

**FINAL REPORT:**

**QUALITATIVE SURVEY (FOCUS GROUPS)**

**ATTITUDES TOWARD THE ROMA**

**IN ROMANIA**

**JULY, 2005**

**Opinion Research Project  
Commissioned by the World Bank**

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## I. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

In February 2005, eight central European states<sup>1</sup> and a number of international institutions such as the World Bank and The Open Society Institute launched a “Decade of Roma Inclusion.” The goal of the effort is to change prejudicial attitudes and develop support for government programs, aimed at bettering the lives of Roma through better employment opportunities, access to education, health and housing.

In order to develop this support, it is first essential to understand the drivers of these attitudes and perceptions among the general population. In addition, it is crucial to develop a more systematic and deeper understanding of the Roma population in these countries so that efforts are appropriately designed and targeted.

With this purpose in mind, the World Bank has commissioned a qualitative public opinion study in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Romania to Balkan British Social Surveys AD (BBSS), an independent research firm based in Sofia, Bulgaria. BBSS provided overall methodological guidance, operational coordination and quality control on this project, as well as fieldwork in Bulgaria. Fieldwork and reporting in Romania and the Czech Republic were assigned by BBSS, respectively, to CSOP, an associate company of BBSS based in Bucharest, and to Factum Invenio, an established opinion and market research agency based in Prague.

The qualitative survey has been carried out through conducting 8 focus groups in each of the three countries concerned. Research set out to answer the following questions:

- Develop an understanding of why people think the way they do about the Roma (not just what they think about the Roma).
- Determine how to change the minds, behaviors and attitudes of people toward the Roma, and how to build support for government policies meant to support the Roma.
- Identify the obstacles that exist to acceptance of government efforts to improve the lives of Roma.

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<sup>1</sup> Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia

- Identify the risks and opportunities associated with different aspects of reform.
- Identify opportunities to change the views of the general public toward Roma.
- Identify the messages that resonate most with populations to change their perceptions and views.
- Identify the ‘ambassadors of change’ – those elites who can be trusted by the general public and who can act as messengers for critical messages related to Roma policy.
- Identify target audiences whose attitudes may shift more easily than others, and who may lead the way to help change perceptions.

A presentation of the findings from the group discussions carried out under this project in Romania follows.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The focus group discussions in Romania were held during the period 31<sup>st</sup> of May-7 June 2005, with locations and composition in conformity with survey design approved by the client, as follows:

### Non Roma (5 groups, all mixed gender and ages)

1. Bucharest, 18-50 years, secondary & university education
2. Slobozia, city with big Roma population (aged 18-29)
3. Slobozia (aged 30-60)
4. Targu Mures, multi-ethnic area (Romanians, Hungarians, Romanian and Hungarian speaking Roma population)
5. Village (tension point between Romanian and Roma population) (lower education and income levels)

### Roma (3 groups, all mixed gender)

1. Bucharest, 18-50 years, secondary & university education
2. Slobozia (aged 18-60)
3. Targu Mures (aged 18-60)

The recruitment of respondents was carried out by qualified interviewers using screening questionnaires, by randomized quota procedures.

The discussions were held on suitable premises, with audio and video recording. Full verbatim transcripts were produced from the discussions, and on this basis English summary transcripts of four discussions, selected on the value of their content, were elaborated.

Two discussion guides were developed and provided by the World Bank. The guides were translated into Romanian and verified by back-translation into English.

The discussions were conducted by qualified moderators.

### III. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### 1. General public attitudes toward the Roma, and underlying rationales and emotions

The overall representation of Roma was negative (they act as trouble makers, sources of conflict and social deviation).

They are seen as expecting to receive help without making their own contribution.

Although there are interactions with Roma they are mainly related to daily life circumstances like public transportation, shopping experiences, work and school. There are only rare the occasions when non Roma are looking/initiating for contact with the Roma population.

Roma are also perceived as contributing to an increasing deterioration of human relations and behavior.

Also in the register of negative perception it was mentioned their pushing approach which tries to obtain advantages in any occasion from non Roma.

Most respondents referred to the generally poor life conditions Roma live in. To some extent this does not lead to accepting a major effort to improving their life conditions because is described as very difficult for everybody.

Most interactions with Roma belong to a negative register (being robbed, begging, homeless, wrongdoings, delays in paying the taxes, public order disturbances, etc).

Although the negative perception is dominant there is recognition that Roma population is not homogenous and that not all Roma indulge in criminal behavior (good Roma versus bad Roma).

Even when there is recognition of “good Roma” this category was described as being a very small minority within Roma.

It was also stated that there is a small share or Roma who managed to integrate and be successful. To some extent this is also a negative perception because the success is related to abandoning his Roma identity.

### Positive perceptions:

- United
- Respect tradition
- Sociable
- Religious
- Good musicians
- Skilful craftsmen
- Talented
- Pitoresque

### Negative perceptions

- Thieves
- Lazy
- Dirty
- Not interested in education
- Aggressive
- Cheaters
- Noisy
- Dangerous
- Wealth generated by criminal activities
- Primitive
- Gregarious behavior

## **2. Roma perceptions of the problems they are faced with**

Roma perceive themselves as an excluded and marginalized group. Irrespective their individual performance they believe that the Roma ethnicity prevails in the attitudes of non-Roma. In other words there are negative expectations which impede the non Roma to objectively asses Roma as individuals. The situation was perceived as a major obstacle in building trust and in encouraging Roma to hope that they can be accepted as Roma in society

Poverty and exclusion are perceived as the main problems Roma face. These are considered to be old issues which, in the context of today's more stratified society in terms of power and wealth, became more acute. For example the freedom of speech and the political pluralism have, as far as the Roma population is concerned both advantages and disadvantages. The possibility for Roma to have their

own organizations was perceived by higher educated Roma respondents as an opportunity for a better communication and information of the non Roma majority. At the same time anti Roma propaganda became a component of the public message conveyed by some organizations.

However, there is also recognition of the fact that there are non Roma who do not share the dominant hostile attitude regarding Roma.

The prejudices against Roma even when do not generate an active negative behavior are believed to be deeply rooted in the mentality of most non Roma.

Similar to the attitude reflected by non Roma respondents, there is some feeling that the problems belong to the other side and that they are external to their own community. In this sense there is a relevant amount of self justification and criticism of the others.

Regarding the future, most Roma respondents stated optimism. This attitude is generated by various positive expectations: improvement of the domestic situation as a result of Romania's economic development and EU integration; progress or the Roma people in terms of access to education and access to new work opportunities.

### **3. Government policies to help the Roma: the views of non-Roma respondents**

The main obstacle in the acceptance of government help for Roma can be evaluated as being the fact that poverty and fighting with difficult life conditions are nation wide problems and not mainly Roma problems ("poverty to be eradicated for all not only for Roma").

Another obstacle refers to the lack of transparency of government spending and the way this is decided. In this respect, negative comments regarding irrelevant and useless government spending or private interests influencing these spending were recorded.

Higher government spending for helping Roma was perceived as having beneficial effects such as lower criminality, Roma contribution in increasing common wealth, an improved country image abroad, etc.

As far as government spending is concerned, the vast majority of respondents stated that more resources or approximate a similar



amount should be used for all surveyed fields. This attitude reflects the dominant belief that major improvements are needed in all domains (agriculture, health, infrastructure, attracting Foreign Direct Investment, social care system, environment protection, assistance for minority groups, education, fight against corruption, economic growth and creation of new jobs).

In this respect there is no government spending field respondents believed should be privileged in the future.

At the same time the need for higher spendings is less frequently accepted when it refers to poor people or minority groups.

#### **4. Roma views on how the lives of Roma may be improved**

A larger central and local government contribution to improving Roma lives was desired by all respondents. Such a situation was perceived as generating:

- Functional benefits (jobs, education, housing, social care)
- Emotional benefits (hope, perceived positive attitude, support, strengthening the probability of generating positive reaction within Roma community)

A larger assistance for improving Roma lives was stated as necessary both in comparison with the current situation and in terms of its share within the total spending.

At the same time, even if political and social will exist, skepticism was expressed that the necessary funds will be available.

For the effort of improving Roma lives to be successful it was thought that it has to be shared between the government and the social NGOs.

Moreover, in order for all these efforts to be successful it is necessary for the Roma themselves to have a larger and more active contribution. As a reflection of the current weak involvement of Roma communities and organizations were recorded phrases like “we need to fight”, “we need not to abandon”.

