

Report Croatia

Decade of the Roma – Non-Roma Groups

Prepared for: SMMRI

CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Methodology	4
Summary of Key Findings	5
Results and Discussion	7
1. Situation in Croatia	7
2. Croatian Identity and Attitudes toward Differences	14
3. Attitude toward the Roma	19
4. The Government and the Roma	30
5. The Decade of the Roma	33
6. Ambassadors of Change: Voices to Trust	38
7. Message Concepts	39
Conclusions	43
Appendices	44
Appendix 1: Government spending	44
Appendix 2: Thoughts on Roma	49
Appendix 3: Message statements	51
Appendix 4: Transcript from focus group	52

Introduction

In February 2005, eight central European countries, including Croatia, and a number of international institutions such as the World Bank and The Open Society Institute launched a “Decade of Roma Inclusion”. The effort is meant to improve the lives of Roma through better employment opportunities, access to education, health, and housing. The effort is also meant to change prejudicial attitudes toward Roma.

In order to understand the drivers of attitudes and perceptions toward the Roma among the general population in Croatia, PULS conducted a qualitative research with Non-Roma population using focus group method. The main aim of this research is to find out the attitudes of the general population toward Roma so that efforts of the “Decade of Roma Inclusion” could be appropriately designed and targeted.

Research goals:

The main goals of this research were:

- To determine perceptions toward the situation in Croatia today
- To explore respondents’ own national identity and attitudes toward “others”
- To explore respondents’ attitudes toward Roma
- To determine how Croatian Government can help Roma population in Croatia
- To determine awareness and attitude toward the “Decade of Roma Inclusion”

In order to accomplish these goals, a special focus group guide was designed by the Client based on which discussions were carried out. The research plan encompassed five focus groups with the general population in Croatia.

Methodology

The research was conducted using qualitative methodology: by method of focus groups.

The focus group method is a qualitative form of research that includes group discussion on a given topic. The basic goal of focus group is to encourage in-depth discussion in order to study values and opinions of the respondents concerning the problem or the topic of the research.

The focus group method facilitates the analysts, advisors, researchers and other to gain a better insight and to understand the way of thinking of certain groups of people. In other words, when using the classic method of polling a large number of people, we receive an answer as to what people think about a particular question, i.e. which option of answering is selected, in the case of the focus group, along with this basic information we try to uncover the reason(s) why people have a positive or negative opinion on a certain topic.

In this way the focus group enables us to see the motivational and other factors behind particular opinions, i.e. (indirectly) by which messages and activities it is possible to hold a positive relationship to public opinion and organize one's own activities according to the needs that individual groups inside the population feel to be the most important.

Structure of the groups:

Altogether, five focus groups were conducted. Groups were homogenous by age, education and level of income of respondents. All groups were gender mixed. Groups were held in Zagreb, Beli Manastir (in Osječko-baranjska County) and Čakovec (in Međimurska County). The city of Zagreb, Osječko-baranjska County and Međimurska County are areas with the highest number of declared Roma in Croatia, according to census from 2001. The structure of the groups can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. The structure of Non-Roma groups

	Age	Education	Income	Place	Date
FGD1	31-60	Secondary	Average	Zagreb	30.05.2005.
FGD2	18-30	High	High	Zagreb	30.05.2005.
FGD3	31-60	Secondary	Average	Beli Manastir	31.05.2005.
FGD4	18-30	Secondary	Average	Čakovec	01.06.2005.
FGD5	31-60	Low/Secondary	Low	Čakovec	01.06.2005.

Summary of Key Findings

Respondents generally perceive that Croatia is moving in a wrong direction and present a whole range of fields where problems in Croatia exist. They particularly emphasize high unemployment rates and low standards of living. Economy, corruption, state of law, agriculture, and social status of workers and the retired are only some of the mentioned problems. Respondents largely believe that the Government is to blame; they also disagree with Government expenditures from the budget. Although pessimistic about the situation in Croatia today, respondents emphasize some positive steps which can be seen in a higher degree of democracy, tourism, road construction and a greater promotion of Croatia in the world.

Respondents perceive their Croatian identity on various levels. Some respondents perceive their Croatian identity as belonging to the country; others identify themselves through accomplishments of own nation. Respondents from Beli Manastir are the most attached to their Croatian identity and, in their descriptions of self-identities, a dose of nationalism can be detected. Respondents are divided in their opinion how Croats treat people who are different. Some illustrate examples of positive attitudes while others present a belief that a dose of nationalism exists in Croatia. Respondents from Beli Manastir present negative attitudes toward differences.

Attitudes toward Roma are experienced in different degrees and in different situations; Roma are also perceived differently by different group of respondents. There are respondents who positively describe Roma, show understanding of their problems and express a certain degree of empathy toward them. Other respondents are more negatively inclined toward Roma. Overall, it can be said that attitudes are based on respondents' experiences (direct or indirect) with Roma. Attitudes are also formed from lack of knowledge about Roma history, culture and traditions. Some negative attitudes are based on common prejudices about Roma. In order to fully understand attitudes toward Roma, historical and political processes in Croatia need to be taken into consideration. The most negative attitudes are expressed by respondents from Beli Manastir. Their negative attitudes must be observed within the context of recent war in Croatia.

Attitudes toward Roma integration into Croatian society coincide with their attitudes toward Roma. The ones more inclined toward Roma believe that Roma should be integrated into the society; they further believe that it is important for Roma not to be assimilated so that they can preserve their tradition and culture. Respondents from Beli Manastir largely oppose Roma integration.

Respondents are divided in their attitude about how much Croatian Government has helped Roma so far. On one side, there is an impression that Croatian Government does not help Roma to the extent that it could. Others believe that the Government helps Roma by providing them with social benefits and welfare. Respondents largely believe that the amount of resources is not the main issue, but rather the way in which Roma population is approached. The question was also raised as to how much Roma themselves want to be helped.

Respondents' initial reactions to the "Decade of Roma Inclusion" are quite positive. The belief is that the efforts would not only help Roma improve their standards of living, but would also reduce fears and common prejudices toward Roma. Also, Croatia could become a more open and democratic society. However, the efforts of the "Decade" should not be imposed on Roma. The most negative toward the "Decade" are respondents from Beli Manastir. Special efforts of the "Decade" cause even greater animosity of these respondents toward Roma.

Results and Discussion

Individual topics of special interest were studied by using the guide for group discussions designed by the Client. The discussions started with “warm-up” topics that included an analysis of respondents' opinions and feelings about the current situation in Croatia. All this, in addition to getting valuable information, had the purpose of gaining respondents' confidence and helping them to relax and to get to know others in the group.

What followed after this “warm-up” were respondents' definitions of their self-identity as Croats, and their attitudes toward differences. The next topic of discussion included attitudes toward Roma and toward Roma integration into Croatian society, as well as ways in which Croatian Government could help Roma. Toward the end of the discussions, respondents spoke about their awareness and knowledge about the “Decade of Roma Inclusion” and their attitudes toward it, non-Roma leaders who could be trustworthy spokesmen on issues related with the “Decade”, and attitudes toward the message concepts related with the “Decade”.

The structure of this paper also follows this outline. Important conclusions are shown in **bold type**, and are often additionally explained by the respondents' statements, the so-called “Verbatim”, which are shown in *Italics*.

1. Situation in Croatia

Direction of the country and problems in Croatia

Overall, focus groups show that respondents perceive that Croatia is moving in a wrong direction. Respondents present various fields where problems exist, starting from politics and economy to agriculture and sports. Respondents' personal experiences confirm their attitudes and perception of problems. Croatian Government is to blame for negative movements in the country in all groups. The influence of war is particularly evident in the group from Beli Manastir, which is the part of Croatia that was directly affected by the war.

Respondents in all groups are very pessimistic toward the situation in Croatia today. All of them are very negative toward the direction that the country takes. They largely believe there are little or no changes; if there are changes, these are largely believed to be negative in nature. Some believe that the situation is becoming “*worse and worse*”, and the country is faced with ongoing problems. The quality of life in Croatia is perceived to be quite low considering the fact that people need to fight for their existence and “*survival*”.

- *Shortly, I wouldn't describe this as living, we are surviving.*

- *We are all bothered by sheer existence, that is the point.*

When talking about problems, respondents mention various fields where problems in Croatia are felt. It is noticeable that almost the same problems are mentioned in all groups. It also seems that there are no differences in degree of problems. However, respondents slightly more emphasize **unemployment, politics, economy and corruption** as major problems in Croatia today. Many other problems are mentioned such as: **state of law, agriculture, the retired and their status, status of workers** (“They are working but not receiving salary”), **health care system, education, the young** (“There is no perspective for youth”), **no morality** (“Politicians are fraud”), **loss of values** (“We are losing traditional values, such as the family”), **army, sports** and other.

Respondents are overall very disappointed when speaking about the situation in the country. They believe that the **standard of living in Croatia is low** and that people are generally fed up with this situation. Many give examples of low salaries but high prices of bills to be paid. Respondents are bitter and resentful at **high unemployment rates**. They are also resentful to the fact that, even when employed, many workers do not receive salary for months. Respondents are also concerned for the **retired** who receive disgracefully low pensions and literally fight for their existence.

- *Huge unemployment. Young people finish school, but there is no job.*
- *Employees ... they take young people and force them to work on weekends, even on holidays. And don't pay. We have become African slaves.*
- *Pensioners, their life is a sheer survival.*

Respondents show concern for perspective and future of Croatia if such problems continue to exist. Some older respondents believe that the **young generations in Croatia** will consequently experience even greater problems due to the situation of the country today. It is also believed that the future of this country is not very bright because it will take years for this situation to improve. Some respondents believe that Croatia has the potential to improve its standard of living because of its natural resources but cannot make use of them. **Such an opinion was heard with young respondents who are deeply disappointed that Croatia cannot (or does not know how) to take advantage of its potentials.**

- *We have good conditions, and we don't know how to use them. E.g., Adriatic sea, tourism.*

Personal experiences of respondents as well as experiences of their friends and family members confirm the existence of the mentioned problems. It can be said that the perception of problems in Croatia stems from personal experience in respondents'

lives as well as information they receive from their environment. They themselves are witnesses of problems in many areas, out of which difficulty in finding employment is the most frequently mentioned.

- *I work in my profession, but I think that ordinary people can hardly get a job, unless they have some connections. Except for some examples. but very hard.....*

Responsibility for problems

The Government is often blamed for problems in Croatia. It can be heard in the groups that Croatian Government does not do enough to improve the state of the country and respondents are generally quite angry at such an attitude. They are furious at politicians who “say one thing but do something else”. It can also be heard that “politicians gain benefit at other people’s costs, it’s like a vicious circle”.

Some believe that the cause for the situation in Croatia is the fact that politicians and people in power do not fluctuate, i.e. the same people are re-elected in the Government for years.

- *Because whenever something changes in the Government, they don't change people who have been in the politics for 40 years, since the former system, and their own opinion never changes. While their opinion is supposed to serve the welfare of all citizens – in essence, they care only about themselves.*

According to some, the “whole system is to blame”. Respondents have a feeling that not all are treated equally and are embittered at such a situation. They feel incapable of changing anything and this makes them quite angry at the “system”.

- *The politics, the economy, the entire system is falling apart.*
- *Actually, it is the fault of the system which we inherited from Austro-Hungarian Empire, and it obviously doesn't function, while there is no strength or money to change it. Because, for people in power such situation is good. Because I as a human can simply not do anything in courts; if you have money, you can do whatever.*

Respondents from Beli Manastir emphasize that war caused so many problems in this country. In this group, war is frequently mentioned and from respondents’ testimonies it becomes clear that the war has left permanent scars in lives of people and war consequences are still very noticeable in this area.

- *It was the war that caused this all, it deprived us of jobs; otherwise it would be difference and we would be employed; now it is us who suffer for it.*

Government expenditure

Respondents are overall angry at Government expenditures from the budget. They believe that the Government excessively spends the money in fields of less concern (like Government officials' salaries and cars) while other sectors remain without sufficient funds. Many respondents don't know how Croatian Government spends the money and express a need for greater transparency in terms of Government expenditure.

