policies and programs that ensure adequate mechanisms for community involvement and choice*. Because of the legacy of failed housing programs and projects during the socialist era, this is particularly critical, and there are few experiences to draw from to date. A number of facilities have emerged recently that provide promising opportunities for communities and households to apply for resources for community development and upgrading of housing, including microcredit arrangements and social funds. As discussed below, the effectiveness of these instruments in reaching Roma communities needs careful consideration and monitoring.

### *Employment and Social Protection*

Initiatives that increase opportunities for Roma in the labor market start with *improvements in educational status*. At the policy level, it is also critical that *anti-discrimination legislation be in place and that effective and accessible mechanisms are available for appeals*. Beyond legislative measures, project interventions can overcome barriers between non-Roma and Roma by building confidence and expertise through on-the-job training and employment experience. For example, a successful public works project recently implemented in Bulgaria illustrated to non-Roma contractors that Roma could be reliable and effective employees.<sup>53</sup> Possible approaches could include tax incentives for employers who employ Roma.

*Training programs can facilitate labor market reentry* for low-skilled and unskilled workers. However, because international experience with training programs is mixed, programs need to be carefully designed to fit labor market conditions (Dar and Tzannatos, 1999). A particular issue for some active measures targeted at the Roma is the need for training programs to be relevant to labor market needs. Some initiatives have sought to retrain Roma in traditional trades. While these approaches may suit cultural needs, they may have limited relevance for labor market conditions.

There have been a number of recent experiments by NGOs in the region *with employment and income-generating programs*. In Hungary, the Autonomia Foundation provides grants and interest-free loans to develop employment programs for Roma. Small income-generating initia-

tives have included livestock breeding, agricultural initiatives, and small enterprise development. The success of Autonomia's projects, as measured by the repayment rate of its loans, has increased greatly since it was established in 1990. In 1998 repayment rates reached nearly 80 percent, in comparison with 10 percent during the first year. Autonomia attributes this improvement to the involvement of trained monitors who work closely with project teams throughout the implementation of the project (Tanaka and others, 1998). Similarly, the Romani CRISS foundation in Romania has started providing microcredit for small to medium-size enterprises in metallurgy and agriculture.

As is the case with training, relevance and long-term sustainability of the projects are issues. Discussions with project coordinators identified significant challenges because of (a) the weak capacity of Roma communities in project management, (b) mistrust between Roma and local officials and among Roma organizations, and (c) the difficulties in reaching the poorest Roma communities. Evaluation of these projects is essential to draw lessons for future interventions.

In the area of social assistance, *improving targeting to reduce inclusion and exclusion errors* is a priority. Within Roma communities, this could be achieved through greater involvement of social workers in the community, as well as Roma facilitators who can assist in identifying isolated households and the provision of language assistance. The *design of social assistance programs* also requires close attention to ensure that work incentives are in place and that benefit levels are adequate to address the needs of the poorest families.

### **Conclusions**

The growing level of activity and interest in Roma issues in Central and Eastern Europe is unprecedented. Countries have recently made important steps in formulating strategies for improving the conditions of Roma and establishing institutions to develop and administer policies and projects. However, the agenda ahead is complex and improvements will not come overnight. Poverty among Roma in the region is multifaceted and has deep historical roots. Indeed, poverty among Roma communities in some West European countries highlights the scope of the challenge.

Effective policy responses will require a multilayered approach involving cross-country partnerships among Roma and international organizations, national governments, NGOs working at all levels of government, local governments, and communities. The preliminary review of

projects and policies undertaken for this report illustrates that a wide range of experience with Roma projects exists within the region. However, few lessons are readily available. As countries move forward, it is critical to examine this body of experience to distill lessons for future work.

A related priority is the need to build mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation into new and ongoing initiatives, and to provide opportunities for exchanging information within and across countries.

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# Notes

1. In this report, “Central and Eastern Europe” refers to the transition countries that were not part of the USSR.

2. Based on a poverty line of two-thirds mean per capita consumption.

3. Based on a poverty line of 60 percent of adult equivalent income.

4. The countries that are currently in accession negotiations are Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic, and Slovenia.

5. “South Eastern Europe” refers to the countries of the former Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania.

6. For a description of the role of the Contact Point see OSCE, 2000.

7. Annex 3 describes the Bank’s involvement to date.

8. Annex 1 discusses the main background studies and data sources used in the report.

9. A recent review of World Bank Living Standards Measurement Surveys (LSMS) datasets for countries in Europe and Central Asia found that only two out of nine surveys distinguished respondents by ethnicity.