The fact that references to Roma leaders activity were mainly done in terms of expectations (what they should do) reflects the current poor perceived contribution to improving Roma’s status. The gap between common Roma people and communities and Roma leaders is generated by the current lack of communication and information.

Even if there are leaders who act for positive changes, such actions are currently not known by most common Roma. Although not included in the survey topics, it can be stated that the electoral scores of Roma political organizations reflect even in the context of a population with a low political participation, the poor influence they have within the Roma population.

Many Roma respondents declared they had enough of promises and empty words and that they need actions with tangible results.

## **5. The Decade of the Roma as seen by non-Roma and Roma**

With minor exceptions, both Roma and non Roma groups were not aware of the Roma Decade effort.

Revealing the aims of the effort triggered positive assessments especially within Roma respondents. At the same time, the prompted hope interfered with expressing the doubt that the benefits will not be experienced in person. Having Roma as the target of a specific program caused also apprehension that the resentment of the majority will increase.

Among non Roma respondents there was also expressed suspicion towards directing specific funds for only one group and not for the whole society.

## **6. Elements of communications strategy to build support for government policies to help the Roma**

### **6.1 Message concepts**

Among Roma respondents, all three message concepts obtained about the same score. However, the statement “ If the Decade of Roma effort is to have a positive impact on the lives of Roma here in Romania, we Roma will have to play a prominent role in ensuring that the goals are achieved” received the highest overall score.

The Roma group in Targu Mures showed the highest differentiation among the three concepts surveyed with the above mentioned statement obtaining a clear best perception.

Among non Roma respondents, the best rated message concepts were the following:

- If there's one thing we must do, it is to help the Roma children so that they will have the opportunities to prosper in a way that our own children have.
- Our country is on the road to prosperity. We must make sure that this prosperity is shared by all.
- Helping the Roma is really about giving every person in our country the opportunity to achieve his/her potential. This is the true meaning of freedom and the fall of the wall.

The lowest overall score was received by the following message:

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

## **6.2 The 'ambassadors for change'**

Among Roma respondents, there were mentioned but a few Roma elites. Beside several local leaders, Mădălin Voicu (Roma MP) and Nicolae Păun (Roma MP) were most frequently mentioned.

It should also be emphasized that traditional („tribal”)Roma community leaders like “King” Cioaba or ”Emperor” Iulian were not mentioned.

Local Roma representatives were mentioned among mistrusted elites.

Among non Roma respondents, Mădălin Voicu was also more frequently mentioned.

Potentially influential non Roma speakers in favor of Roma Decade were journalists (Cristian Tudor Popescu-Editor in Chief, Newspaper *Gandul*) or political leaders (Ion Iliescu – former Romanian president, Traian Basescu – actual Romanian president, Marian Vanghelie – Mayor of 6th District, Bucharest).

## IV. Narrative description of results

### 1. Context: How are things going?

#### 1.1 The direction of the country today

Opening each group discussion with such an issue proved to be a spirit inflator and a trigger for many debates. Thus, it was hard to find an agreement concerning a dominant direction Romania would be heading to. While for some participants it looked hard to assess the country's direction others were quite strong about their opinions. As a possible conclusion of this chapter it can be said that the negative views seemed to be much clearer embedded than the positive ones.

*"I really do not know in which direction things are going"* (Non-Roma Male, 28 years, Bucharest)

*"I don't think that things are looking that great at all. I doubt that things are going to change. Since the revolutions I didn't notice any changes for the best"* (Non-Roma Male, 25 years, Argeş).

While some respondents expressed optimism, there were more respondents who thought that things are not to be changed for the better. Most existing negative perceptions were related to the lack of clearly perceived economic benefits and to some extent also to the insecurity brought about by the EU accession.

As one major source of frustration there were mentioned several times the disparities between on one hand, the high salaries of politicians and top business successful people and on the other hand, the miserable conditions the majority of the population live in.

The few positive perceptions were related to the expected increase of life standards brought about by the EU accession. Joining the EU will allow the skills of Romanians to be better recognized worldwide.

*“Usually I am optimistic. This is due to the opening that we have towards EU even though we are Europeans by birth and we have had a European education and it has been seen that the cadres educated by us have received appreciation abroad, they have reached everywhere, even NASA. We have been appreciated all over the world and we have demonstrated that the Romanian school is a good one” (Non-Roma Female, 56 years, Slobozia).*

One important qualification has to be made concerning the positive view regarding EU. It was almost overall agreed that the Accession benefits will come with a certain delay and maybe only the next generation will be able to fully enjoy the accession effects.

*“I am 45 and the lady here is 50 years old, what hopes can we have?! As EU membership is an issue I feel optimistic about, I can say it is good to be actually achieved. At the same time, it will take years until things will be better. Maybe our children and the young people will see the benefits”. (Non-Roma Male, 45 years, Bucharest)*

At the same time, optimism about EU was associated with a sense of not obtaining enough information about what EU accession really means. This sense of uncertainty was also associated with the fear that the process might not happen at the scheduled time and that there will be delays due to the incapacity of the country to fully comply the accession requirements.

When people expressed optimism that things are heading in the right direction this was however associated with a certain discontent regarding the pace of the overall progress.

Another possible factor of favorable views was associated with the possible changes that would be brought by the new government (Romania held general election at the end of 2004)

## 1.2 What are you most optimistic about

Almost in all cases, questioning about optimistic aspects of the existence brought into discussion rather the problems the people confront with. The overall tendency was for the dimension of pessimistic life aspects to overcome the one of the things people are hopeful about.

*“I believe people are much poorer and they don’t have anything to be optimistic about. Even if something would go well, they don’t have time to notice it. Until something precise will be done in order to raise the living standards, there is no sign of optimism”* (Non-Roma Female, 30 years, Rural/Arges)”

A slight hope could have been distinguished in relation with the undiscovered/unused potential of the country’s resources.

*“The country has resources. They just have to be rationally employed”.* (Non-Roma Male, 48 years, Targu Mures)

Even though not so manifest, the same predisposition was also observed in case of Roma respondents.

*“I don’t know what can I say. Cause if you don’t have money nobody looks at you. Here the money speaks. In order to go to school, you have to pay. You cannot go only on your own head (merit)”* (Roma Female, Bucharest, 18 years)

*“For the beginning, things seem to have started to move but we got to wait till the end to see what’s happening”* (Roma Male, 47 years, Bucharest)

Just as in the case of non-Roma respondents, when identified, the existence of a positive trend was counterpoised by perceiving an overall decline in the rhythm of progress.

*“I say we are heading towards a good direction but while at the beginning we were doing high revs, we started to slow down and now we are rather stuck.*

*Even for Roma there have been things started. They have tried to do something but it seems that the efforts diminished” (Roma Male, 30 years Mureş).*

### **1.3 What brings about these positive trends**

As there were but a few respondents that considered Romania as being on a positive trend, the answers to this issue were scant. The most often mentioned factors responsible for the positive trends were: the foreign investors and gradually changing mentality of the people.

### **1.4 The greatest problems**

Maybe the most recurrent problem that came out in almost all group discussions (both non Roma and non-Roma was the high spread corruption).

*“I believe the biggest problem is corruption both at the high level and the petty corruption” (Non-Roma Male, 45 years, Bucharest).*

While fighting against this phenomenon was considered most of the time as being with no real effects, even if culprits were found, they were not the “big fish”. The presence of corruption at all levels was considered to have as effect impeding the resources to be distributed to the people who really need them.

Another problem frequently mentioned which goes hand in hand with the corruption (actually one of the causes of corruption) was the low quality of the political class which is “*seeking their own interest*” without paying attention to the need of the poor.

The second most recurrent problem was the high prices associated with the population’s poverty

*“We have already joined the EU but only with prices. We have high prices as those from EU” (Non-Roma Male, 57years, Targu Mures).*

Another acute social and economic problem identified was the dwindling number of jobs and consequently the high rate of unemployment.

*“Things, I see them in black, this is my opinion. Agriculture is down, there are no working places. Where are our factories? (...). They have destroyed everything, there is no factory left, anything.”* (Non-Roma Male, 47 years, Targu Mureş)

The lack of working places was perceived as being a more acute issue for the young generation. *(I’m afraid for the future of my children)*

The problems identified by Roma respondents were to up to some extent identical with the problems of the whole society. At the same time, it was recognized that for Roma people the same problems are more acute.

*“Thus, the biggest problem is the poverty. There would also be the housing conditions. Especially for Roma they are very precarious and from here a bunch of health problems”* (Roma Male, 30 years, Mureş).