Respondents unanimously believe that the Government spends too much money on own salaries, cars, and travel. (*"Travel, one Croatian representative is not enough, but 4-5 travel together"*). It was also heard that too much money is spent in pre-election campaigns (*"Their posters, jumbo ads, commercials"*) as well as on various manifestations (*"Miss Croatia competitions"*), promotions (*"switching from HT to T-Com"*) and unfinished constructions (*"Dinamo stadium"*).

When asked how they would like to see the Government re-allocate its budget, respondents mostly emphasize investing the funds in areas of importance for Croatia, such as economy, education and tourism. Respondents would also like for Government to start from itself and to reduce salaries of Government officials. There are also some who mention that the funds should be directed toward **endangered social groups** (single mothers, disabled children, children in orphanage) but neither minorities in general nor Roma population in particular are mentioned spontaneously as groups toward which the Government needs to re-allocate its budget.

A special form was given to respondents prior to focus group discussions started. They were each asked to state their opinion on Government spending for different areas. Overall, it can be said that respondents believe that Government should spend more resources on employment, economic growth, health, agriculture and services for poor. Fewer resources should be spent on governance and infrastructure. About the same amount as it is spent today should be spent on minority groups such as Roma. In almost all groups, only a small number of respondents believes that more resources from the budget should be spent on minorities. A detailed overview of respondents' answers can be found in Appendix 1.

Positive steps

Although very negative in their perception of situation in Croatia, respondents do emphasize some positive steps that Croatia takes. From their point of view, certain positive changes can be seen. These are, however, not enough for respondents to form a positive picture of state of affairs in their country, but are nevertheless optimistic to a certain degree.

From what respondents say, improvements can be seen in **democracy and a higher degree of transparency**. As explained, the media in Croatia today is more open to talk about certain issues; this is welcomed by respondents. The issue of transparency was also mentioned as something positive: today Croatian public can have an insight into what is happening through greater freedom of the press.

- *One positive issue I see is that we can talk public ally through the media, the radio and television, about all issues, which means that possible irregularities could improve. It is positive that we can talk, that's one level of democracy.*
- *Now we can hear all kinds of things, or read about them in the newspapers. They probably occurred before, but we never knew about them.*

Progress is also visible in **education, tourism, transport and road constructions**. These positive changes are highly appreciated and welcomed by respondents.

- *Agro-tourism. There is Istrian region; we see how much things improved in the past decade. Because they got busy and foreigners have recognized that.*

Respondents also mention **greater promotion of Croatia** in the world, as something that is positively changing.

- *The fact that it moves forward, with a very strong propaganda campaign in the world about Croatia, I see it as a positive thing.*

Out of new Government decisions, respondents point out Hitro.hr, a new service for opening private firms through which “you can open your own firm in 7 days”.

Attitudes toward the EU

Respondents are divided in their opinion about Croatia's accession to the EU. Generally it can be said that respondents with higher education tend to have positive views about Croatia's entry into the EU, while respondents with lower education tend to have negative attitude. However, in some groups both opinions were mentioned.

In describing their positive attitudes toward Croatia's accession to the EU, respondents mostly mention creation of state of law. Laws will be imposed on Croatia and they will have to be respected equally by everyone.

Also, laws will be introduced from outside which means that the situation in Croatia will be monitored. This creates a belief among some respondents that Croatian Government will not be able to manipulate its position. Croatia's entry to the EU, according to some respondents, will solve some of the current problems that Croatia faces.

- *The state of law, that's what we need supervision, rules from outside.*

Some younger respondents believe that entering the EU is also good for education. There is a belief that greater exchange of knowledge would be possible if Croatia entered the EU.

- *It would be good for education to enter the EU, because universities would be much better and people would have more opportunity, and they could study also abroad, not just in Croatia.*

Those respondents who are negative toward Croatia's accession to the EU believe that the EU requires too many conditions for Croatia to enter. They believe that Europe wants to impose law on Croatia and perceive this in a negative light, as opposed to those who support Croatia's accession to the EU. Furthermore, the ones who oppose Croatia's entry into the European Integrations openly declare that Croatia is not yet economically ready to enter, nor she will ever be.

- *Because we are going to destroy ourselves, we are economically not strong enough to follow suit with Europe, and we will never be.*

Croatia's entry into the EU is perceived as not good for the economy. There is a belief that there will be more foreign products and less domestic products in Croatia.

- *You can see it already, as soon as foreign supermarket chains entered Croatia, our shops started closing down. And when we enter the EU, we will have nothing.*
- *It is bad because only foreign products would sell, our products would sell less.*

Some respondents also believe that the EU will take advantage of Croatia, while Croatia will not benefit from the EU.

- *The EU will only misuse us. Primarily because of our seaside. And we are not interesting for them to give us jobs.*

Respondents from Beli Manastir base their attitudes toward the EU from experiences of other EU member states. They give an example of Hungary where *“people are disappointed, they lost much more than they gained”*.

2. Croatian Identity and Attitudes toward Differences

This section explores feelings of respondents' identity as well as their perception and attitudes toward differences.

Croatian identity

Respondents perceive their own identity on various levels.

There are some respondents who perceive their identity on a **basic, almost superficial level**. *"To be Croat means that your parents are Croats, and that's it"*. This view is not further elaborated by respondents because it's a fact per se. *"Nothing more can be said about it"*. From the way these respondents talk about their identity, it can be assumed that being Croat does not represent an important part of their self-identity. This view was heard in groups with young Croats in Čakovec.

Some respondents associate Croatian identity with Croatian citizenship. For them, Croatian identity represents belonging to their country and their **civil identity** is pronounced.

- *To work, to pay taxes, to be an honest citizen and to love this country no matter what.*
- *For me that means that I was born here, that I'm a Croat. If I was born in Romania, I would be a Romanian.*

Others identify themselves as Croats through accomplishments of own nation. To be Croat means to belong to a country that has *"talented sportsmen"*. Also, to be Croat means to come from a beautiful country, that is well-known.

- *I am proud because of the sports, the handball players, the soccer players.*
- *If I came to another country, and if they asked where I'm from, I'd say from Croatia, and the first thing that comes to mind is that we have a nice sea, mountains.*

Some respondents are disappointed at Croatia and the situation in the country. These disappointments reflect their feelings of identity and belonging. Low salaries, small pensions and other already mentioned problems influence the way these individuals feel toward their country and their identity. **Negative movements in the country make these respondents feel a decreased sense of identity as Croats.** These feelings are mostly expressed in Čakovec with older respondents, who emphasized their regional belonging (to Međimurje area) more than to the whole country.

- *I fought for Croatia, and now... I lost the feeling... for this small state that pays bad.*
- *It means nothing to me, because I don't have anything.*
- *I feel more belonging to Međimurje.*

Results from focus groups show that **respondents from Beli Manastir are the ones who are mostly attached to their identity**. They deeply feel as Croats. These respondents are proud of their origin, religion, and proud that they never hid their identity. However, their descriptions of identity almost traverse feelings of pride. **In their descriptions of identity, a dose of nationalism can be detected. These respondents have had a direct experience with the war in Croatia and their pronounced identity as Croats needs to be observed within the context of war.**

- *I am proud, we never hid who we are, what we are, we were baptized as children, we went to church, decorated Christmas tree, and we always knew that we are Croats. And that means a lot, I am happy when I can pass by a Serb or a Gypsy as a Croat.*

Descriptions of Croatian nation

While describing characteristics of Croatian nation, **most respondents mention positive characteristics of Croatian nation** and emphasize that Croats are: honest, diligent, hard-working, good workers, nation with rich history and culture, civilized nation, cultured, respecting traditional values, conservative and similar descriptions.

- *Croats are more conservative, cold, cultured than compared to the East (Serbs).*

There are a few who are **ironical** in their descriptions when they say “*Croats are the smartest nation. 100% they are always right*”, actually implying that Croats are stubborn and convinced to be always right even if this is not the case.

There are also a few who describe Croats as envious. Respondents perceive their fellow-countrymen as not being friendly and not willing to help.

- *That envy... Instead of helping others, they don't ...*

Croatian nation is also described as diverse because of regional differences. It can be often heard in groups that there are diversities across regions in Croatia and comparisons of Istrians, Dalmatians and Slavonians were made in terms of history, cultural influences, different mentalities and usage of Croatian language. As a matter of fact, regional differences were mostly emphasized when discussing diversity of Croatian nation. **Croatian nation was also described as diverse because of different minorities that live in Croatia, but not as often as regional differences.** Serbs and Roma are mostly mentioned as minorities in Croatia that make Croatian nation diverse.

- *Throughout the history, there were various influences, from Hungary, Austria, Italy... we belonged to more countries, so that regional differences were made. Dalmatia is more like Italy, Istria too, Zagreb like Germany, Austria, Slavonian region is like Hungary, Serbia.*

Tolerance of Croatian nation and attitudes toward differences

Croatian nation was not spontaneously described as tolerant. But when prompted, respondents present different opinions toward the tolerance of Croatian nation. Different opinions depend on different definitions and understanding of what tolerance means.

Implicitly, “tolerance” was more understood as “*our sufferings*” than as respect and consideration toward others and toward differences (like minorities). It was heard in some groups that Croatian nation is perceived as tolerant because it “*endures sufferings*”. According to this opinion, Croats are tolerant because they endure various different situations, such as stress at work or stress in everyday situations. It seems as if these individuals relate tolerance with patience or resistance to stress.

- *Well, we are tolerant, we suffer much, that is a kind of tolerance.*
- *They say that all suffer. You suffer at work and when you go from work, and on tramway you suffer, when you come home also you suffer ...*

Tolerance is also perceived as readiness to forgive and forget. Respondents who think this way mainly associate tolerance with war times, and believe that Croats are tolerant because they are able to forget what happened during the war and move on. This view is mainly present in the group in Beli Manastir. It is interesting to note that these individuals believe that Croats are tolerant and forgive what happened, but their testimonies actually show the opposite. As it will be portrayed below, respondents from Beli Manastir still deeply feel war effects.

A similar view was heard with older respondents in Čakovec, where respondents associated tolerance with religion. To be Catholic means to be tolerant, regardless of a degree of religiosity.

- *We are prepared to forget all, to forgive, as if nothing ever happened, and a decade ago there was everything here. And now we are read and we will be forgiving everybody like this.*
- *We are Christians, we have calmed down. Regardless of being religious, that is how we forgive easily.*

There is an accepted view that different individuals in Croatia exhibit different degrees of tolerance. Some are more tolerant while others are less tolerant, and tolerance as a trait cannot be generalized to the whole Croatian nation. Younger respondents perceive younger Croats to be more tolerant while older Croats are perceived as less tolerant and less open toward differences. Older respondents tend to believe that “*people are different*” and that tolerance is a characteristic of some but not all Croats.

- *From abortion to homosexuality, some do not mind it at all. A majority of these (who don't mind) are young, while older people bother even more.*
- *We are tolerant people as individuals, but intolerant society.*

There are some respondents who admit that Croatian nation is not tolerant. These respondents believe that Croats do not behave tolerantly toward anyone who is different, which includes different races, minorities, religions or any other differences (such as illnesses or physical disabilities).

- *Black people ... Roma, Serbs, children with AIDS ... especially religious tolerance is not present there.*
- *For example, I practice yoga. I read headlines ... that compare yoga with drugs, the Catholic Church. Why wouldn't I want it, they wanted to introduce yoga in schools and all of a sudden Catholic Church protested that yoga is God knows what.*
- *Physically hindered people have always been neglected and seen from another view in dismay.*

It can also be said that historical events shape degree of tolerance among Croats. During the war time, as perceived by some respondents, it was more important “*who is who*” whereas today national and religious differences are more accepted. **Also, tolerance of Croatian nation depends on historical and cultural influences in different regions of Croatia.** There are different degrees of tolerance in different regions. The reason for this can be found in political events (such as war) and economic prosperity of different regions in Croatia.