10. These issues are common to the analysis of ethnic minorities in general. See, for example, Psacharopoulos and Patrinos, 1994.

11. Demographic trends will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

12. The European Roma Rights Center has extensively documented discrimination and human rights violations of Roma. Regular updates and country reports can be found at [www.errc.org](http://www.errc.org).

13. These issues will be discussed more fully in subsequent chapters.

14. For more information on migration see Council of Europe, MG-S-ROM Report on Migration.

15. For a discussion of the social impact of the transition see World Bank, 2000c, Milanovic, 1998, and Barr, 1994.

16. For more on the characteristics of poverty in the transition countries see World Bank, 2000c.

17. For more on measuring poverty, see Ravallion, 1993.

18. In the Hungary dataset, income was higher than expenditures and was found to be a more accurate measure. See World Bank, 2000d.

19. For the comparison “poor” was defined as the bottom two expenditure quintiles.

20. However, it is important to note that undersampling of Roma households in the survey makes the results less robust. Only 1.5 percent of the sample identified as Roma; the actual population is estimated at nearly 10 percent.

21. Although the Hungarian Roma population is estimated at 5-6 percent, only 4 percent of the sample were identified as Roma, and thus the results cannot be considered robust.

22. Because panel data were not available, analysis for Bulgaria and Romania looked at the risk of poverty in one year, rather than long-term poverty, as was the case for Hungary.

23. A highly publicized attempt was the city of Kosice in the eastern Slovak Republic, which sought to move people who were not paying rent (largely Roma) to the Lunik IX neighborhood, a housing development on the outskirts of the town (OSCE, 2000).

24. Helsinki Citizens Assembly Newspaper, quoted in ECOHOST, 2000, p. 37.

25. For a discussion of labor market dynamics in the early transition see Allison and Ringold, 1996; and Commander and Coricelli, 1995.

26. Employment rates are not comparable across countries because of differences in definition of the working age population (Box 2.2).

27. Working age population in the survey referred to individuals between 15 and 54.

28. Annual Report of the Parliamentary Commissioner for National and Ethnic Minority Rights, 1 January-31 December 1998, Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner. Quoted in OSCE, 2000.

29. See also, OSCE, 2000, p. 33.

30. Based on a survey of 831 households in 8 Roma settlements: Sofia (Christo Botev neighborhood), Doganovo, Sliven (2 urban communities), Gorno Alexandrovo, Topolchane, Sotirya, and Kardzhali.

31. Birth rates are not ideal measures, as they do not account for the age distribution. However fertility rates were not available.

32. The Romania case study of Babadag found a high rate of intermarriage (Rughinis, 2000).

33. Refer to the World Bank sector strategies for health (Staines, 1999); education (World Bank, 2000f); and social protection (World Bank, 2000a) for more information.

34. In all of the qualitative case studies commissioned by the World Bank, a few Roma teachers and teachers aides were identified, but no Roma were working in health or social assistance.

35. Because of the problems of measuring income, expenditure data were used for the poverty analysis (World Bank, 2000d).

36. At the time of writing, the Czech Parliament was considering legislation that would allow graduates of special schools to continue in the mainstream school system.

37. See the World Bank Education Sector Strategy (World Bank, 1999b) for more on this issue.

38. For more on the context of health systems in transition see World Bank, 2000, Staines, 1999.

39. It is difficult to interpret this data fully, as "illness" is self-reported.

40. Access to free medical care is a right enshrined in the constitutions of some countries in the region including Hungary.

41. Evidence for this was found in related World Bank fieldwork in Romania and Bulgaria.

42. Social insurance, including pensions and disability insurance, are important components of social protection but are not discussed here. Social assistance refers to cash and in-kind benefits and services including targeted income support, and child allowances. For a full discussion of social protection in the Europe and Central Asia Region, see World Bank, 2000a.

43. Using a poverty line of two-thirds mean per capita income.

44. Means-tested benefits (combining an income and assets test) are common across Central and Eastern Europe. Programs have been introduced in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania and the Slovak Republic.

45. The poverty line was set at 60 percent of adult equivalent income (see Dhanji and others, 2000 for details).

46. For a detailed discussion see World Bank, 2000c and World Bank, 2000d.

47. For an evaluation and discussion of international experience of various ALMPs see Dar and Tsannatos (1999).

48. E. Marushiakova and V. Popov, quoted in Iliev, 1999.

49. For more on decentralization in the transition context see Wetzel and Dunn, 2000.

50. The EU's website contains further information on the enlargement process: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/index.htm>.