Within Roma groups there has been also mentioned the issue of discrimination which would affect the way Roma gain access to education and job market. The discrimination, even though not argued with the same consistency within all Roma groups, was mentioned by every Roma as affecting at least some areas of Roma activities.

*“And there have been cases when the Roma child was smarter than the Romanian and despite this, the Roma one was marginalized. They said that they did not know. It was accepted the one who gave the money envelope”* (Roma Male, Bucharest, 47 years).



At the same time, there were opinions expressed that Roma problems have also causes which lie within the community itself and that is where the problems' responsibility should be looked for.

*"I want to say that the mentality problem is beside poverty, one of the causes for which Roma do not attend school. I keep going to them in the villages and tell them 'Let the children to school'. It is very important for them to learn, to make humans out of them and for them to integrate easier. And they are pretty stubborn. This is our shortcoming, of Roma people, stubbornness"* (Roma Male, 59 years, Mureş).

### **1.5 Who or what is responsible**

The politicians were pointed out to be the main factors that lead to the existing problems. The political class as a whole was considered to be formed mainly of individuals who *put on the first place not the common interest but their own interest* (Non-Roma Male, 29 years, Bucharest)

References were also made to the inheritance of communism and how the system destroyed the country resources.

Another mentioned factor responsible for the current problems pointed to the cultural characteristics of Romanians alluding to the fact that an important role is played by the mentality of Romanians towards work. The so-called *laziness of Romanians*, mentioned by the young respondents would be an inheritance of the communist ethics of work.

Another factor to blame for the present problems was the process of privatization and more precisely the way this was handled.

*"Badly organized and reckless privatization; we sold almost everything just for the sake of selling and privatizing, without being concerned about getting profit from there"* (Non-Roma Male, 19 years, Slobozia).

### **1.6 Thoughts on joining the European Union**

The opinions regarding the EU accession proved to be divided among those pointing to benefits and those pointing to the hard times that will come immediately after the accession event. Among the expected accession drawbacks, the most often mentioned was the increase of prices.

*“I believe there’s going to be hard times. Look at those from Hungary who are now in EU, they come to us to do their shopping” (Non-Roma Female, 50 years, Bucharest).*

The expected advantages were perceived to have effects only further on in the future, the optimism of the elderly being motivated only by their hopes that their children will enjoy more advantages.

*“We at 45 or the lady at 50, what kind of hope can we have?! I would say the EU accession is a good thing to be done but we will be better off only after many years, maybe our children or the youth will get to enjoy the benefits. We, those who are no longer young, we are going to be a generation of sacrifice. Maybe it is a good thing to join to EU thinking of our children, for them to be better off” (Non-Roma Male, 45 Bucharest).*

The EU accession was perceived as a trade off between advantages *a la longue* and immediate difficulties.

*“It is a very good thing but I don’t know how are we going to handle the situation. Because it has many demands. And with lies and thefts, you can’t get along. It is complicated to solve everything they require. It is a quite long process and it won’t be easy at all”. (Non-Roma Male, 57 years, Targu Mures)*

The existence of skepticism was counterbalanced by the hope of benefiting of one of the fundamental freedoms of the union: freedom of movement

*“It is going to be pretty bad, seriously. Things will not be colored in pink, as many people expect. The only positive aspect, so to speak, is that we will be able to leave. We will work abroad, especially the youth...” (Non-Roma Male, 26 years, Bucharest).*

Other benefits were related to an increase in foreign investment and the consequent revitalization of economic activities.

*“There will come foreign investments, there will come money, even big companies are going to open subsidiaries here”* (Non-Roma Male, 29 years, Bucharest).

On another hand, the difficulties brought about by the accession (mainly the increase in prices) were seen as possible causes of social unrest and protests.

*“There will be many sacrifices. I am sure there will be discontent, street protests, strikes”* (Non-Roma Male, 45 years, Bucharest).

At the same time, there were also expressed fears regarding the capacity of the country to comply with all EU regulations.

*“We will not be able to observe all the requirements”* (Non-Roma Female, 50 years, Bucharest).

Joining the EU would also mean an opportunity for the Romanians to be better known by the Europeans and, according to some respondents, an occasion of getting rid of the prejudices the Europeans have towards Romanians. One of these prejudices would consist in stigmatizing the whole Romanian nation due to the illegal activities done by the Romanians of Roma ethnicity.

*“I believe that after the accession, the Occident will get to know us better. So they will stop saying that we are gypsies. And I would like to add something else. They should add a sort of a stamp in the passport which would say ‘gipsy’ so that Romanians stop to pay for what gypsies have made. For everyone to know what each of us is...”* (Non-Roma Male, 47 years, Bucharest)

## **2. Government policies and the country’s resources**

Discussing about how to better distribute government's funds in a country where the general perception is that there is an overall want of resources proved to be a thorny issue.

*"There is no field to get the proper attention; I mean they should invest more into everything. But what can they do, how can you distribute when the funds are so little?"* (Non Roma Female, 30 years, Argeş)

The general view was that due to the shortage of resources, it would be hard to reach a distribution that would please everybody. Redistributing resources from one sector to the other would lead to transferring the want from one place to the other.

*"There would be an issue, the one about massive investments in one place that would stop investments in others. I would say it would be better if it were less but for everybody to benefit than to be a lot but only in one place"* (Non Roma Male, 18 years, Slobozia).

*"Money, we need it everywhere, for infrastructure, for agriculture, everywhere"* (Non Roma Female, 50 years, Bucharest).

As the sectors that were thought necessary to attract more resources, the following were mentioned and discussed in more details:

- Education (*"it's an investment in the future"* – Non Roma Male, 19 years, Slobozia)
- Agriculture, (*"In Agriculture, there are but a few things done and the pensions are low. Maybe they should increase them to help us live"* (Non Roma Male, 53 years, Argeş)

However, as it can be seen from the results of the written exercise – *Table on Government spending*, almost all sectors were considered entitled to receive more resources.

	More Resources		Fewer Resources		About the same Amount		Total	
	Freq	Pct	Freq	Pct	Freq	Pct	Freq	Pct
1.Agriculture and Rural Development	36	94.7%	-	-	2	5.3%	38	100%
2. Health	37	100%	-	-	-	-	37	100%
3.Infrastructure (roads, transport, bridges)	30	78.9%	1	2.6%	7	18.4%	38	100%
4.Attracting foreign investment to our country	26	68.4%	6	15.8	6	15.8	38	100%
5. Services for the poor	33	86.8%	1	2.6%	4	10.5%	38	100%
6.Environmental protection	26	68.4%	2	5.3%	10	26.3%	38	100%
7.Assistance for minority groups such as the Roma	19	50%	6	15.8%	13	34.2%	38	100%
8. Education	37	97.4%	-	-	1	2.6%	38	100%
9.Governance (corruption)	26	68.4%	4	10.5%	8	21.1%	38	100%
10. Economic growth	37	97.4%	-	-	1	2.6%	38	100%
11.Employment (particularly for our youth)	36	94.7%	-	-	2	5.3%	38	100%

(Table on Government Spending)

The areas of work considered most entitled to more resources were Education, Health, Economic Growth, Employment for Youth and Agriculture and Rural Development. The chapter regarding Assistance for minority groups, especially Roma, even though with a high overall score for *more resources*, was also considered by many (half of respondents) to receive fewer or just about the same amount of resources.

### 3. Perceptions of ethnicity

#### 3.1 What does it mean to be a Romanian? What makes us different from others

Most attributes associated with the Romanian identity belonged to a positive register, stressing a lot upon the cultural stereotypes Romanians have been taught to trust in during the Communist times. Thus, Romanians were considered to be convivial and open-hearted people

*“Romanians are most convivial of all Europeans and especially of the neighbors”* (Non Roma Female, 30 years, Argeş)

Romanians were also considered to be intelligent even though it was also recognized that this intelligence doesn't always transpose into practical usages.

*“Romanians are a people of intellectuals”*(Non Roma Female,30 years, Argeş)

*“A plus of intelligence, we are very intelligent but at the same time, we prove to have an incapacity to use in the most effective way this intelligence”* (Non Roma Male, 26 years, Bucharest).

Romanians were considered to be patriotic and emotionally bound to the motherland and traditional customs.

*“We are brave and patient. We know how to be tenacious and to wait till we succeed”* (Non Roma Female 46 years, Argeş).