- *It is more expressed in Vukovar ... It is different in Zagreb and in Istria ...*

There are differences in opinion as to how Croats treat people who are different. There are respondents who believe that “others”, like tourists, immigrants or people of other religions, are treated very positively by majority nation. Respondents often illustrate examples of positive attitudes toward “others” from their own experiences. These examples usually include mutual relationships between respondents and “other” people.

- *We help them, we have neighbors who came from Turkey with three little kids, she is a Croat and he is Turkish, and we are in good relations.*
- *I have neighbors... I have Serbian neighbors, Moslems, and so on, but they would help you sooner than our man. I was convinced a thousand times.*
- *I am safe among them. I am a Croat, and there is no difference between us, we help each other; if someone wouldn't know... they would say that we're 'all the same'.*

It could also be heard that “others” in Croatia are treated with a dose of reserve. History and experience has taught Croatian nation to be cautious. For this reason, Croats are not open toward “others” because they are careful not to be deceived.

- *Well, we are always reserved because... the experience was such that all foreigners who came, actually came to misuse us, to trick us.*

There is a belief among young respondents that certain doses of nationalism exist in Croatia. While some believe that certain incidents are sporadic and individual, others believe that nationalism is present on the level of the whole country. This does not necessarily have to be the opinion of respondents themselves; these respondents base their opinion on observation of other fellow-countrymen who exhibit such forms of behavior.

- *There's a lot of Nazism, nationalists, many in Croatia, so that the Roma and Albanians are very much discriminated. If you're a Roma, no chance to get a job.*

Respondents from Beli Manastir express negative attitudes toward differences. They perceive themselves as tolerant but their testimonies show different. When talking about differences in Beli Manastir, discussion was almost exclusively focused on Serbs. From what they say, it can be assumed that the war has left deep scars in lives of these individuals and that the war shaped their perception of “others”, particularly Serbs. They are very sensitive and vulnerable toward hearing Serbian phrases, passing by Serbian houses or just being around Serbs. **Such a negative view was heard only in this group and it can be assumed that such attitude is a result of war traumas and consequences.**

- *In our magistrate court, for example, it hurts me so much, those guys left their health in the frontline, they lost lives, children lost parents... We work at the court, she comes to work in the morning, says 'zdravo' (in Serbian), and I would take her eyes out immediately.*
- *I cannot say I hate them. Sometimes they make me sick. I don't know what to say. We have to listen to local popular music a lot ... All of them have taught us to say 'ćao' and 'zdravo' (as salutes). In my surrounding, when I hear the local popular music, I get bumps all over my head. On account of what happened to all of us.*

3. Attitude toward the Roma

This section explores attitudes Croats have toward Roma in Croatia and presents respondents' views on Roma integration into Croatian society.

It can generally be said that attitudes toward Roma are various and are experienced differently by different group of respondents and region they come from. Attitudes are also experienced in different intensity and in different situations. There are positive descriptions of Roma and positive attitudes toward them. Some respondents show understanding of their problems and a certain degree of empathy toward them. There are other respondents who tend to be more negatively inclined toward Roma. Testimonies from focus groups show that attitudes are, to some extent, based on respondents' personal experiences with Roma and on information provided by others. Positive attitudes are usually based on personal experiences and are manifested through "maternal" behaviors. It can be said that negative attitudes are formed from lack of knowledge of Roma history, culture and tradition. Respondents seem not to be aware of Roma history that has, to a certain extent, caused Roma situation as it is today. Negative attitudes are also based on common prejudices that are socially rooted. Also, attitudes toward Roma need to be understood through historical, political and societal processes in Croatia (such as the transition process). Negative attitude has been more emphasized in recent years, since Croatia declared its independence and it can be said that the level of prejudice against Roma increased within the context of war.

Results show that many respondents are aware of problems that Roma in Croatia face. They know that Roma have reduced access to education, difficulties in finding employment as well as discrimination in health care system. Problems in hygiene, housing and children rearing are also mentioned in groups. **A dose of empathy can be detected in respondents' description of problems faced by Roma.** In the groups with young respondents from Čakovec it was mentioned that the greatest problem for Roma is the "police" indicating that Roma have a tendency to criminal and problem behavior.

- *I know them from school, they sought jobs after high school, although some are of light skin, even blue eyed, when it comes down to jobs, they don't get any.*
- *If a Roma gets sick, they have problems with doctors. They turn children back as if they're healthy.*
- *They live in one room, where they eat and sleep and clean laundry, it is not easy for them, they have rats there.*

Respondents are aware that lack of opportunities and lack of perspective for Roma, especially in finding employment, is caused by visible characteristics of Roma. Their specific physical features are easily recognized. Roma are most easily distinguished from any other ethnic groups (Serbs, for instance). The fact that one cannot hide to be Roma makes him/her “marked”, labeled by others, and negative feelings and prejudices are automatically formed. **This easy identification leads to discrimination of Roma in labor market as well as to prejudices toward Roma in personal contacts and experiences.**

- *My school mate who also finished high school never got a job, she is smart, great student and all, but when it came down to the job... because she cannot hide that she is a Roma, you can see it on her, they have some facial lines that are... specific ... they can be recognized.*
- *You can tell about him, but not about the others, you cannot tell if someone's a Croat a Serb or a Moslem, right? And you can always tell about the Roma, and I am sorry that I cannot have... an opinion about Roma as about human beings...*

It could be heard in groups that perception of individual Roma is based on a collective perception of the whole Roma community. In other words, a process of collective identification takes place that is noticeable in the testimonies of some respondents. This form of social labeling is present both on individual as well as societal level. **Respondents generalize from one Roma to the whole Roma community, and just because Roma belong to this ethnic minority, they are automatically labeled and discriminated.** As portrayed in the Verbatim below, young Roma man in the army was labeled by being called “Roma”. It seems that Roma don’t have a privilege to be called by their own name, but are identified and perceived through the whole Roma community. In the other example below, this collectivity is present on societal level as well where the media present a collective identification of Roma in Croatia. Although having a name and a surname, Roma are labeled as “Roma”.

- *A guy was there with me in the army. All was normal, his father was highly positioned in that community because he was rich. Normal, like any other normal guy, just ok. Although people used to say that he was a Gypsy. That's how they knew it was him. When someone talked about him, they would firstly say that rather than his name.*
- *Newspapers, obits. A man kills another man and they tell their name, their family name. But when a Roma does something, then it stands 'a Roma' besides his name. So it won't be reported that a Croat killed, a Serb killed. But it will be always reported that 'two little Roma did so and so'.*

Although collective identification and generalization takes place and individual Roma cannot be “separated” from their community, there are some respondents who emphasize that differences exist among Roma themselves. According to what respondents say, there are Roma who are ambitious, complete schooling and want to make

something out of their lives. There are other Roma who are indifferent and show no intention or desire to change their way of life. The difference among Roma themselves is individually based as well as conditioned by different ways of living in different regions in Croatia.

- *In my opinion, Roma differ significantly. I know one family who are really clean, neat, the kid will soon finish vocational high school as a plumber.*
- *There are differences among them, some want to do something, and there are some who don't care at all.*
- *Because a Roma in Zagreb open market who sells grills or something, has nothing to do with the Roma here, in Beli Manastir. These here are dirty, untidy, backwarded, they don't want to learn, they don't want to fit in, to live with people, show what they've got, and so they live from day to day.*

The concept of normality was often mentioned in the groups. When speaking about Roma, respondents often use the term normal (or not normal) to describe Roma way of living, lifestyle, behaviors and attitudes. According to what respondents say, it seems that respondents themselves determine boundaries of “normality”, and whatever falls within the boundaries is “normal”; Roma are almost always outside these boundaries. The question of who determines where the line should be drawn was mentioned with younger respondents from Zagreb.

- *If I could notice anything? Now that we are talking about Roma, we immediately started mentioning the word 'normal'. It means, we have to superimpose them with what is normal. It is not normal to steal, but in all countries they live in such way. Nomadic, and we like need to adapt them. And who is right and who is wrong now?!*

Although differences in Roma way of life are perceived by most respondents as negative (precisely because Roma are different) and often cause uneasiness and wonderment at such way of life, there are some respondents who believe that Roma are free of limitations and boundaries and even envy them for this reason. Roma cannot be forced to any system and their behaviors and world-views are not conditioned by society and societal rules and processes.

- *Sometimes I envy them because they are free from the system. They have no pressing of the system that all citizens feel. They don't, they are nomads. They only need a job. They are free to go to garbage dump and work there. I think that's freedom that we'll never have, because the Croatian community will judge us and make us feel bad, while nobody touches them. They are free, more free than people within the system.*
- *We cannot put them in our shoes. We must let them live as they please. They are people just like us.*

According to what respondents say, the reason why Roma are “the way they are” is due to society and the way in which society treats them. But not only is society to blame. It is also fault of Roma that they are neglected. Actually, throughout group discussions it was mentioned that the reason why Roma are neglected and mistreated is influenced by two sides. On one hand it is society that needs to take responsibility for Roma; Croatian society has continuously been mistreating Roma by not accepting them as equal citizens, or not appreciating their culture, tradition and values. As pointed in the example below, Roma are treated differently in other societies in comparison with Croatia, and Croatian society does not let Roma be Roma. On the other hand, there is a view that Roma must take responsibility for themselves. They are “blamed” for the way of life they have and in order to change it, they have to adjust to the society. Roma themselves have to put effort into adjustment to society. According to some, older members of Roma community should be educated and adjusted to generally accepted norms and principles. This view is in contrast with the above mentioned idea that Roma cannot be forced into society’s standards and criteria, as mentioned with young respondents in Zagreb.

- *You watched the movies about Roma (movies “Cigani lete u nebo” and “Sakupljači perja”) ... Gypsies there are different; it is about Roma soul, their specialties, their music. We are talking about these here who are not given a chance by our society.*
- *They are a neglected minority, but they are to blame for that...*
- *But they need to adjust because the society has simply rejected them...*
- *Firstly, their parents, their older family members, need to be educated and directed towards a certain culture, to adapt and to live up to our standards...*

There are individual Roma who have achieved accomplishments in life, as perceived by respondents. These Roma have completed university or have realized certain successes through work. However, Roma are overall perceived as “beggars”. This collective identification labels all Roma to be viewed equally and creates a negative public attitude toward all. Even when speaking about individual Roma, respondents mention the overall image of the public toward Roma.

- *As I wrote down – all the same, normal people, working, tidy, behaving, but there is always someone who says that Roma remind them of street beggars.*
- *I have a Roma friend who finished university and doesn't differ at all. And the society took him in. But usually you think of Roma when you see junk, or if you see street beggars or if they pull your sleeve.*

Interactions with Roma and closer relations have influenced the way respondents perceive Roma. From this, it can be said that attitudes are developed through social interactions and experiences with Roma. Some interactions are personal while others are indirect (for example, from respondents' friends, family members or respondents' own observation). Generally it can be said that respondents have developed positive, neutral and negative experiences from these interactions.

Respondents describe **positive experiences** through interactions that they have had with Roma. Some respondents have frequent contact with Roma, visit them and perceive them as very hospitable. Others describe their relationship with Roma through supplying them with large wastes or helping them in different ways. There are also some positive descriptions of Roma through observations of their way of life. Most respondents who have positively described Roma also manifest some kind of "maternal" feelings toward them and desire "to take care of them".

- *I know one Roma family who are extremely guest-friendly, they would give you all they've got.*
- *Frequently I observe children and think about how nice they are and how I would bathe them and give them a candy. That is the first thing that comes to mind. All children are so beautiful.*
- *There is one who comes each month to collect junk, sometimes he comes earlier and asks what's up. My dad first gave him an old blanket, and now there's everything, remaining of roof tiles, he sometimes comes to ask if we could leave stuff aside.*

Some respondents also show interest toward Roma community. As portrayed in the example below, closer interactions with Roma contribute to creation of positive experience through exchange of knowledge and experience. But also, there are a few respondents who show apathy and indifference toward Roma, their problems or lifestyles. This indifference toward Roma can even be understood as refusing to have any concern toward Roma.