51. More information on the Phare country programs is available at <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/pas/phare/index.htm>

52. An exception is the Don Bosco School, which was started in 1988.

53. UNDP, 1999b.



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# Annex 1. Main Data Sources

The following briefly describes the main data sources that were used for this report.

## **BULGARIA**

*Bulgaria Integrated Household Survey (BIHS), 1995 and 1997.* Data from surveys for both years are referenced in this report. The BIHS was a nationally representative survey that included 2,500 households in 1995 and 2,432 households in 1997. The surveys were conducted during the periods of March-May 1995 and March-September 1997. Ethnicity was determined in the survey through self-identification. More information and analysis of the surveys can be found in the World Bank's poverty assessment (World Bank, 1999). Additional information and data from the 1995 survey are available on the World Bank's Living Standards Measurement Survey (LSMS) web site: [www.worldbank.org/lsm/](http://www.worldbank.org/lsm/).

*Tomova, I. and Team, "Bulgaria, 6 Case Studies," 2000.* This study was done in tandem with a larger study commissioned by the World Bank on the impact of fiscal decentralization on social services (health, education and social assistance cash transfers). The study relied on in-depth interviews and focus groups with Roma, service providers, local officials and NGO leaders. The researchers also conducted a quantitative survey of 831 Roma households. The case studies were conducted in three districts: Sofia Region, Sliven, and Kardzhali. Individual sites were selected to reflect a diverse mix of characteristics including rural-urban environments, ethnic diversity (for example, Roma subgroups and the presence of other minorities including Bulgarian Turks and Pomaks), socioeconomic characteris-

tics (for example, areas impacted by economic restructuring), and local government capacity.

## **THE CZECH AND SLOVAK REPUBLICS**

*European Centre on Health of Societies in Transition (ECOHOST), 2000. "Health Needs of the Roma Population in the Czech and the Slovak Republics."* This study is the product of a comprehensive literature review commissioned by the World Bank on health in the Czech and the Slovak Republics. It compiles the results of studies and surveys by international and local researchers.

## **HUNGARY**

*Hungarian Household Panel (HHP), 1992–1997.* The HHP is a panel survey that consists of six rounds or waves from 1992-1997. Data from 1992 and 1997 are referenced in this report. Ethnicity in the survey was not asked directly, but was based upon interviewer perceptions. The questionnaire asked the interviewer if the interviewee was Roma or not. In the 1997 round of the survey 4 percent of the population was identified as Roma. More information and further analysis of the survey can be found in the forthcoming poverty assessment (World Bank, 1999b).

*Orsos, E. and Team, Hungary, Evaluation of Alternative Secondary Schools, 2000.* This study aimed to evaluate the experience of six recently established secondary schools for Roma students in Hungary. Although differing significantly in approach and organization, the schools all aim to assist Roma students in successfully completing secondary school and continuing on to further education and employ-

ment. Quantitative data were collected for all institutions, and in-depth interviews were conducted with school directors, teachers, parents and students.

*Hungary Roma Project Database, 2000.* This database was compiled by a team of researchers to inform the preparation of a country study on Roma for the World Bank. It includes information on over 1,000 targeted programs for the Roma that have been implemented in Hungary between 1990-1999 in the areas of health, education, employment, and housing.

*Puporka, L. and Zádori, Z. 1999, "The Health Status of Romas in Hungary." World Bank Regional Office Hungary, NGO Studies, No. 2.* This paper is a comprehensive review of the literature on the health status of Roma in Hungary; it also brings together much of the available evidence on education and employment. The study was published in English and Hungarian by the Budapest Country Office of the World Bank.

## ROMANIA

*Romania Integrated Household Survey (RIHS), 1994-98.* The RIHS, which has been implemented every year since 1994, is a large scale, nationally representative survey encompassing about 40,000 households. Data from the 1994, 1997, and 1998 are used for this report. Ethnicity was determined in the survey in two ways: first, through a direct question on nationality and second, by asking the interviewee's native language. The share of the survey pop-

ulation identifying as Roma on both questions is consistently around 2 percent, which is thought to be about one-fifth of the actual size of the Roma population in Romania, so results from this survey are not robust for the purposes of this report. For a full description of the data and methodological constraints see the World Bank poverty assessment (World Bank, 1997). Additional information and data from the 1994-95 survey are available on the World Bank's Living Standards Measurement Survey (LSMS) web site: [www.worldbank.org/lSMS/](http://www.worldbank.org/lSMS/).