*“There's a lot to say on the topic. Romanians are patriots maybe in a higher extent than other nations. We have a strong relation to our friends and I fell greatly bound to this land. I even missed the country 1 month after being away. This is how the Romanian is, dedicated to his land and his beliefs* (Non Roma Male, 57 years, Argeş).

*“We are hardworking, outgoing and ready to lend a hand”* (Non Roma Male, 55 years, Argeş).

The existence of the current problems influenced the way the people perceived the national identity. Thus, the issue of self-interested leaders was brought into the fore again when talking about national characteristics.

*“We have bad leaders”* (Non Roma Male 26 years, Bucharest).

On another hand, fears have been expressed that the extent of the economic hardships in which many Romanians live could lead to dissolution of the national identity and to sentiments of embarrassment related to the fact of being a Romanian.

*“I believe there is a different problem. Because we live in misery, this situation makes us not be proud that we are Romanians. We love our country, we miss this lands if we go abroad but we are not proud with what we are”* (Non Roma Male, 45 years, Bucharest).

When asked about their identity, Roma respondents mentioned different experiences related to the degree of their acceptance by the majority population.

*“There is a sort of race hatred. On my papers there says nothing about my ethnicity. I am a Romanian citizen, that’s all. There are Roma who are more civilized then Romanians but they are seen as good for nothing people. We also live in Romania. Why should we be guilty because we have another race? We feel marginalized, we feel offended, and we are not treated accordingly. They do not offer us the necessary attention if we are going out somewhere, they are staring at us and letting us to wait at the doors”* (Roma Male, 47 years, Bucharest)”

Belonging to the way some Roma perceived themselves there was a sense of exclusion and a skepticism regarding the possibilities of improving their lives in the near future.

*“I say that some of us, we have integrated ourselves, we are accepted in this big community of Romania, others of us are not accepted. Because you see, as long as the world will last, Roma will always be underprivileged in comparison with others”* (Roma Female, 44 years, Slobozia).

*“I believe it is a little bit harder for Roma. In order to be notice or if you want to do something, to be on the same level with the others, you have to work more, to do more. For them, there is this attitude: they have only to see you that you are Roma and especially if you haven’t had the chance to talk with them, you are being treated in an inferior way”* (Roma Male, 34 years, Slobozia).

The combativeness was considered to be a feature of some Roma necessary in order to overcome the discriminatory practices.

*I’ve been a feisty one and indeed I have not allowed anyone to call my child a gipsy and I have been set on anyone wanted to played injustices to him* (Roma Female, 44 years, Slobozia)

To some extent being Roma meant also recognizing the fact of belonging to a community which causes social problems. At the same time it was also mentioned that Roma are not the unique source of trouble making.

*It is true that we also have the category of Roma who causes problems but your cannot say that this category does not exist to non Roma as well* (Roma Male, 34 years, Slobozia)

*They say, he is Roma, he will cause problems. All Romanians say that all Roma cause problems. If some of them steal and do some sort of things, all Roma are treated in the same way* (Roma Female, 18 years, Bucharest)



Another perceived feature of Roma was a sort of inferiority complex which in the context of interacting with the majority population would further increase the suspicion and eventual discrimination of the latter.

*From my personal experience, I have not been discriminated. Neither in primary school nor in high school. I have tried to study well and not to be different of others. Because as far as I have noticed, Roma have a problem with the fact that they themselves imagine all kind of complexes. They have complexes and therefore do not behave normally. They sit withdrawn, remote and that is why they are treated differently. If you do not appreciate yourself, how do you want others to do it? (Roma Female, 20 years, Mures)*

### **3.2 Is our nation tolerant?**

Most non Roma respondent tended to agree that Romanians are a tolerant nation, tolerance which would be related to the cultural identity of Romanians. There were also expressed opinions regarding the fact that sometimes tolerance works in excess.

*Even too tolerant. We can accept nearly any kind of treatment.(Non Roma Female, 46 years, Argeş)*

*We are very tolerant, this is how we are, we are not moving forward too much, we accept many as long as they do not affect us directly and very bad (Non Roma Male 45 years, Bucharest)*

*They care a lot their family and their friends, even the extended family with cousins, uncles, aunts, we are all a big family (Non Roma Male, 19 years, Slobozia)*

*Generally we are very tolerant, we mind our own business, our problems, there are many poor people here and this is what concerns us more (Non Roma Male, 20 years, Slobozia)*

Probing about attitudes regarding behavior towards foreigners, tourists of immigrants, didn't reveal any prejudiced reactions towards the different kinds of minority. In Targu Mureş, city with a large Hungarian minority, the general opinion was that Romanians get along with Hungarians very well and that the only sources of tension that might exist comes from politicians.

However, the attitude of people living together with Roma minority in their close proximity triggered rather general negative feeling about Roma minority.

*I want to say that until 20 years ago, they were very respectful, they minded their own business and they did not steal (...). After the revolution, they became nasty. There came all kind of punks from outside the local community and they do all kind of incidents, they steal, they beat (Non Roma Female, 46 years, Argeş)*

According to Roma respondents the attitudes of non Roma towards their community has improved in the last years but there were always expressed qualifications that there still are biased and prejudiced Romanians.

*To some extent things have changed but there still are unchanged views. I say yes because those with non Roma ethnicity have mixed with those with Roma ethnicity and some of them accept us as we are with qualities and drawbacks. But there still are others who do not accept us even though we are honest and truthful persons. (Roma Female, 24 years, Slobozia)*

*In my school, I am not marginalized at all. I am the only Roma in the class, the rest of my colleagues are Romanians but they behave with me as if I were one of them. They do not make any difference at all. (Roma Female, 18 years, Bucharest)*

Most Roma respondents seemed to agree that generally Romanians are a tolerant people and that the discrimination practices are the characteristics of only some Romanians.

*Yes, generally yes. Even though they regard us a little bit with more reservation, after they get to know us, they accept us with open arms. I have Romanian friends and they do not have any difference. (Roma Female, 37 years, Mureş)*

*I say they are pretty tolerant. They do not abuse someone only because he is different of them. Or to refuse to talk, or to communicate with him. (Roma Male, 59 years, Mureş)*

*It depends, some of them are, some of them aren't. Anyway, those who mind their own businesses are pretty well received, those who steal and make bad things are not tolerated. (Roma Female, 36 years, Bucharest)*

*Tolerance is in Romanians gene. Romanians are very tolerant nation in comparison with Hungarians who are snubs. The Hungarians think themselves superior to everybody and this is how they behave like, as if they were the center of the world. (Roma Female, 37 years, Mureş)*

*You see, they have peoples and peoples. Some of them are open-minded while others are not. And I believe this is the problem. On another hand there are also Roma who cause problems and it is hard for them to be accepted and welcome. (Roma Male, 47 years, Bucharest)*

*Today, it is the young people's chance. Many things have changed. We have many facilities that we haven't had before. (Roma Male, 55 years, Mureş)*

## 4. Attitudes toward the Roma

### 4.1 The greatest challenges/problems faced by Roma

According to the opinions expressed in all non-Roma groups there might be difficult to talk about Roma as a whole, the Roma community being heterogeneous and diversified. The Roma way of life seems to differ according to region and to the clan to which some of them still belong.

*“I believe there are Roma and Roma, not all of them are alike”* (Non Roma Male, 45 years, Bucharest).

*“Well, it depends. They are very numerous in villages. They are pretty different within each others. Some of them are good craftsmen, others indulge in thefts from people from the field, some of them engage in trade activities. I say not all of them are the same”* (Non Roma Male, 56 years, Mureş).

Despite recognition of the fact that Roma community is heterogeneous and that there are different Roma communities, the overall perceptions were rather negative, the good Roma being considered as exceptions. It was especially the social problems that Roma cause what lead the non Roma respondents to judge most Roma as being rather reluctant to integration.

The attributes which were thought to best characterize Roma community belonged rather to a negative register such as: thieves, lazy, dirty, not interested in education, aggressive, cheaters, noisy, dangerous, primitive, and gregarious. The positive register was made of attributes such as united, tradition keepers, religious, sociable, talented, musicians, craftsmen and pitoresque.

An issue that came out when asking about Roma problems was a suspicion of non-Roma respondents regarding the nature of problems Roma really face. Thus, the

first reaction was to consider Roma as causing problems rather than having problems.