- *One Roma ... worked for us, I discussed with him a bit, and I was interested about how they live, what they do. He explained to me, you can talk for days about such things, it is really interesting ...*
- *I don't care, they can life their life. If they want it so.*

Focus group discussions reveal that respondents do not have only one attitude toward Roma (whether positive or negative). There are some respondents who have both positive and negative attitudes toward them, as shown in the example below. Positive characteristics of Roma, such as humor, are contrasted with negative perceptions and attitudes, such as a belief that Roma are carriers of disease. **From this it can be said that attitudes toward Roma are situation-specific. One may feel comfortable with Roma in one situation and less comfortable in another.**

- *A Roma has a café here where I regularly drink coffee with my wife, and many of them come and there's a lot of great fun, they are the best to make a good mood, when they start making jokes you can really cry of laughter. And on the other hand, you enter a shop, you see a little dirty kid, you feel like you want to get out, as far as possible, because who knows what kind of diseases he can get you.*

Negative attitudes toward Roma are more complex. As it can be seen from focus groups, negative attitudes are demonstrated in a variety of forms, various situations and levels of intensity.

On one side, negative attitudes are developed from personal experiences (for example, forcing non-Roma to buy something or to give money) **and one negative experience leads to forming a general negative attitude toward Roma.** Further situations and interactions with Roma are judged based on previous experiences and prejudices are formed.

- *Depending on what he's asking for, if they are trying to sell something then they are bothering. Then I say that I won't buy. Then they bother a bit more and there is this negative feeling that evolves.*
- *I work as a security guard in a company. When Roma come there they first ask me if they could take some cardboard, they sell them, and I let them take as much as they like. But no, by accident I go back to the place to check whether they took cardboards, and see them taking lead and things they shouldn't... understand, it's mistrust to them.*
- *I know a few of them that I see downtown. I sit in a café, drink coffee and they beg around tables. When I see them, I feel like grabbing my cell phone and covering my coffee cup with hands. Because they ask for money, and if you don't have any they even spit in your coffee if you won't give them money.*
- *I see them in the shop, they dig into everything, there is no culture there, it's horrible. They are dirty, have no culture, you can't say anything positive about them; or at least I had no positive experience with them.*

Secondly, it can be seen that respondents perceive Roma negatively because Roma don't comply with norms and demands of society. It was heard almost in all groups that Roma are *"just different"*. They lead different kind of life, respect different values, exhibit different forms of behavior, have their own principles and way of living. They are viewed to be determined in the way of life they lead; *"it's in their blood"* to be the way they are. Respondents from Beli Manastir believe that Roma *"live nicely"* and *"have no problems"* because *"they don't burden themselves"* with anything.

- *A little Roma girl is my daughter's schoolmate, and she is three days in school, and then missing two weeks, without a reason.*
- *I watched and listened to my colleagues, when they gave them an apartment or an old house, they left it dirty, full of bugs. They are being given a chance, but it's probably in their blood.*
- *Roma live nicely. They don't burden themselves. They won't work, they are dirty. They are not interested. They don't have to take shower, they don't have to spend. You as soon as you wake up in the morning and go to bathroom, you've already made expenses. You consumed water that you need to pay. That means nothing to them. They live the same as 50 years ago.*

Roma are also perceived as taking advantage of the society. Respondents from Beli Manastir are particularly angry at Roma for receiving social welfare. Roma are perceived as living “parasitic” way of life receiving welfare but not working. There is also a view that Roma in Croatia today beg much less than before the war because today they receive more support through benefits and resources.

- *It's unacceptable for me. To see a man who hasn't washed for 10 days, who stinks, walks in rugs, while you can eat and drink in the restaurant. And he has a cell phone around his neck, or so!*
- *They simply collect their social welfare, have the money for two days and then it's over.*
- *In our community they get free food, while our children are poorer and have no money for food. They (Roma) simply get it all.*

Further, it can be said that some respondents base their attitudes on common prejudices about Roma. For example, Roma are by some respondents perceived in a very negative context because of the belief that they exploit their children or even mutilate them.

- *I repeat, there are some who work, but some really exploit their kids, who are getting rich from them and who will beat up their kids if they return with no money.*
- *Another tragic thing with them, as I heard from a Roma, he nearly cried when telling me this ... He said... "I had no real trauma... no damage to my body organs, etc.", which means they really hurt their children so they can beg...*

Some respondents express feelings of fear when near Roma. These feelings are also developed from the common prejudices about Roma (“they steal”). **It can also be noted in the groups that negative attitudes some respondents have toward Roma stem from their childhood.** It can be, therefore, assumed that negative attitudes and fears begin to take their shape in respondents’ childhood. Perhaps their upbringing and home education influenced their attitudes toward Roma.

- *I am slightly afraid when they are near me. They tend to touch things and in some cases things disappeared, I've heard. So that I pay more attention when I'm around them. You never know.*
- *We were scared. (In our childhood) they used to say "Now Gypsies will come", we were scared with that. "They will come with their coach and take you away, and never turn you back".*
- *I am a bit afraid. I always think that I'll get lice or so.*
- *When I see them in a shop, I always expect them to lift something. That's been always so, since we went to schools with them. It's always like if you had two pencils they had to steal one. If you had two erasers they had to steal one. God forbid, in winter our jackets hung in the end of the classroom. If I had some money in pockets... they always had to take a handkerchief from their jackets during a class. They look for a handkerchief in their pocket, while his other hand was in my or somebody else's jacket.*

Very negative attitudes toward Roma are present in the group from Beli Manastir.

Reactions of these respondents border with extreme negative feelings and are to a certain extent nationalistic in nature. Respondents from Beli Manastir openly admit their negative feelings toward Roma and themselves understand that these negative attitudes stem from their childhood.

- *I would never want them to be my friends. Even if they said hello five times on the street, I would tell them to go away, I don't need you and that's it. Simply, it is in them. I don't want to fight that ...*
- *I don't know, I felt sick about them since my childhood, they are dirty, I know they are lazy, they don't want to work because it's easier, walking all day from house to house, in sunshine, in wind, rain, than to work.*

Negative attitudes toward Roma in Beli Manastir are also formed from personal (negative) experiences. Respondents seem to be very sensitive to a decreased hygiene of Roma and this seems to bother them very much. Roma could be tolerated if they took greater care of themselves (in terms of hygiene).

- *When they come, the whole corridor stinks. And when they enter our office, we tell them to wait outside. Then when I have to take some documents from them, even the documents stink. They stink, they are dirty, they make my life sick.*
- *If they were tidier and took care of themselves, maybe there would be something. I don't say that we would sit together and sip coffee, but we would put up with them more easily.*

However, negative attitudes of respondents from Beli Manastir need to be observed in the context of the recent war in Croatia. As already emphasized, Beli Manastir is the area that was directly influenced by war; sufferings, devastations and war casualties were numerous. It was heard in the group that attitudes toward Roma even worsened after the war. **From their testimonies, it can be said that intolerance of Roma by respondents from this area is influenced by political factors of the war.** Some Roma were fighting on the side of Serbs during the war and this particularly affected the way in which inhabitants of those areas perceive them. Respondents often used the name “Serb” while describing Roma. **It can be said that the attitude against the Roma in this area reflects negative feelings toward Serbs; Roma are perceived as and equated with Serbs.** There is also a belief that Roma “*changed the sides*” in the war (from Croats to Serbs) and they can never be trusted.

- *Because they chose that Serbian side, they fought against us. They robbed our houses, took away our stuff.*
- *They change sides as they please.*

Integration of Roma into Croatian society

When discussing integration of Roma into Croatian society, some similarities and differences between Roma and respondents could be heard. Similarities such as *“they are also human”* or *“they are also made of flesh and blood”* were quite frequent. Some other similarities included having a *“Gypsy soul”* implying love for music and *“longing to be free”*. Greater similarities are perceived between Roma and non-Roma children (*“children are children”*), although some differences between them are perceived as well. Differences are, again, based on some common prejudices toward Roma.

- *I have a Gipsy soul ...*
- *It seems to me that they (Roma children) are more mature. Our children are kittens, spoiled. They (Roma) are more mature because they are forced to make money from an early age.*

Differences between Roma and respondents are more emphasized and often include *“way of life”*, *“freedom”*, *“no constrains”* and similar descriptions of (different) Roma way of life. Croats are also perceived to be more educated, with higher hygiene habits, home upbringing but also colder and more reserved in relationships. Roma are said to be more unified than Croats.

- *They are together, which is something we don't see with Croats.*

Closer and more frequent relations with Roma could be perceived by respondents if Roma behaved *“normally”*, i.e. if they respected our norms and standards.

- *I wouldn't feel bad if they behave normal, because ... they are simply not behaving.*
- *Yes if they behaved normally as we do, then there is no difference. If they built some dumps in front of their house and yell non-stop, it is normal that it wouldn't be ok.*
- *If they are good, clean, then alright. Normal person doesn't care if you're a Roma or a Serbian, as long as you're a human.*

While discussing integration of Roma into Croatian society, different opinions could be heard.

There are opinions that Roma should be integrated and should be provided with equal rights as all citizens in Croatia. Such an attitude is mainly heard from respondents who are more tolerant toward Roma and who have developed more positive attitudes toward them. There are some who believe that Roma should not be integrated because integration could jeopardize their tradition, culture, language and ways of living. It needs to be noted here that respondents who think this way actually understand integration as assimilation. **They actually believe that Roma should be integrated but not assimilated because they would lose its values, traditions, culture.** A belief that Roma

should not be integrated is not presented in a negative context among these respondents. Roma should be accepted as a community as it is.

- *We should not integrate them, rather accept them as a community. If they live as they do, they live in their way. Let them respect laws as much as possible, nobody respects them entirely. They breach laws in their own way. And that's it.*
- *Their culture should be richness not poverty. They enrich us.*

There are ideas that Roma need to be integrated and need to accept “our” norms and standards. But, because of Roma way of life, this integration is impossible.

- *It would be better for all of us if they were to integrate. Because then there would be no such negative attitude towards them. They would accept our circumstances, our living standard and that would be better for all. We wouldn't run from them to the other side of the street. That is mission impossible. Science fiction. They don't live in the same way we do. It's impossible.*

Some respondents believe that Roma need to be integrated gradually. According to these respondents, Roma cannot be at once “pushed into society” but rather **gradual integration should take place**. Others oppose the idea of “pure segregation” and believe that Roma would remain isolated and even more “backwarded” if segregated.

- *They cannot be integrated into society immediately. No chance. Rather, they should be gradually – it may sound as segregation – integrated into society. (z1)*
- *They'd stay the same as they were. That is pure segregation. That is not good. They could never change their mentality and their life style.*

Some respondents, mostly the ones from Beli Manastir, believe that Roma should be segregated and not integrated into Croatian society. These respondents, for example, do not want their children to attend mixed classes with Roma children because they believe that Roma children are far behind their children in school material. Some respondents also believe that Roma should not be integrated because their integration would not benefit Croatian society. They wonder how Roma could contribute to Croatian society at all.

- *What can we get from them that matters? What can we expect from them? What is our gain if we include them in our lives now? What can they contribute?*

On the other hand, there is a belief that Croatian society would greatly benefit if Roma would be helped or would be integrated. According to these respondents, a greater tolerance of Croatian nation could be developed, and this is perceived as something very positive. Also, integration of Roma into Croatian society could contribute to greater acceptance of Croatia in the EU. This is perceived as positive even by respondents who are not completely positive toward Croatia’s accession to the EU.