*Rughinis, C. and Preda, M., 9 Case Studies, 2000.* This study was undertaken in conjunction with a study commissioned by the World Bank of social service delivery at the local level in Romania. It aimed to assess the human development issues facing different types of Roma communities, and the capacity of local governments and social service providers (health, education, and social assistance cash benefits and services) to address these needs. In-depth interviews were conducted with Roma, social service professionals, local government officials, and other key informants such as NGO project managers and religious leaders. The case studies were done in settlements in six districts: Bucharest, Tulcea, Vaslui, Covasna, Hunedoara, and Timis. Sites were selected to represent diverse types of settlements, including rural-urban environments, differences in Roma subgroups, integrated and nonintegrated communities, relations with other ethnic minorities (for example, Hungarians), and areas with a high or low degree of NGO activity.

# Annex 2. Data Tables

**ANNEX TABLE 1. BULGARIA, HOUSEHOLD AND FAMILY SIZE, 1997**

	<i>Household size</i>	<i>Family size</i>
Bulgaria	2.8	2.7
Bulgarian Turks	3.7	3.4
Roma	5.1	4.7
Other	3.3	3.1

Source: BIHS, 1997.

**ANNEX TABLE 2. ROMANIA, HOUSEHOLD AND FAMILY SIZE, 1998**

	<i>Household size</i>	<i>Family size</i>
Romanian	2.8	2.7
Hungarian	2.6	2.5
Roma	4.4	4.2
German	2.2	2.1
Other	2.7	2.6

Source: RIHS, 1998.

**ANNEX TABLE 3. ROMANIA, TYPE OF WATER SUPPLY (PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS)**

	<i>Public system</i>	<i>Own system</i>	<i>Outside unit, inside building</i>	<i>Outside the building</i>	<i>From the river</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Total</i>
Romanian	45.3	2.4	3.2	48.8	0.0	0.3	100
Hungarian	54.8	7.2	4.1	33.7	0.2	0.1	100
Roma	23.5	1.0	10.1	63.4	0.6	1.4	100
German	60.7	2.5	12.3	24.6	0.0	0.0	100
Other	49.6	13.0	5.9	31.1	0.0	0.4	100
Total	45.7	2.8	3.5	47.7	0.1	0.3	100

Source: RIHS, 1998.

**ANNEX TABLE 4. ROMANIA, LOCATION OF TOILET FACILITIES (PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS)**

	<i>Inside</i>	<i>Outside</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>Total</i>
Romanian	42.9	27.4	29.7	100
Hungarian	47.3	36.0	16.8	100
Roma	18.6	46.6	34.8	100
German	52.5	34.4	13.1	100
Other	38.2	51.5	10.4	100
Total	42.9	28.6	28.6	100

Source: RIHS, 1998.

**ANNEX TABLE 5. BULGARIA 1997: LOCATION OF WATER TAP (PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS)**

<i>Population group</i>	<i>Inside the dwelling</i>	<i>Inside the building</i>	<i>Outside the building</i>	<i>Total</i>
Bulgarian	84.5	6.8	8.7	100
Bulgarian Turk	75.2	10.8	14.0	100
Roma	60.2	12.1	27.7	100
Other	81.5	7.4	11.1	100
Total	82.9	7.2	9.8	100

Source: BIHS 1997.

**ANNEX TABLE 6. BULGARIA: HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINED (PERCENT OF POPULATION GROUP)**

	1995		1997	
	Roma	Total	Roma	Total
No education	14	3	14	2
Preprimary	2	1	2	1
Basic (grades 1-8)	77	43	78	42
General secondary	4	17	3	17
Vocational and technical secondary	2	22	3	23
Tertiary	1	15	1	15

Source: BIHS, 1995 and 1997.

**ANNEX TABLE 7. ROMANIA: HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINED (PERCENT OF POPULATION GROUP)**

	1994		1997	
	Roma	Total	Roma	Total
No education	36	11	42	12
Basic (grades 1-8)	57	48	49	43
Secondary	7	36	9	37
Tertiary	0	5	0.1	8

Source: RIHS, 1994 and 1997.

**ANNEX TABLE 8. HUNGARY: HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINED (PERCENT OF POPULATION GROUP)**

	Roma	Non-Roma
Grade 0	9	0
Grades 1-7	33	11
Grade 8	46	36
Vocational school	11	19
General secondary	2	24
Tertiary	0	9

Source: Kemeny and others, quoted in Puporka and Zádori, 1999.