*I don't think that they have so many problems. They are the troublemakers.*

(Non Roma Male, 55 years, Argeş)

*Do they actually have any problems?*(Non Roma Male, 29 years, Bucharest)

Another almost overall shared opinion was to perceive Roma as a rather passive community in terms of the action needed in order to improve their lives. Roma were considered to be waiting for the governments and others help and less as actors with initiative. Furthermore the wealthy Roma were considered not to be at all preoccupied by the fate of their not so fortunated conationals.

*Yes, but it is up to them to make their life easier. They stay and always wait for that help, they do not make any decision of their own about how to earn better.* (Non Roma Male, 45 years, Bucharest)

*They are always only expecting to be given. That's how they think, that they should be given without doing anything in return.* (Non Roma Male, 55 years, Argeş)

*I think it is more important for them to be taught how to live, instead of being given. If you're just giving them things you're not effectively helping them out. They will only ask more in future. They must be determined to work, to think to make an effort for their well being.* (Non Roma Female, 30 years, Argeş)

Education and the poor living conditions were mentioned as extremely acute problems that Roma confront with. At the same time, anytime when such a problem was discussed in detail there were voices which found Roma to be responsible to some extent of the respective problem.

*They didn't think much of school so far. But now, for example, the ones that want a driving license need at least an 8 grades certificate. They became rich*

*and realised that they can't get a driving license. Now they are more motivated to attend school.* (Non Roma Male, 59 year, Argeş)

*I believe those who do harm are more numerous and that those who mind their own business are isolated cases* (Non Roma Male, 47 years, Bucharest)

#### Education

*"The problem is that they don't go to school that much, they are not concerned about education"* (Non Roma Female, 21 years, Mureş).

#### The housing conditions

*"Another problem would be the conditions they live in. Many of them do not have houses, stay all together in some pretty bad conditions".* (Non Roma Female, 28 years, Bucharest).

#### High birth rate

*"They have a high birth rate. They make many children and very early"* (Non Roma Female, 53 years, Mureş, 1).

#### Compromise the national image

*"But it seems that they have been accustomed to steal, to cheat. End there is another problem. They go abroad. And they appear to be Romanian citizens and they compromise us"* (Non Roma Male, 56 years, Mureş).

## 4.2 Experiences of interactive situations with Roma

Most reactions generated by meeting and living with Roma were of suspicion, fear and reservation. Almost all non-Roma respondents had a negative experience with a Roma which influenced the way they currently perceive them. The negative attitudes towards the whole Roma community were considered to be justified as long as all respondents had but a few positive encounters with *good Roma*.

*"We regard them with fear, instead of getting into contact with them it is better to give up. We are afraid of having contacts with them"* (Non Roma Male, 29 years, Bucharest).

*“In our block of flats there is there is only one Roma family and we pray God for they to leave, to get rid of them. This is it, they make noise, they play music 24 hours a day, they fight, they scream, slamming doors, it is tough to live with them...” (Non Roma Male, 47 years, Bucharest).*

One mentioned dislike about Roma was the negative influence they can exert upon the Romanian youth. (promoters of insulting language and behavior)

*I believe they can also be negative examples for our children. I am looking at the young generation, it is promoted the subculture. For example these children in trams, even the girls, we can hear them speak extremely ugly. We have taken from Roma only the worst, we have not succeeded to make them follow us, we followed them and we took from them the worst (Non Roma Male, 47 years, Bucharest)*

*I wanted to tell you that I had in my team a Roma who for one year he minded his own business but when the second Roma appeared he started to show his real nature, things have started to disappear. We have caught him on the fact and he has been laid off. I don't know why he has changed. (Non Roma Male, 45 years, Bucharest).*

*“I have been robbed 3 times. I have seen them. They were dark hair, they were organized, you cannot ketch them. You cannot even warn other persons because they threaten you. They are capable till the next bus stop to cut your face or to steal you necklace” (Non Roma Female, 50 years, Bucharest).*

*“I have met a Roma family in the place where I have lived before. We were neighbors, they were very special people, they have graduated from the Music Academy. Even now we keep in touch by telephone. It doesn't bother me that they are Roma. But maybe there are fewer persons like this” (Non Roma Female, 50 years, Bucharest).*

*“I want to tell you that I also had unpleasant experiences with them: they have stolen my money, I have been beaten by a Roma on the streets without any reason, when I was a child, and food has been taken out of my hand. And now I have a University colleague whom I have appreciated and whom I appreciate because even though he is Roma, he minds his own business, he learns well and I like him because he is a good man, he helps me. We talk, we help each other with our papers. As long as it can be discussed with him, why not to discuss” (Non Roma Female, 21 years, Târgu Mureş)*

Roma who succeeded in integrating and being accepted within the Romanian community were considered as exceptions and experiences of such persons did not seem to change the overall negative opinion non-Roma respondents seemed to have towards Roma.

However, one possible factor of change could be religion.

*“I want to tell you that I have known those who have changed their religion. Those who made themselves Pentecostal and who changed a lot. They are better, more docile, more respectful” (Non Roma Female, 26 years, Slobozia)*

One powerful source of frustration regarding Roma was their total disregard of rule and laws.

*“We should learn them that there are some rules. Some of them behave as if they would not know that there are rules. They live in a world of them, they do not respect anything, they pretend that they do not know any rule. They are not allowed to do this. They should know the law. Some of them are as if they were not living on Earth” (Non Roma Female, 40 years, Târgu Mureş)*

### **4.3. Underlying attitudes toward Roma integration**

#### **4.3.1. Do you have anything in common with the Roma?**



There was one aspect in which Roma and non Roma were thought to be most similar: the children. Even in cases of improper behavior, the responsibility of their acts was transferred upon their parents and the (lack of) education they have been given.

*“There is also the fact that they are not educated, they are not stimulated to study. There are many families which send their kids to school only for the social benefit and for the roll and the milk. (social program which ensures every primary school child breakfast).But they are still children.”* (Non Roma Female, 30 years, Argeş)

In other aspects most Romanians perceived as being different to Roma in term of Education, living conditions, way of life and respect of the rules and laws.

#### **4.3.2. Roma compared to other minorities**

The general view was that Roma are much more different than other minorities due to their aggravated problems. Thus, the Hungarians or the Germans were considered not to have the specific social and economic problems Roma deal with.

*The others are integrated, they behave normally, and they respect our rules and our laws. They only differ from us by the language, by the fact that they speak other language and that’s all”* (Non Roma Female, 46 years, Argeş)

#### **4.3.3. Do Roma want to integrate more?**

The general view within non-Roma respondent was that Roma are rather reluctant to integration and that they prefer their actual marginalized way of life. The few ones

who wanted to integrate have succeeded but in the same time have broke with their Roma identity being considered rather Romanians.

#### **4.3.4. The moral angle: are Roma treated fairly?**

The dominant view was the most of the time Roma are neither treated worse nor better than other social groups in need and that they should not necessarily enjoy special benefits.

However, there were also points of view according to which Roma do not receive all the chances that guaranteed in a truly democratic society.

*“From my point of view I say that they are not treated fairly because they are not afforded all the chances. For them to have a working place. They are marginalized, are regarded a little bit worse and this is how it has been used since old times. They are Roma, we should not mix with them this is how many think”* (Non Roma Male, 55 years, Argeş)

#### **4.4. More integration or ‘separate but equal’ approach?**

The general view was that in order to solve Roma problems an integration approach would be much more successful.

*“They should be integrated and not at all separated. Otherwise, we would not help them at all to progress, it would not be good...”* ( Non Roma Female, 30 years, Argeş)

*„How do you want him to learn anything, to be interested of changing anything if you keep him together with those alike. Everybody in one place it’s better”* (Non Roma Male, 59, Argeş).

### **5. Roma views on greater integration**

## 5.1 The problems faced by Roma

The problems faced by Roma can be divided into two categories:

➤ Common, shared with the other social groups:

They are mainly referring to poverty and associated difficulties like poor housing conditions, poor education, poor health and limited access to jobs. Although it was recognized such problems are not unique to Roma community, statements regarding a comparatively more difficult situation were recorded.

*“Many Roma do not wash, this is the situation and we have to admit it, or they wear dirty clothes. These all are again linked with poverty and the miserable living conditions they have”* (Non Roma Male, 46 years, Targu Mures).

*“It was always more difficult for Roma to raise children. They live in overcrowded and very poor condition”* (Non Roma Male, 19 years, Slobozia).