- *Because the tolerance to others would increase as well as comprehension about letting democracy into all fields of society.*

According to some respondents, Roma themselves do not want to be integrated into the society because of their way of life. Roma have a very specific and traditional way of life and they don't want to change it. In order to be integrated into society, Roma have to work on it to integrate themselves.

- *They don't have any ambition or wish to fit into society. It is a way of life that is traditional. It is a very specific population. They have no ambition, rarely you can find someone with ambition for further education. They are happy with such nomadic way of life.*
- *That is a special way of life and they don't show much interest. It is a special subject that concerns incorporation into the society, befitting the society. There is no particular wish or interest.*
- *In order for them to integrate into society and get closer to use, they must invest some effort. They must make a move, and they don't care. It is not down to us to adjust to them. Now we are jumping from 21st to 16th century. They must come to us, and it does not suit them. They prefer it this way.*

In order to decrease negative attitudes and prejudices, Roma need to present themselves to the majority nation. According to what some respondents say, many prejudices arise because non-Roma, in this case Croats are not informed about the Roma and their level of knowledge and understanding of Roma history, tradition and culture is very low.

- *To present themselves to people. So that people would understand that they are not only people who never wash themselves and present that culture and all that makes them Roma. Because I think that each community has something to show, but I think that people see many negative things and thus make a general impression about the Roma.*

4. The Government and the Roma

Respondents are divided in their attitude toward whether, and how much, Croatian Government helps Roma community in Croatia today. On one side, there is an opinion that Croatian Government does not help Roma to the extent that it could. There is an idea that only impression is made in the media that Croatian Government helps Roma but that actual steps are not made. According to these individuals, society does not treat Roma correctly. On the other side, respondents (mainly from Beli Manastir) believe that Croatian Government helps Roma population *“too much”* by providing them with social benefits and welfare. A rationale behind the latter opinion is that Croatian Government does not provide adequate support for Croats who need support (war-torn areas, social services, etc.) and should not help Roma more than they already do or should not help Roma more than they help Croats.

- *As a matter of speech yes, but as a matter of principle – no. That means that we see in the media a desire to help them, but I think that on the field there are no moves whatsoever...*
- *They get something, they never got anything before. Now they have something and they are getting help.*

There is an overall opinion that the Government, different services and responsible bodies should be involved in helping Roma improve their lives. Respondents also mention different Ministries (*“Jadranka Kosor”*) who should be responsible for helping Roma.

- *I think that it is an issue for politicians and the society to care about them, so that they could be given an opportunity.*

There is another view that also rests on the premise that Croatian Government should help Roma community but it is further elaborated. **According to some respondents, Government should help Roma population but only in areas in which Roma want to be helped. Programs which are unrealistic and impracticable should not be developed. This implies that communication between Roma community and Croatian Government is necessary in order for efforts to be appropriately targeted.**

- *I think that the Government should help them so that they can help themselves in those fields they desire to be helped. Instead of us making programs for them, programs that are in their essence beyond realization.*

Some respondents believe that the main point in helping Roma is not in the amount of resources (money wise) but in the way in which Roma population is approached. There is a belief that today Roma receive help but this help is only financial which does not solve problems of Roma population in Croatia. The question is not in the amount of money but in

programs that should be specifically developed for Roma and particularly targeted at helping them to improve their way of life. Some respondents resolutely mention that Roma could be helped by having access to schooling system and acquiring higher degrees of education, and that it should be Government's responsibility to ensure Roma with proper education.

- *It is not about money but the main issue is the manner, the approach. You could invest I don't know how much money in some education, with no results.*
- *The help is not coming in a right way. They (the Government) help by simply giving out money, so that they have no trouble with them. They simply don't want to be preoccupied with national minorities. They satisfy their desires, they give them money. That is not the way, certain programs need developing instead.*
- *Only through education. They must be trained, they must have education.*

The question was raised as to how much Roma themselves want to be helped. There is an accepted belief, especially with respondents from Beli Manastir, that Roma like the way they live their lives and that they don't want to change or be helped. Help of any kind would include some kind of change, and Roma don't want to change their lifestyles. It "depends on Roma" how much they want to improve their lives and increase their standards of living.

- *The question is how much they want it. I think they are happy with such a life style, that is what I always say. The question is how much are they actually interested. For education and similar.*

Also, some respondents present the idea that it is responsibility of Roma to help themselves, and not of the Government only. Roma should take responsibility to approach the majority community. They need to show that they want to be helped, through acquiring working habits and becoming diligent. Roma should become more organized and more disciplined. It is also Roma responsibility to preserve their tradition and way of life.

- *I think that the Roma should help themselves. They should make that additional step to get closer.*
- *They should change. When they would have working habits. The working habits.*
- *They should take care of themselves. So to preserve their tradition.*

Respondents also believe that Roma should have their representatives in the Government and/or in Sabor (Parliament). They should also have their representatives in the areas where they live. People who live with Roma in their areas know problems Roma face and can therefore direct efforts into helping them appropriately.

- *I think that they must have representatives in areas where they live. People who live here know the best how people live and what the community needs.*

When comparing Government resources toward Roma and toward other minorities, it could be heard that Roma should not be given more resources than other minorities in Croatia. More resources and extra support directed to Roma population could, according to some

respondents, create additional tensions, cause greater discrimination and increase prejudices toward Roma. As younger respondents in Čakovec pointed out, **local community helped Roma through gas and water usage but this created additional tensions in the local community toward Roma.**

- *Let's say that our community has helped much in life of the Roma by giving them free of charge water and gas. In some villages. They let them use it. On our account. Then that is not good for us. Since we work and finance them. Then tensions arise. That is also not the way.*

Respondents largely believe that local community, like the Government, should help Roma but they also believe that local community needs to help local people and not only Roma. “All should be helped equally” is the attitude of majority in these groups. But there is also a belief that local community should do something to help Roma. As seen in the example below, there are people who are indifferent toward Roma or who have created certain prejudices. These could be eliminated or decreased if local community educated Roma, showed them how to help themselves. Local community could also include Roma in socially useful work, such as construction of roads, in order to help them develop discipline.

- *It is again about our community, I mean neighbors, who will say 'Look how dirty he is.' But won't help him. Why don't you take him to your apartment and wash him then? To show him how, because they have no water, no sewage, no buses, let alone school.*
- *That should be used for socially useful work ...let's say when a motorway is under construction. Why such person (Roma) wouldn't work on a motorway... Such way would discipline them.*

5. The Decade of the Roma

Efforts to help Roma in Croatia

Respondents from all groups have heard about some efforts to help Roma in Croatia. These efforts were made both on local and state levels. But, respondents cannot tell much about these efforts and this implies that they are not sufficiently informed about them. Respondents from Čakovec emphasize that efforts were made, both on local level and through ministries (they particularly mention Jadranka Kosor) but **explain that these efforts were not put in practice.** There have been promises to help Roma population in Čakovec and Međimurje area with basic infrastructure (like water supply) but these have not been successful because they have not been put to practice.

- *They promised water supply, but there is no water supply. They promised water supply 5 years ago.*

Other respondents mention some programs but are not precise about them. They have heard about initiatives made by Jadranka Kosor about helping mothers with children. Some heard about program initiated by Vesna Škare-Ožbolt to help Roma achieve regulated status in Croatia.

- *I heard that Vesna Škare-Ožbolt wanted to employ 30 lawyers to help Roma, to regulate their status and equal rights.*

There are also some respondents who have heard for International efforts to help Roma in order for their social status to be regulated in the EU, but are also not precise about these initiatives. Nobody in these focus groups spontaneously mentioned the “Decade of Roma Inclusion” as an initiative to help Roma in Croatia.

Aims of actions to help Roma

While discussing specific aims of actions to help Roma, respondents mainly mention concrete problems that Roma face. According to what majority of respondents say, Roma projects oriented at helping Roma should be mainly targeted at helping Roma with: education, basic infrastructure (water supply, canalization, etc. “to ensure them with basic existence”), housing, health care system, and clean environment. In addition, some cultural manifestations could be organized in which Croats could learn about Roma culture, but Roma could also learn about Croatian tradition, culture. Aims should be furthermore aimed at helping Roma integrate in Croatian society and also in local community. But, like some respondents emphasize, communication with Roma should be established. Through this communication, it

could be explained to Roma that there is a desire to help them. In this communication, Roma could also speak up and explain which problems they have and what priorities in helping them are.

It is very important to some respondents that more interactions with Roma be established. For example, they mention that Roma should have more socialization with non-Roma children. This suggests that interactions and socialization are perceived as very important and should be constructed already from early age.

- *For Roma to play with other children. Here the situation is that where Roma go, other children don't go. People still think that Roma are Roma and that other children have to be raised differently. Children have to be together from early age.*

Efforts should be also made to ensure Roma with social rights and equal citizenship. They should also be allowed to lead the life they do. This view is particularly emphasized with respondents who show higher degree of tolerance and understanding of Roma.

- *If they live nomad way of life, they have to be given an opportunity to continue, if he wants to move from Zagreb to Dubrovnik he should have equal rights everywhere and social rights.*

Decade of Roma Inclusion

Some respondents, when prompted, have heard about the “Decade of Roma Inclusion” but don't know its specific goals. They also know that President Mesić and Prime Minister Sanader spoke about the “Decade” but cannot recall specific goals of the “Decade”.

After background and specific goals of the “Decade” were read to respondents, most of the respondents had a very positive initial reaction to the “Decade”. The “Decade” is by most respondents perceived as very positive. Their belief is that the efforts through the “Decade” would not only help Roma improve their standards of living but the efforts would also reduce fears, distrust, suspicion and common negative attitudes that general population in Croatia has toward Roma.

The “Decade” is also perceived as positive because it could solve problems that Croatia faces. Actually, most respondents believe that Croatia could greatly benefit if this project was implemented. Through such a project, Croatia could become a more cultured, civilized, democratic, and open society.

While discussing the “Decade”, some respondents mentioned the extent to which this project would be imposed on Roma. According to what they say, the “Decade” should not be forced on Roma. If they don't want help or don't want to be helped, no efforts should be imposed on them. Some respondents also mentioned that Roma, through these efforts, should be helped to become an integrated part of Croatian society but not to be assimilated. It can be said that

respondents believe that implementation of the “Decade” is very important but that Roma should not be forced to our standards, tradition, values, etc. There are a few respondents who question whether Roma want to be helped at all and to what extent they want to be included in the “Decade”.

One young respondent from Čakovec suggested the idea that the “Decade” is initiated because European countries want to improve lives of Roma in central European states so that Roma remain in these countries and don't move to other European countries. According to this view, *“they (World Bank) want to get rid of Roma”* by providing them better conditions in these countries so that Roma remain here.

While discussing resources and the amount of money invested in this project, it could be heard that resources should be given depending on the number of Roma that need help and the extent to which they want to be helped. It was very often emphasized that the amount of money is not an issue. What is extremely important here is the issue of transparency as to how resources are allocated as well as equal and fair distribution of resources.

Almost all respondents agree that they would vote for the “Decade” if it costs 1-2 million Euros. If it costs more, not all respondents agree that they would vote for the “Decade”. When larger amount of money is involved, as explained by some respondents, the question is how resources are allocated; they believe that larger amount of money could be more easily embezzled. Others believe that this project should be implemented no matter what the costs are (*“It can cost more than 20 million Euro”*) because the project has significant aims of not only helping Roma but also helping Croatia enter the EU and become more tolerant and democratic society. However, it was again emphasized that resources need to be controlled. The question was raised whether these resources are distributed to Roma at all and some respondents show doubt of fair distribution of money.

- *I am still for it, and even if it costs more, and even more than this, no matter how much because Europe and the world ask for it. Otherwise there is no chance for us to enter the EU.*
- *I think that Roma don't receive all of resources. These are just stories. I don't know from any experience, but I doubt that Roma receive money from Zagreb. If they received any money, some improvements would be visible. Like this ... I think this money goes in a wrong direction.*

Some respondents doubt that anything would come out of the “Decade” because they fear that these are just promises and that the resources will be spent otherwise.