**ANNEX TABLE 9. ROMANIA, LOCATION OF TREATMENT FOR ILLNESS, 1998 (PERCENT OF INDIVIDUALS WHO WERE SICK DURING THE PREVIOUS MONTH)**

	Nowhere	Private practice	Public primary health unit	Hospital	Sanitarium	Emergency room	Other	Total
Romanian	36.3	11.3	45.0	6.7	0.2	0.1	0.4	100
Hungarian	38.1	10.3	44.5	6.1	0.1	0.0	0.9	100
Roma	52.5	2.2	38.1	7.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	100
German	43.8	6.7	48.3	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	100
Other	51.4	11.0	37.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100
Total	36.9	11.1	44.9	6.5	0.2	0.1	0.4	100

Source: RIHS, 1998.

**ANNEX TABLE 10. BULGARIA, 1997, TYPE OF TREATMENT (PERCENT OF INDIVIDUALS WHO WERE SICK DURING THE PREVIOUS MONTH)**

Population Group	None	Home	Hospital	Nursing	Sanitarium	Other	Total
Bulgarian	10.3	76.3	10.8	0.3	0.9	1.5	100
Bulgarian Turk	14.4	64.8	17.3	0.7	0.0	0.0	100
Roma	29.2	56.3	13.5	0.0	1.0	2.9	100
Other	17.7	76.5	5.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	100
Total	11.4	74.7	11.3	0.3	0.9	1.5	0

Source: BIHS 1997.

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# Annex 3. World Bank Involvement

Relative to other international organizations, the World Bank is a new player in the area of Roma issues. Much of the Bank's involvement to date has been, and continues to be, indirect through its on-going work in the region on poverty and development more broadly. However, the Bank has more recently become involved in a number of specific activities related directly to Roma. Current activities fall under the following areas:

## *Analytical Work*

Bank analysis of issues related to Roma has had a number of objectives, including identifying issues, determining the appropriate role for the Bank, and providing a basis for policy dialogue with countries. As this report has highlighted, there are numerous gaps in the available information on Roma. The Bank has sought to identify and fill some of these gaps through commissioning studies and evaluations. Many of these are described in Annex 1.

Analytical activities also include assessment of programs and policies, to address the absence of monitoring and evaluation of interventions for the Roma. In Hungary, the Bank commissioned a comprehensive review of programs and projects for the Roma in the areas of education, employment, health and housing, in order to identify projects which can provide constructive lessons on the ingredients for success (and failure) of initiatives for the Roma.

## *Country Dialogue and Strategy Development*

The Bank has begun to work at the country level to support policy development related to Roma. In *Hungary*, the Bank is working with the Office of National Minorities and other government and NGO partners on a strategy for implementation of the government's Medium Term Framework.

In *the Slovak Republic*, the Bank is supporting the establishment of the new Roma Office of the Council of Government for Minorities and Ethnic Groups in Bratislava through a grant from its Institutional

Development Fund (IDF) facility is launching both strategic dialogue and research activities. The project includes capacity building activities, including training of staff in the Office and in related government ministries, development of a database on Roma projects and partnership organizations, and public information initiatives. A similar IDF grant has recently been launched for the National Council for Ethnic and Demographic Issues in *Bulgaria*.

## *Operations*

Bank operations address Roma indirectly in different ways, through its support in different policy areas. However, to date, the Bank has not had a targeted loan for the Roma.

Relatively new social development funds in *Bulgaria and Romania*, while not explicitly targeted at Roma, have begun to support Roma subprojects. In Bulgaria, the Regional Initiatives Fund required that 10 percent of subprojects should come from minority communities. The first wave of projects included support for a Roma employment project. In Romania, the Romanian Social Development Fund currently supports a family planning project for Roma. A Child Welfare project in Romania that supports the transition from institutions to community-based alternatives for care does not target Roma, but will probably include many Roma beneficiaries because of their over representation in child welfare institutions.

The Bank's post-conflict grant for *FYR Macedonia* supports Roma youth and families in the Suto Orizari neighborhood of Skopje, including activities to improve school attendance and improve the quality of education.

## *Partnerships*

Bank involvement in Roma issues is closely coordinated with partner organizations, including European institutions, local Roma NGOs, and the Open Society Foundation. The Bank participates as an observer on the Council of Europe's Specialist Group on Roma-Gypsies.



In 2000, through its Development Grant Facility (DGF), the Bank has begun to support the work of the Autonomia Foundation, an NGO based in Hungary. The objective of the grant is to support income generation and employment activities for the Roma. To date, Autonomia's

activities have focused on Hungary, but with the support of the Bank and other donors, the programs will be expanded to other countries in the region that have significant Roma communities.