➤ Specific problems related to Roma ethnicity:

In this respect, the problems refer to discrimination and exclusion. Several Roma respondents stated the dominant negative perception non Roma population has about Roma limits the opportunities Roma might have to prove their capabilities. It was stated that such barriers are mainly soft, discrete ones in the sense they are not explicit or militant in any respect.

Although a situation in which views about need for Roma' exclusion become public and radical is by no means a better one, it can be also estimated that the discrete but relevant support for such options also presents major difficulties. It is sometimes more difficult to gain public support for fighting discrimination when such a problem is not considered as having grounds in the individuals' behaviour.

*I would like to say that, although not shown overtly, it is there, deep in their souls. At work, in formal situations, they addressed me with “Mr. Foreman “ but behind my back they said “Do not take it, it is from the gipsy”. (Non Roma Male, 47 years, Targu Mures)*

### **5.1.1 List of problems mentioned**

Roma perceive themselves as an excluded and marginalized group. Irrespective their individual performance they believe that the Roma ethnicity prevails in the attitudes of non-Roma. In other words there are negative expectations which impede the non Roma to objectively asses Roma as individuals. The situation was perceived as a major obstacle in building trust and in encouraging Roma to hope that they can be accepted as Roma in society

Poverty and exclusion are perceived as the main problems Roma face. These are considered to be old issues which, in the context of today’s more stratified society in terms of power and wealth, became more acute. For example the freedom of speech and the political pluralism have, as far as the Roma population is concerned both advantages and disadvantages. The possibility for Roma to have their own organizations was perceived by higher educated Roma respondents as an opportunity for a better communication and information of the non Roma majority. At the same time anti Roma propaganda became a component of the public message conveyed by some organizations.

However, there is also recognition of the fact that there are non Roma who do not share the dominant hostile attitude regarding Roma.

The prejudices against Roma even when do not generate an active negative behavior are believed to be deeply rooted in the mentality of most non Roma.

Similar to the attitude reflected by non Roma respondents, there is some feeling that the problems belong to the other side and that they are external to their own community. In this sense there is a relevant amount of self justification and criticism of the others.

Regarding the future, most Roma respondents stated optimism. This attitude is generated by various positive expectations: improvement of the domestic situation as a result of Romania's economic development and EU integration; progress of the Roma people in terms of access to education and access to new work opportunities.

### **5.1.2 Are they different from the problems of other minorities, the poor in general?**

Most Roma respondents consider the problems facing their community different, in the sense they are more grave and deep rooted.

*“Everybody is worse off. This is the today's society. Other ethnicities have their problems as well but they are less numerous and they are grouped in certain areas where they are even majoritarian”* (Roma Male, 50 years, Bucharest)

The long history of Roma poverty and deprivation history was considered as being, at least on short term, another barrier.

*“Roma were always poor. They were at the periphery of the society. It is difficult to stand up out of nothing”* (Roma Male, 30 years, Targu Mures).

Another aspect which shows, according to Roma' respondents, a comparatively more difficult situation of Roma population refers to the poor will of non Roma people to give credit and to offer job opportunities to Roma. Various situations in which Roma' jobs applications were refused with no justification were mentioned during the group discussions.

At the same time, it was not recorded any statement that such barriers act as a direct invitation to undertaking illegal activities, either soft or hard ones.

Anyway, such statements are frequently reproduced in the media. In this respect, it could be useful to get evidence regarding the ratio between negative and positive information about Roma presented by the mass media.

### **5.1.3 Have things for Roma gotten better or worse in recent years?**

The dominant feeling was that things remained unchanged as far as employment, housing and Roma's perceptions are concerned.

*A 'Jobs for Roma Fair' was recently organized. It finally completed failed due to the employers' absence. (Roma Female, 40 years, Targu Mures)*

*I think the fact we are discouraged by the majority hearts us a lot. (Roma Male, 55 years, Targu Mures)*

At the same time, progress was stated regarding education and health.

### **5.1.4 What are the obstacles to improvement?**

The lack of jobs was considered by most respondents as the main obstacle to improvement of Roma condition.

Some respondents were critical about the central and local government lack of interest in addressing the Roma poor standard of living issue. It was stated this topic is not a priority on the authorities' agenda.

While the difficulty to cope with many different needs and limited budgets was recognized as being a genuine limitation, it was suggested resources could be better managed and better oriented. In this respect, Roma respondents did not share the opinion the respective community is abusing social security funds, in the sense some have access to assistance which, according to the law, they are not entitled to.

### 5.1.5 Your expectations for the next Roma generation

Optimism regarding next Roma generation was recorded. This attitude is based on a larger access to education and health. Another source of optimism stems into the changes brought about by the EU accession.

*“I would say it is going to be well for Roma. Maybe due to EU accession we are going to be better treated”* (Roma Male, 50 years, Bucharest)

At the same time, it was said that, while opportunities to education are larger now, it is Roma parents’ responsibility to actually use them. In this respect, a better education is perceived as a prerequisite for any further improvements both regarding the Roma inner condition and their perception by the majority.

*I say the most important thing is to send children at school. Now, access is possible. If we do not attend school, it is only our fault.* (Roma Male, 59 years, Targu Mures)

Some Roma respondents stated the current discrimination is likely to continue also in the future, irrespective possible progress which might occur. Nevertheless, respondents expressing this type of fatalistic concept represented a minority

*As long as life on Earth will continue, Roma will be deprived.* (Roma Female, 44 years, Slobozia)

## 5.2 Attitudes to integration

### 5.2.2 The choice between more interaction/integration with non-Roma, and ‘separate but equal’ approach

It can be estimated that more interaction/ integration with non-Roma is the strongly prevailing attitude.

Living and working together were considered as crucial elements in building mutual trust and respect.

*“We should be alongside Romanians with the same rights and obligations”*  
(Roma Female, 18 years, Bucharest)

*“The majority will also feel better, they will come to know us better and will also benefit”* (Roma Male, 55 years, Targu Mures).

*“We also have valuable things to teach them”* (Roma Male, 59 years, Targu Mures).

The perspective of a ‘separate but equal’ approach was clearly rejected by respondents based on several reasons:

- Concerns that such an option is only the first step towards the final ‘separate and unequal’ situation

*Finally, there will be less help, less assistance and less interest.* (Roma Male, 58 years, Targu Mures)

- Negative side effects within the Roma community itself

*We would feel worse, discouraged.* (Roma Male, 55 years, Targu Mures)

At the same time, no opinions about a possible melting pot in which different ethnical groups would gradually lose their identity were recorded.

### **5.2.3 Obstacles to integration and to equal access**

The main obstacles to integration refer to the current dominant negative perception of Roma. Being a mixture of direct experiences and inherited ones, having a complex economic and cultural basis, such perceptions are resistant. Consequently, they can be properly addressed based on a continuous and long term effort which



will gradually get ground in both communities. A steadily improvement of attitudes is a realistic goal which cannot be achieved by any 'campaign style' approach.

The equal access issue also presents difficulties. Besides prejudice or double standards applied by employers, it was stated that lower education and professional training are current obstacles to equal access to jobs. At the same time, many respondents emphasized the need for breaking what was described as the vicious circle of poverty-low education-unemployment.

As far as equal access is concerned, many Roma respondents admitted and welcomed the positive trend regarding education and health. These are actually the areas where Roma people actually saw their status improved.

*Doctors remain doctors and take care of us. (Roma Male, 55 years, Targu Mures)*

#### **5.4.2 Would greater integration be welcome among non-Roma**

Confidence that most non-Roma people will not react negatively regarding efforts for a greater integration was recorded.

Several respondents stated that the prospects of the 'greater integration' objective strongly depend on tangible positive outcomes for both communities. In this respect, people should really feel greater integration provides benefits and not simply be told it does so promised it will do.

#### **5.4.3 Integration of Roma compared with other minority groups**

The general idea Roma have the most difficult situation was shared by most respondents.

As a result of various causes (economic, cultural, psychological), the Roma integration is comparatively a more difficult objective

*With Roma, there is a much bigger discrimination.* (Roma Female, 37 years, Targu Mures)

## **6. The government and the Roma**

### **6.1 Would society benefit from helping Roma**

The dominant view was that solving Roma problems would lead to an improvement in the quality of life for all Romanians (Roma being seen as a major source of social problems, especially high rate of criminality). At the same time, helping Roma will improve the image Romania has abroad (which was considered to be tarnished due to the illegal activities practices abroad by the Romanian citizens of Roma ethnicity)

### **6.2 Who should be responsible for helping Roma?**

Within the non Roma respondents the opinions were divided between those agreeing with a governmental help and those who believed that the main role should be given to the community itself.