- *I believe that everything would be the same like before, promises, promises.*
- *This money will most probably be spent on something else.*

Some respondents express fear that these efforts could increase tensions and cause negative reactions from other social groups in Croatia that face poverty (whether other minorities or Croats).

The most negative toward the “Decade” are respondents from Beli Manastir. They emphasize that the problems that Croatia faces should be resolved first. The resources intended at the efforts to help Roma should be spent on solving problems of local community in Beli Manastir and Baranja in general. The topic of war and helping war veterans was mentioned. These individuals emphasize that living conditions in Beli Manastir are very difficult; many people live on the edge of existence. Their suggestion is first to solve these problems and only then to help others (Roma) who need help. Respondents become quite angry when discussing efforts to help Roma; they emphasize that they have too much problems of their own, and that they don't want to trouble themselves additionally with Roma. Respondents from Beli Manastir emphasize that the “Decade” and special efforts targeted at helping Roma causes even greater animosity toward Roma.

- *For example, war veterans ... we have had here more than 300 casualties, just in this area. Nobody speaks about this ... I feel sorry for Roma but only they are in the media, what about us? And now we talk about Roma? This 1-2 million could be spent in other ways to help our people and maybe then ... others who need help.*
- *It makes me hate them even more because they receive help, and I don't. They do well in life, better than me.*

Special aims of the “Decade”

Overall, respondents consider all of the mentioned special aims of the “Decade” very important. Specific attitudes and reactions to these aims are presented below.

1. Reduced price for preschool programs/books/transport/school lunch for poor Roma children

It can be said that almost all respondents agree that Roma children should have reduced books and other school materials including transport and school lunch. Some respondents believe that this could stimulate Roma children to attend school. Some believe that prices should not be reduced but should be given for free to Roma children.

The issue of equality was mentioned during the discussion. Some believe that all poor children should be given the same opportunity to have reduced books.

- *Why would my child pay much more than Roma child?*

2. Incorporation of elements of Roma culture into curricula for children

This is unanimously believed to be very important. Respondents believe that children should be educated about “others” from early age and this education could be done through learning about tradition, culture, history. Respondents are overall very supportive of this idea which suggests that they believe that getting to know about Roma culture and tradition could significantly reduce prejudices toward them.

There was an idea that incorporation of elements of other minorities should also be made.

3. Loan and scholarship programs so Roma youth can attend University

This is also perceived as a very good idea because it can stimulate young Roma to educate themselves. An accepted belief is that Roma students need to be given a chance to attend university because education could help them to find employment.

Here, again, the issue of equality was raised. Non-Roma students who want to attend University but don't have resources should be given equal opportunities.

Some respondents believe that Roma should be given scholarships but not loans. They question how Roma would return loans, and this belief is probably based on the common prejudice that Roma cannot be trusted.

4. Micro-loans for Roma to start businesses

Most respondents believe that micro-loans could stimulate Roma to work, *“to have a real job instead of collecting iron”*. Some questioned how Roma could be businessman (implying that Roma cannot be good businessman).

5. Enacting very strict anti-discrimination laws that fine employers for hiring and promotion discrimination practices

There are respondents who believe that these laws are very important. Some believe that anti-discrimination laws would create opposite effect: employers would come up with other excuses not to employ Roma. They also question how these laws can be implemented.

- *If a man doesn't want to employ Roma, he won't employ Roma and no law will force him to employ Roma.*

6. Free vaccines for Roma children

This is believed to be extremely important, but for Roma and for respondents' themselves.

- *It is important for us so that they don't spread diseases.*

6. Ambassadors of Change: Voices to Trust

While discussing prominent Roma leaders and organizations, respondents mentioned only a few. They could not tell much about them; they have either heard about these leaders or have seen them on TV. The following Roma leaders were mentioned: **Đurđević** (in Čakovec), **Braco** (host from local TV show) and **Kasum Cana**.

While discussing prominent non-Roma leaders who could be trustworthy on issues related with the “Decade”, respondents find it very hard to think of anyone. They generally show mistrust toward any politicians in Croatia. **Although respondents think that politicians should be responsible for improving lives of Roma, when it comes to identifying which politicians should be involved, respondents largely remain quiet.** They believe the politicians should not be “voices to trust” when it comes to the “Decade”; politicians are perceived as only making promises in pre-election campaigns but not doing any concrete steps.

When asked to name a few who could be involved, respondents mention: **Milan Bandić** (although some respondents resolutely believe he should not be involved), **Vesna Pusić**, **Jadranka Kosor**, **Ivan Čehok** and “*different ministries*”. **Žarko Puhovski**, activist for human rights and President of Croatian Helsinki Committee, was mentioned as a trustworthy and persuasive spokesman on issues related to the “Decade”.

Young respondents from Čakovec believe that politician should not be “voices” because they cannot be trusted. Instead they suggest **singers** (Gibonni, who was UNICEF ambassador, Severina, Alka Vuica) and **sportsmen**.

7. Message Concepts

The final part of the focus group guide included 8 message concepts that were read to respondents. Respondents then had to rate these statements on a scale from 1-10, where 1 meant that the statement is not at all persuasive and meaningful, and 10 meant that it the statement is extremely persuasive and meaningful. An overview of average grades for each statement can be found in Appendix 3.

1. 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.

An overall belief is that this statement is quite meaningful. Younger respondents from Zagreb (average 4,5) and respondents from Beli Manastir (average 3,4) tend to agree less with this statement.

The main argument for this statement is that *“all citizens should be equal”* and *“should have equal rights”*. Some questioned why Roma are not mentioned in this statement because Roma are the most discriminated. Others emphasized that not only Roma are discriminated in this country and that other minorities (or anyone who is “different”) also experience discrimination.

There are some respondents who believe that discrimination is present everywhere and that there is not a single country without discrimination. According to these respondents, there is no single modern country if no discrimination is a “true sign”.

There are some respondents who believe that this statement could be true but that it cannot be applied to Croatia. “Croatia is far from being a modern country” because of many different reasons and not just because of discrimination.

Some respondents question whether we really want to be a part of Europe.

- *I'm bothered by this part “to become a real part of Europe” and modern country ... if we want this at all, if we want to be a part of Europe ...*

2. 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.

Older respondents from Zagreb mostly agree with this statement (average 8). Others consider this statement less meaningful, while respondents from Beli Manastir consider this statement not persuasive at all (average 1,4).

For some respondents, it is difficult to answer the question in “the name of the whole society”. There are many who believe that Croatia is not so unjust toward Roma. They admit there is

discrimination but not to such an extreme level. Their argument is that other societies treat Roma similarly or even worse.

A discussion was again raised as to how much Roma want to be integrated at all. They should be integrated if they want to be integrated but should not be forced or pushed into something that they don't want

- *It is indeed the issue of human rights, but the question is how much they want it.*

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

Respondents from Čakovec (older respondents' average is 9 and younger is 8) tend to agree with this statement mostly.

Others emphasize that resources should be equally and justly distributed. Again, the issue of the amount of money is emphasized as not being so important; programs and projects are more important than the actual amount of money. Also, some wonder why only education is emphasized and not employment. Discrimination is felt in different fields, mainly employment, and even educated Roma cannot find employment.

4. 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.

Almost all respondents, except those from Beli Manastir (average is 3), consider this statement to be quite meaningful. *"Children should definitely be helped the most" because "they cannot be blamed for anything".*

Respondents also emphasize importance of education Roma children. But, there are some who doubt that Roma children will have equal opportunities like Croatian children because discrimination always exists.

- *It is not convincing that they will have equal opportunities like our children even if they have education ... because discrimination is always present.*

5. 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.

Respondents who consider this statement to be meaningful believe that "all should be helped equally". It is very important to give every person an opportunity to achieve the potential. Basically, to provide Roma with opportunities is providing everyone opportunities because, according to some, Roma are the most neglected group in Croatia. There is also an idea that Croatian country should help Roma more because Roma don't have their mother-country to support them.

- *The country should help Roma more because they don't have mother-country. They don't have ... anyone who can help them ... because Croats are helped by Croatia.*

Respondents who oppose this view are from Beli Manastir (average 2). They believe that Croats, especially the ones who experience poverty, should be helped more than Roma.

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

Respondents who agree with this statement believe it is true because people usually walk away from Roma and do nothing to help them; they are being mistreated.

- *We just turn our head away.*

Others agree that the way Roma are treated should be changed, but are not ashamed of it. For them, it was difficult to rate this statement because they agree with it only partly. They believe that they themselves do nothing wrong to Roma and are not ashamed of how they treat them, but overall agree that Roma are treated by others in a wrong way.

Respondents from Beli Manastir do not agree with this statement at all (average 1). They believe that Roma are blamed for being treated this way; *“it is their fault”*. In addition, respondents from Beli Manastir think that Roma are not treated in a wrong way because they have certain conditions and receive welfare. It is their choice not to live according to our standards.

7. 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.

Respondents who consider this statement meaningful believe that Roma are a part of our community and society and that the country can certainly do better. However, not only Roma live in poverty and not only Roma are discriminated, so some respondents don't agree with this statement. Others agree that perhaps not only Roma are discriminated but if the society makes effort to help Roma, this is already a big step forward.

- *It is true that not only Roma are discriminated, but if we start from them that is also a step further.*

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

There are many respondents who disagree with this statement because they believe that Croatia is not on the road to prosperity. Croatia is far away from it because there are still a lot of people who live on the edge of existence in Croatia. Respondents cannot agree with this because there is a large gap between the rich and the poor and Roma are not the only poor group of people.

Some respondents also believe that it depends upon individual how much he/she participates in the society and not all deserve to have prosperity.

- *Why would all have to have equal prosperity, maybe someone didn't deserve to have prosperity?*

Conclusions

This research gives insight into the way in which Croats perceive problems their country faces and perspective of their country. It also gives insight into how Croats perceive their identity and the way in which they treat differences and “others”. The research also provides a wealth of information about attitudes of Croats toward Roma, their attitudes formation as well as perception of Croats of the “Decade of Roma Inclusion”.

Respondents are overall disappointed in the direction in which Croatia is moving. They perceive many problems and show concern for the future of their country. Different forms of Croatian identity are manifested, and the way in which respondents perceive movements in their country also affects their sense of identity as Croats. The most pronounced sense of Croatian identity is expressed by respondents from Beli Manastir. Their strong self-identification as Croats must be observed within the context of Croatia’s war for independence.

Attitudes toward Roma are manifold and are experienced in different levels of intensity. Attitudes vary from positive descriptions and empathy toward Roma to negative feelings and animosity. Respondents’ attitudes toward Roma are formed from their personal experiences, (lack of) knowledge about Roma and common prejudices. The most pronounced differences among respondents in their attitudes toward Roma are regional in nature. Respondents from Beli Manastir are the most negative in their views. Attitudes toward Roma need to be observed through historical and political processes in Croatia; negative feelings and prejudices can be understood within the framework of war circumstances.

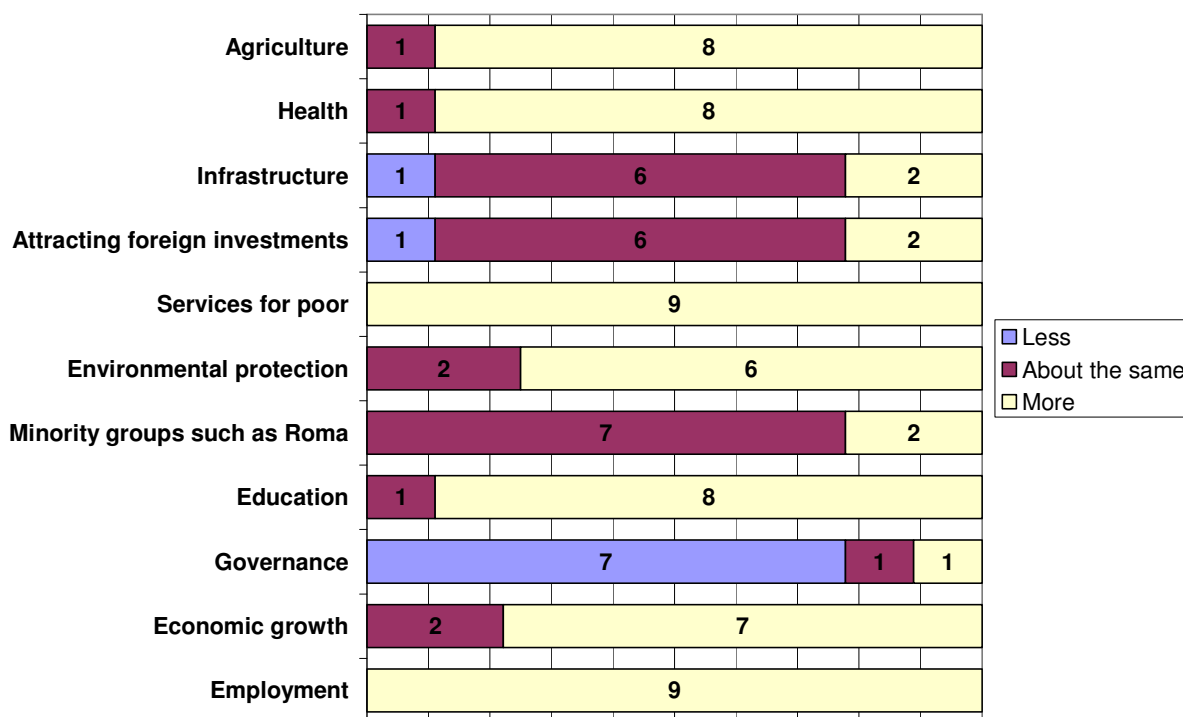
Respondents are generally positive toward the efforts of the “Decade of Roma Inclusion”. Again, respondents from Beli Manastir are negatively inclined toward these efforts. The emphasis was made that the efforts of the “Decade” should not be forced or imposed on Roma. This suggests that communication with Roma community needs to be established so that efforts of the “Decade” could be appropriately targeted.

Appendices

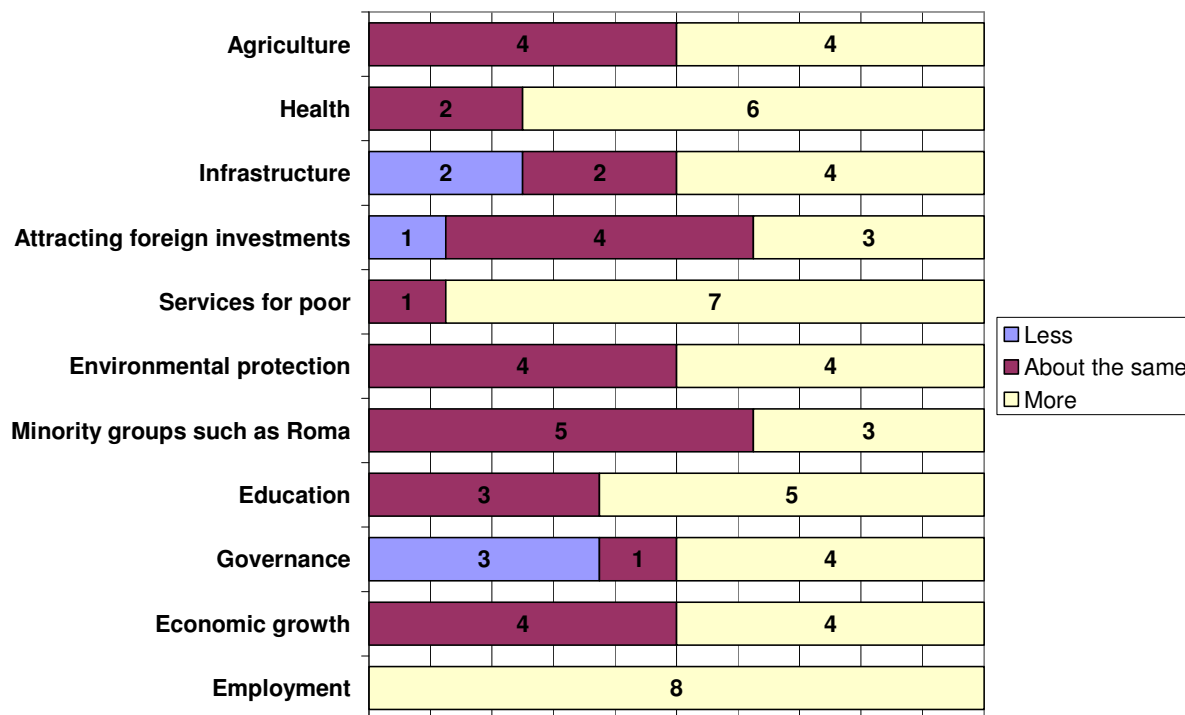
Appendix 1: Government spending

The following pictures present counts (N) on Government spending for each focus group. These graphs are meant to illustrate and present answers to this question clearly and not to quantify the data. If, in some fields, the number does not equal the total number of respondents in the group, it is because the respondent did not provide answer to the particular field.

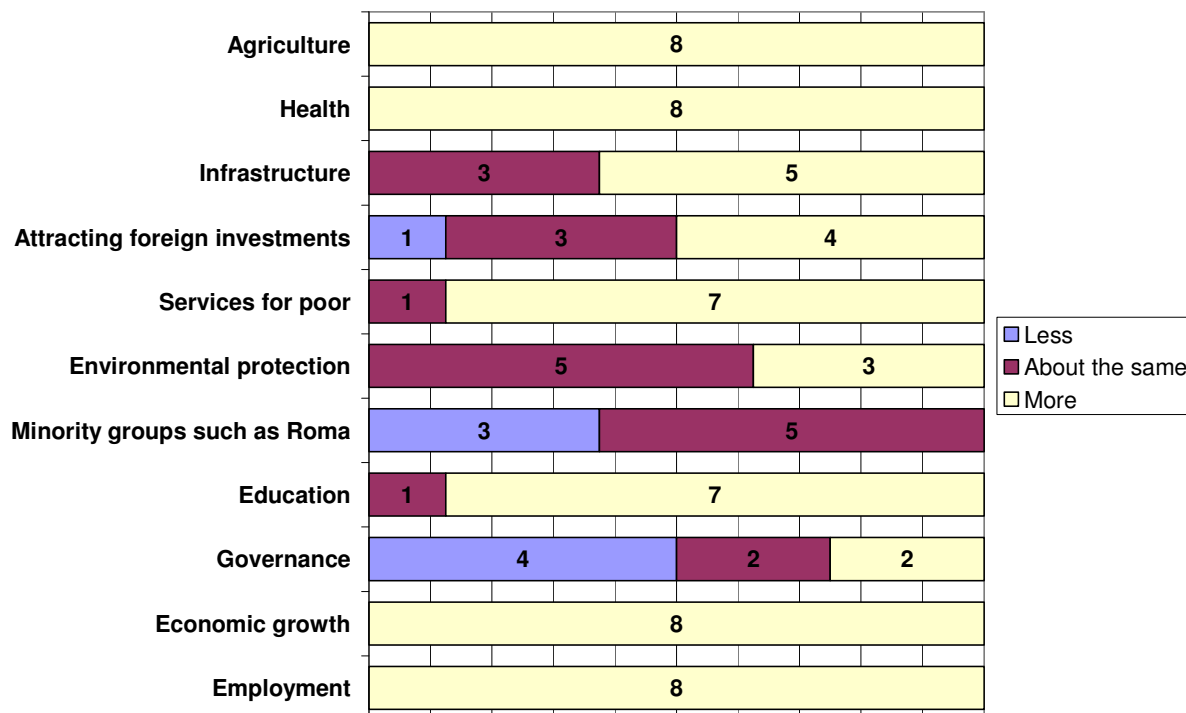
Picture 1. Zagreb, age 31-60, secondary education, average income (N=9)



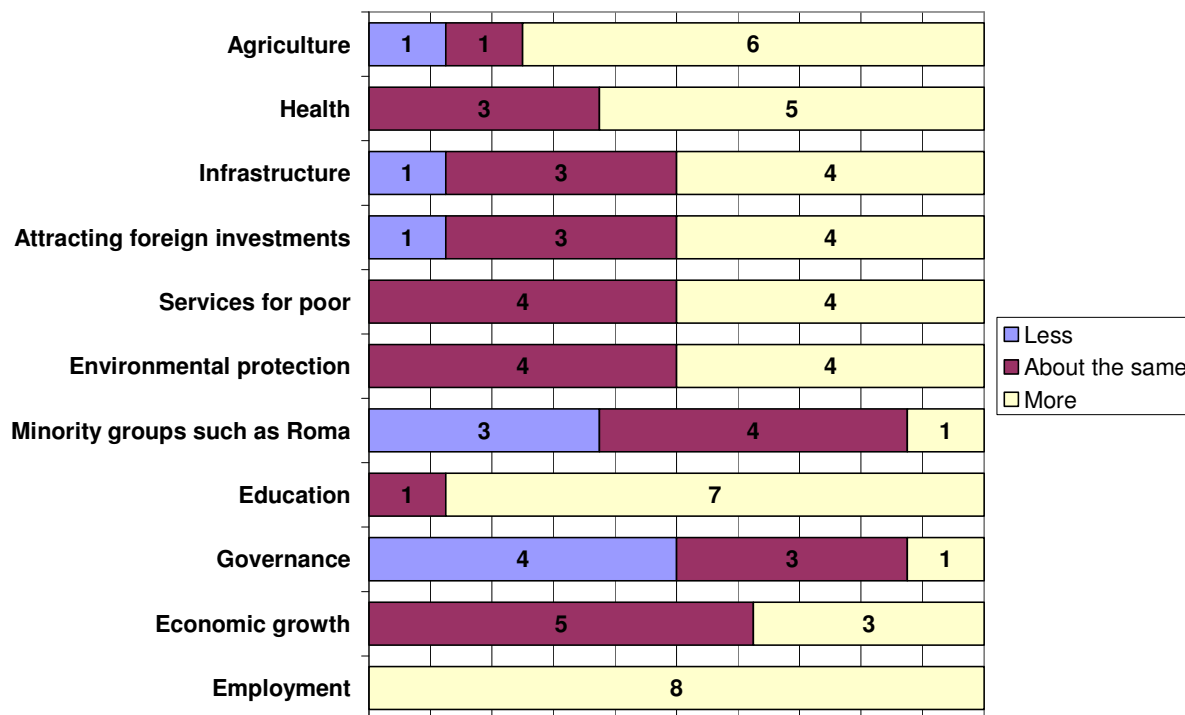
Picture 2. Zagreb, age 18-30, high education, high income (N=8)