*“The community should help itself. They should support and raise each other”*  
(non Roma Female, 50 years, Bucharest).

### **6.3 How generous should government help be?**

The dominant view among non-Roma respondents was that the main help should be not financial but consisting in improvement of opportunities and equal access to common goods and resources. A specific financial aid raised suspicion in the context in which there are so many other deprived social groups and in the context of existing the risk of the money not to reach the people who are really in need.

### **6.4 Should the government help Roma more than others in need?**

The dominant view was that there should not be taken exceptional measures in order to improve Roma's lives. One argument upon which this statement was based was that Roma have themselves a part of the responsibility for the hard situation in which most of them are currently found.

*"Why should I have such a responsibility? I should improve my personal life first. (Non Roma Male, 26 years, Bucharest)*

*Did we oblige them to have so many children? (Non Roma Male, 47 years, Bucharest)*

### **6.5 What about the duty of non-Roma community to help**

The opinions regarding the responsibility of the whole community in helping Roma life were divided among those highly favorable to this effort and those pointing out the necessity of solving first the overall social problems.

*Why should I have such a responsibility, let me first improve my own life (Non Roma Male, 26 years, Bucharest)*

*We can participate and try to do everything for this thing to work. For example, we could communicate more with them ((Non Roma Male, 55 years, Argeş)*

### **6.6 And what about Roma self-help**

There was an almost overall agreement regarding the high disparities that exist within Roma communities. Thus, while some Roma are extremely rich, the majority live much bellow under the standards of poverty. A wide shared opinion was that a part of the help should come from the wealthy Roma who can easily afford to help the members of their community who are less better off.

*Some of them are pretty rich. But they don't help the poor. (Roma Male, 47 years, Bucharest)*

*Roma have the latest car models. And what palaces I have seen on TV. And still they don't help each other. Some in palaces and others in shacks. (Non Roma Male, 47 years, Bucharest)*

*Let Roma help themselves. For example, Adi de la Valcea and Guță and Adrian (famous Roma singers) and many others to contribute some amount, they can afford and an amount exceeding 2 millions will be easily gathered (Non Roma Male, 26 years, Bucharest)*

The high level of unemployment within Roma community was considered by almost all respondents as an usual thing as long as the general view was that most Roma engage in illegal or low qualification temporary jobs. Not only that no one was surprised by the 65 % unemployment rate but some non-Roma respondents even presumed that the real Roma unemployment would be in fact even higher.

*Most of them do not work legally, they work one or two days, seasonal jobs (Non Roma Male, 25 years, Argeș)*

*This is quite understandable because they do not work and those that work, work illegally. They deal with trade or with begging or they don't have any work place and then they steal because they have to live as well. (Non Roma Female, 40 years, Targu Mureș)*

*They are not serious, they do not behave properly. There was a Jobs Fair for Roma but they did not come, the employers were waiting and did not have whom to employ (Non Roma Male, 47 years, Bucharest)*

## 7. Roma views on helping improve their lives

### 7.1 Should the government help the Roma...how generously?

A larger central and local government contribution to improving Roma lives was desired by all respondents. Such a situation was perceived as generating:

- Functional benefits (jobs, education, housing, social care)
- Emotional benefits (hope, perceived positive attitude, support, strengthening the probability of generating positive reaction within Roma community)

A larger assistance for improving Roma lives was stated as necessary both in comparison with the current situation and in terms of its share within the total spending.

Most respondents emphasized the need for an immediate and substantial support. In this respect, the current situation was evaluated as unsatisfactory.

Several respondents outlined the need for a balanced approach as far as assistance is concerned. For these respondents, the ethnical aspect of poverty, besides from not being the only one, is not even the most relevant one. Consequently, efforts are needed for assisting all people in need and any selection in this respect is counterproductive.

*All people facing poverty should be helped, this is normal. Why only us to benefit?*  
(Non Roma Male, 57 years, Targu Mures)

### 7.2 The obstacles to more government help

At the same time, even if political and social will exist, skepticism was expressed that the necessary funds will be available.

Besides the scarcity of resources available for being used in this respect, several Roma respondents negatively commented the lack of interest of institutions having responsibilities in the social assistance areas.

For the effort of improving Roma lives to be successful it was thought it has to be shared between the government and the social NGOs.

### **7.3 What help Roma expect from the national government/local authorities**

According to Roma respondents, help is expected regarding:

- direct financial support for Roma people in need
- financial programs addressing the needs of the communities
- active involvement and reaction to discrimination

*Let them fine those not admitting Roma in restaurants. (Roma Male, 55 years, Targu Mures)*

- better funds management  
*Funds to be oriented where they are actually needed and be managed by our people. We have a much stronger interest regarding our condition. (Roma Female, 37 years, Targu Mures)*
- stronger interest for the problems faced by Roma

*They need to have a stronger political will in this respect. (Roma Male, 55 years, Targu Mures)*

### **7.4 Expectations of self-help by the Roma community**

Moreover, in order for all these efforts to be successful it is necessary for the Roma themselves to have a larger and more active contribution. As a reflection of the current weak involvement of Roma communities and organizations were recorded phrases like “we need to fight”, “we need not to abandon”.

### **7.5 What role for Roma leaders**

The fact that references to Roma leaders activity were mainly done in terms of expectations (what they should do) reflects the current poor perceived contribution to improving Roma’s status. The gap between common Roma people and communities and Roma leaders is generated by the current lack of communication and information. Even if there are leaders who act for positive changes, such actions are currently not known by most common Roma. Although not included in the survey topics, it can be stated that the electoral scores of Roma political organizations reflect even in the context of a population with a low political participation, the poor influence they have within the Roma population.

Many Roma respondents declared they had enough of promises and empty words and that they need actions with tangible results.

## **8. The Decade of the Roma**

### **8.1 Spontaneous and prompted awareness of the Decade**

Both the spontaneous and the prompted awareness of the Roma Decade effort was low no matter the group composition. The presentation of the aims triggered positive assessments especially within the Roma respondents

### **8.2 Is the Decade necessary?**

The effort was considered as beneficial and most people declared that they would support it in case of a referendum. On another hand there were also skeptic voices which considered such sort of undertakings useless and with the resources being spent in order to reach the pockets of people who do not have vital need.

### **8.3. How will the non-Roma community react? [Roma expectations]**

Overall, Roma respondents hoped that the effort will be welcomed by the majority population and that they will receive all the needed support. At the same time fears were expressed regarding the possible backlash that the financial aspects of the effort will trigger among non Roma population which also face economic deprivations.

### **8.4 Would the Decade help/hurt our country?**

The general view was that the effort will lead to improving the lives of Roma and consequently will reduce the social problems the latter cause. On another hand criticism was expressed regarding the way this effort leaves aside other groups in need such as for example the youth.

*"I would say these are façade words. The funds are not getting to poor Roma, these money get gain to the pockets of those in power"* (Non Roma Male, 47 years, Bucharest)

*"I would ask how money are given for Roma and how many are given in order for the young people to stay in this country"* (Non Roma Male, 26 years, Bucharest).

Another critique expressed was related to the interpretation of the Decade as being a part of an international strategy to solve Roma problems closer to the place where they first appear. This would contain Roma in their countries of origin and would avoid the complications that arrive when Roma population migrate into the Western European countries.



*“I believe those from outside thought the followings: it is better to give them money, I pay them to educate the Roma and to make him to stay there, not to let him invade them and spoil them as well not to let them make problems”*  
(Non Roma Male, 47 years, Bucharest).

### **8.5 Will something positive come out of it?**

All Roma respondents hoped that the effort will finalize in improving their community’s life. Most of all there were hopes expressed regarding the improvement of their children’s lives.

*“It will be only for our well being. And if our problems will be solved, there will be much easier for our children”* (Roma Male, 47 years, Bucharest)

### **8.6 Willingness to support the Decade**

*We are going to do whatever it takes but money we should not give them. Advice, suggestions and that would be all.* (Non Roma Male, 45 years, Bucharest)

### **8.7 Attitudes to specific objectives**

#### **8.7.1 Education**

- **Reduced price for preschool programs/books/transport/school lunch for poor Roma children**

The school discounts were considered as welcomed as long as they do not introduce major positive discrimination in favor of Roma children.

*“I do not think that would be correct if these things would not also be offered to a poor Romanian”* (Non Roma Male, 19 years, Slobozia)

*“Let say the Roma child will get a soup and a steak and your child will get nothing. Would you agree?”* (Non Roma Male, 47 years, Bucharest)

*“I would rephrase the question. If we help only one group, are we not disadvantaging others? I think we do” (Non Roma Male, 29 years, Bucharest).*

➤ **Introduction of Roma culture elements in the curricula for children**

*It is good for them to have their own culture and traditions printed, to learn. I do not believe is there anyone who does not want to learn about Ion Voicu (famous Roma musician), about their habits and traditions.( Non Roma Female, 50 years, Bucharest)*

*It is very good. They would have more confidence in themselves too. They would no longer be so ashamed. (Non Roma Female, 30 years Argeş)*

➤ **Loans and scholarship programs for Roma people to be able to go to college**

This was an advantage which was perceived as being already acquired.

*I think that there already are. Scholarships are being granted (Non Roma Female, 30 years Argeş)*

### **8.7.2 Employment**

➤ **Micro-loans for Roma people to start a business**

The business loans were an aspect which hasn't prompted consistent agreement. The arguments against it were referring on one hand to the inability of Roma to properly use them and on another hand to the risk that this money gets into somebody else's hands.

*I don't know if they would be interested. But I have nothing against it* (Non Roma Male, 59 years Argeş)

*Wasted money, I do not think those funds will reach the poor ones.* (Non Roma Male, 47 years, Bucharest)

- **The enforcement of a strict anti-discrimination law that would fine the employers for the discriminatory practices related to employment and promotion**

The enforcement of stricter working place anti-discrimination laws triggered overall appreciations. At the same time there were some doubts expressed concerning the possibility of infringing the private employer's right to do whatever he wants within his private company.

*"I would say we have a problem in here in the sense that we cannot oblige an owner to hire somebody. It's his company, he does what he wants within it"*  
(Non Roma Male, 19 years, Slobozia)

### **8.7.3 Health**

The objectives related to health were overall appreciated. At the same time it was recognized that some steps on this path have already been achieved.

*"It has to be like this for sure. But they do benefit of these things even now."* (Non Roma Female, 23 years, Slobozia)

## **9. Voices to Trust**

Among Roma respondents, there were not many Roma elites mentioned. Beside several local leaders, Mădălin Voicu (Roma MP) and Nicolae Păun (Roma MP) were most frequently mentioned.

It should also be emphasized that leaders like "King" Cioaba or "Emperor" Iulian were even not mentioned or when mentioned were included in the category of not trusty elites.

Local Roma representatives were also mentioned among mistrusted elites.

Among non Roma respondents, Mădălin Voicu was also more frequently mentioned. Potentially influential non Roma speakers in favor of Roma Decade were journalists: Cristian Tudor Popescu, Editor in Chief Newspaper *Gandul* (known as a rather radical journalist with good rethorics and persuasion power) or political leaders (Ion Iliescu – former Romanian president, Traian Basescu – Romanian president, Marian Vanghelie – mayor of 6th District, Bucharest).

## 10. Message concepts

### 10.1 Messages targeted at non-Roma

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

The average rating received by this statement was 7,24. Even though overall it was positively discussed, it triggered comments related to the other aspects that need to be fulfilled in order for the country to become a real modern one.

*“Discrimination should no longer exist”* (Non Roma Female, 46 years, Argeş).

*“We do have bigger problems in our country”* (Non Roma Female, 23 years, Slobozia).

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

The average rating received by this statement was 7,13. The reference to human rights gathered positive appreciation while the second sentence was perceived to be an exaggeration.

*“This is a good idea but it’s necessary for them to want help as well”*  
(Non Roma Male, 26 years, Bucharest).

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

The average rating received by this statement was 7,89. The rational justification presented seemed to be appealing to everyone.

*"It is easier to fix the wrong when it's not too widespread. It is true. It's also cheaper this way"* (Non Roma Female, 30 years, Argeş).

*"It's much easier to prevent than to repair"* (Non Roma Female, 50 years, Bucharest).

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

The average rating received by this statement was 9,40. It was the statement which gathered the highest appreciation. It seems that the high resonance of this statement is due to the fact that it touches an emotional register that is, the future of children. No matter the possible prejudices, the Roma children were perceived as being victims of their social environment and not carrying any sort of guilt in them.

*"The children have no fault, they should be helped"* (Non Roma Female, 30 years, Argeş).

*"The children are innocent"* (Non Roma Female, 28 years, Bucharest).

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

The average rating received by this statement was 8,27. Placing third as overall resonance, the above statement seemed to have had success due to its references to the rights that a democratic system guarantees.

*“Equal chances for all. That’s what democracy it’s about”* (Non Roma Female, 46 years, Argeş).

*“Indeed, each one needs to have an equal chance”* (Non Roma Male, 45 years, Bucharest).

*“Not only Roma should be helped”* (Non Roma Male, 19 years, Slobozia).

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

The average rating received by this statement was 5,30. It was the statement that proved to be the least appreciated. The causes of its low resonance seem to lie within the fact that most respondents did not perceive the treatment Roma received as being unfair up to such extent so that to cause shame.

*“I don’t believe they have been unfairly treated. They even have been treated to well”* (Non Roma Male, 47 years, Bucharest).

*“And in Ceauşescu times, they had so many rights”* (Non Roma Male, 45 years, Bucharest, 2).

*“I believe the information that they have been so unfairly treated is completely wrong”* (Non Roma Female, 26 years, Slobozia).

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

The average rating received by this statement was 7,66. The comments triggered by the first part of the statement divided it in two. Thus, most respondents seemed to be not very convinced about the first part (abject poverty and constant discrimination) while they tended to agree with the second part (the country can do better).

*“I do not think that they are living in such serious poverty”* (Non Roma Female, 46 years, Argeş).

*“Yes, but there are also poor Romanians”* (Non Roma Female, 46 years, Argeş).

”There are many things which can be made, and not only for Roma” (Non Roma Male, 19 years, Slobozia).

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

The average rating received by this statement was 8,69. There were no negative comments expressed expecting doubts regarding the destination the county would be heading to.

*“Of course yes. We should all benefit from it. Except that I don’t know if prosperity is exactly what we are heading for”* (Non Roma Female, 30 years, Slobozia).

## 10.2 Messages targeted at Roma

1) I believe the Decade of Roma effort will have a positive impact on the lives of Roma here in Romania because governments have committed real resources. It’s not just ‘talk.’

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

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

Overall, all 3 statements received positive, almost maximum appreciations. The ranking of the 3 statements is the following:

Statement 3	9,88
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Statement 2	8,88
Statement 1	8,66

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(ranking of messages targeted at Roma)

As the statement involving the responsibility of Roma community scored highest, it can be concluded that for Roma respondents, the most important aspect concerning the success of the Roma Decade is the implication of their own community.



## **V. LISTINGS**

### **a. The greatest problems we face here in Romania according to non-Roma respondents**

Low living standards, poverty, corruption, unemployment, people's mentality (lack of working motivation),

### **b. The greatest problems we face here in Romania according to Roma respondents**

Poverty, low education, lack of political interest regarding Roma problems, exclusion, prejudices, discrimination, poor housing conditions

### **c. What are you most optimistic about in Romania according to non-Roma**

While overall most non Roma declared to be pessimistic about the future, the most frequently positive aspect identified was UE Accession and the related expected increase in living standards. At the same time it was also stated that even the country is going in the right direction the results are still to be expected.

### **d. What are you most optimistic about in Romania according to Roma**

The same pessimistic attitude was recorded among Roma as well.

### **e. The greatest challenges/problems that the Roma face in Romania according to non-Roma**

Poverty, lack of education, unemployment,  
Some non Roma respondents underscored Roma's problems and emphasized the fact that Roma are generating problems.

**f. The greatest challenges/problems that the Roma face in Romania according to Roma**

Poverty, negative social perception, discrimination, improper housing conditions

**g. Who should be responsible for improving the lives of the Roma according to non-Roma**

Non Roma respondents tended to put a strong emphasis on the need for Roma themselves to be actively involved in improving their life conditions. At the same time, creating a special program only for Roma and not include this effort within a general one addressed for the whole society can represent a source for increase resentments and prejudices.

**h. Prominent and respected Roma leaders**

Madalin Voicu, Nicolae Paun, Marian Vanghelie

**i. Respected/ trustworthy non-Roma leaders in our country**

Cristian Tudor Popescu, Ion Iliescu, Traian Basescu

**j. Prominent leaders you do not trust**

Nicolae Paun, local leaders