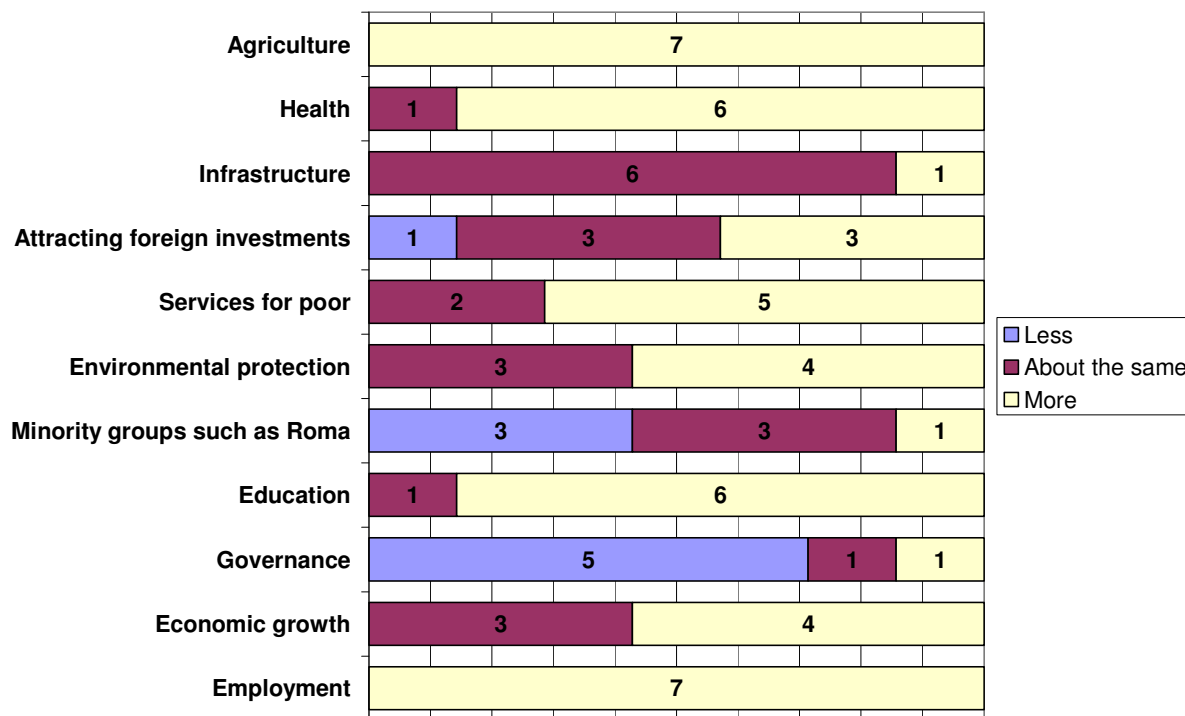
Picture 3. Beli Manastir, age 31-60, secondary education, average income (N=8)



Picture 4. Čakovec, age 18-30, secondary education, average income (N=8)



Picture 5. Čakovec, 31-60, low/secondary education, low/average income (N=7)



Appendix 2: Thoughts on Roma

Table 2. Descriptions of Roma Community

POSITIVE	NEUTRAL	NEGATIVE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adaptive ▪ Warm ▪ Bright/happy ▪ Diligent ▪ Persistent ▪ Fight for their rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Always together ▪ Homogenous ▪ Traditional ▪ Neglected by society ▪ Not changing community ▪ Unaccepted ▪ Distinguishing ▪ People without homeland ▪ Collecting old iron ▪ Horses ▪ Colorful clothes ▪ Live on benefits from society ▪ Discriminated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poor ▪ Uneducated ▪ Closed ▪ Irresponsible ▪ Quarrelsome ▪ Unemployed ▪ Untidy ▪ Social cases ▪ Unorganized ▪ Poor ▪ Begging on streets ▪ Serbs ▪ Non-human ▪ Non-workers ▪ Dirty ▪ Thief ▪ False ▪ Nomads ▪ Uncultured ▪ Like alcohol ▪ Ungrateful ▪ Lazy ▪ Exploit their rights ▪ Too many of them ▪ Specific smell ▪ Stealing ▪ Arrogant ▪ Too many benefits for them ▪ No hygiene

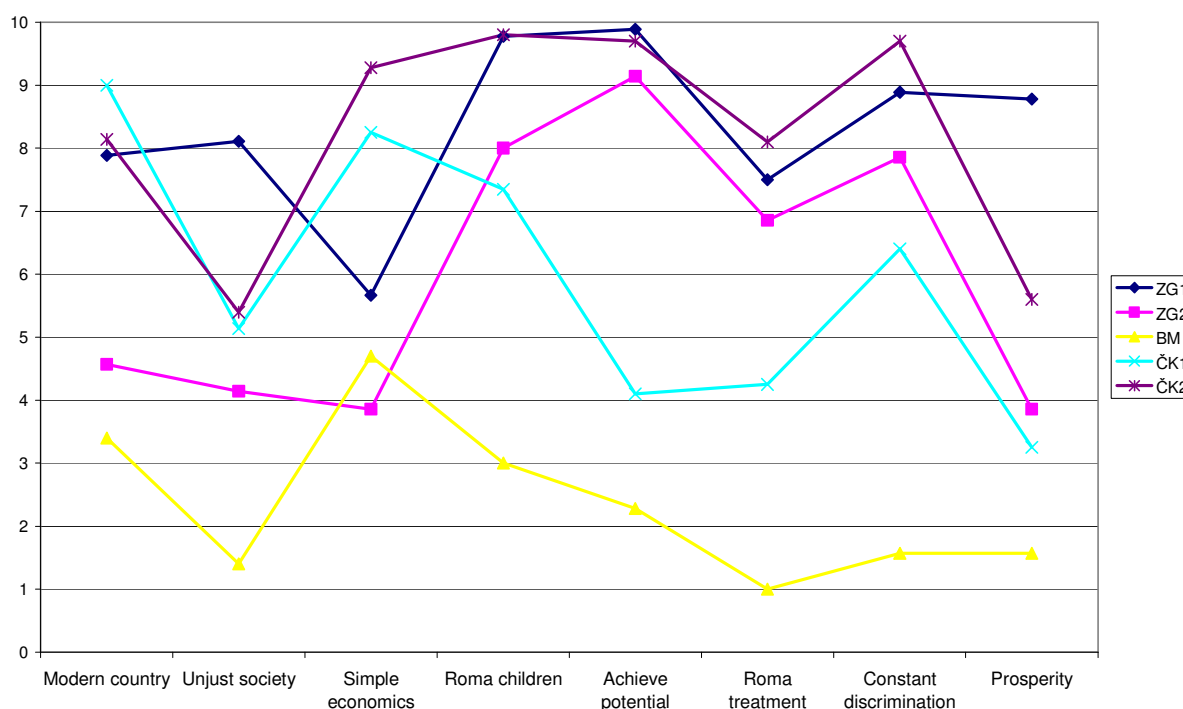
Table 3. Descriptions of Roma

POSITIVE	NEUTRAL	NEGATIVE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Happy ▪ Funny/humorous ▪ Likes to help ▪ Good-natured ▪ Likes to welcome guests ▪ Open ▪ Diligent ▪ Sociable ▪ Honest ▪ Curious ▪ Always smiling ▪ Good ▪ Young Roma re diligent, want to work ▪ Nicely dressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Patriarchal community ▪ Doesn't differ from others ▪ Unsatisfied 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dirty ▪ No school, uneducated ▪ Unemployed ▪ Untidy ▪ Wary ▪ Wild ▪ Family with 22 members ▪ Poor ▪ Vulgar ▪ Careless ▪ I don't like them ▪ Not ambitious ▪ Disabled/invalid ▪ Poverty ▪ Thief ▪ Like to earn money quickly/lazy ▪ Liar ▪ Alcoholic ▪ Dirty ▪ Intolerant ▪ Rich ▪ Irresponsible ▪ Wanderer

Appendix 3: Message statements

The following graph presents average grades for each message statement for each focus group. It is meant to illustrate and present clearly respondents' answers. It is not meant to quantify data and cannot be generalized. Complete statements are not written due to limited space, but they are presented in the same order as in the text.

Picture 6. Average grade for message statements by each focus group



ZG1 – Zagreb, 31-60, secondary education, average income
 ZG2 – Zagreb, 18-30, high education, high income
 BM – Beli Manastir, 31-60, secondary education, average income
 ČK1 – Čakovec, 18-30, secondary education, average income
 ČK2 – Čakovec, 31-60, low/secondary education, low/average income

Appendix 4: Transcript from focus group

Focus group held in Zagreb, 30th May, 2005

Age: 18-31, high education, high income

Focus Group Guide

Research topic: Position of the Roma in Croatia
Version: Non-Roma groups

INTRODUCTION

Non-Roma (YOUNG)

May 30, 2005 19.00h

ZAGREB

- Tihana, 22, from Zagreb. I completed a two-year post secondary school of economics, the same year I enrolled in college, major: sociology and psychology, I am in my senior year, I work as an economist
- Vesna, 22, I completed a four-year vocational degree as a physiotherapeutic technician and am currently pursuing degree in a two-year post secondary school, I work as a physiotherapist.
- Melita from Zagreb, 26, BA in economics. I work in a firm, in my free time I ride a bike, nothing special.
- Damir, employed at the Ministry of Defense, 30, I do some sports, some gym.
- Alen, degree from the University of Practical Sciences in Split, I'm into IT. More or less, it occupies all my time. From time to time I go to a gym, some basketball. I am 22.
- Goran, 30, BA in linguistics, I'm a translator for one company. Hobby: sports.
- Paula, 27. I work at the Zagreb Institute for Public Health, sanitation engineer. I'm currently in my senior year in college and am mostly preoccupied with studies.
- Danijela, 29, city transportation engineer. I don't work in my profession, but at the publishing house Vjesnik. Hobby – currently, decorating my apartment.

Current situation

- **Moderator: How would you describe the direction of the country today? Do you think the country is going in the right direction or the wrong direction?**
 - In the wrong direction.
- **Moderator: What is going in the wrong direction?**
 - Everything. Politics, economy, the whole system is falling to pieces, even though our politicians claim otherwise.
- **Moderator: How can you tell?**
 - The way these politicians behave, their personality as shown on TV. They say one thing and a different thing is going on.
 - Sport.
 - Health care.
 - Agriculture. We hear and read in newspapers all kinds of things these days. Such things were probably happening before as well, but the public did not know about them.
 - The army.
 - Employment. A large number of unemployed and still growing. There are quite many bad things, but this one is... the worst of all.
- **Moderator: What do you experience in your life that confirms such a view?**
 - In relation to the sport. Many things changed several years ago regarding employment, regarding what he said about politicians and how they behave.

- I work in my profession, but I think it's very difficult for an ordinary man to find a job, unless one has connections. There are exceptions, of course. But it's very difficult...
- **Moderator: Is there anything going in the right direction...?**
- Things that were previously unknown are now brought to light. That's good. At least now you can read about them in the newspapers and the media. Although, it was possible to read about them before as well, but I don't know to which degree.
- It's ok when things become exposed, but two years down the road and the same things will happen anew without any consequences.
- There are no consequences for those involved; it's all forgotten after one month.
- Nobody is held responsible.
- I am fascinated by *Latinica* (TV talk show), they reveal things in true light, next morning everybody talks about it, but the day after nothing.
- It is exactly for this reason that such things happen – because nobody is held responsible for anything.
- There was something about health care, a doctor who made a serious mistake, I think he made the same mistake the year before as well, but he still works with childbearing women. I think that should be resolved in a different way.

- **Moderator: What are you most optimistic about in Croatia? What is, in your opinion, the most positive in our country?**
- Education.
- There are more and more educated people, the number of private colleges is growing. I don't know how good or bad that is, but they exist.
- Agro-tourism. We have Istria, when you get there, you can see how greatly the situation has improved in the last ten years. Because they oriented themselves on agro-tourism and foreign tourist recognized that. Now, how good or bad it is that foreigners buy all that is another issue. Still, people living there now live better than ten years ago.
- Transport. Tourism.

- **Moderator: What do you think is bringing about these positive trends in Croatia?**
- Frequent elections. So that the same people don't spend all the time in power.
- We have a whole government apparatus in charge of tourism. Obviously, it's worth it for tourists, somehow.
- **Moderator: What about the Government, how much credit goes to our Government for these positive trends?**
- I think these plans are long term ones and therefore no government can take credit for them, after all, these highways that we are constructing, they are financed with loans; the government did not earn that money, it only secured loans for construction of these highways. That way even I could build highways.
- Later on they pay loans back.
- It is us who work that pay back these loans.

- **Moderator: What do you think are the greatest problems we face here in Croatia?**
- Rule-of-law.
- Legal system.
- There's nothing left.
- Unemployment.
- Corruption.

- **Moderator: Anything else?**
- Unprotected workers, workers' rights. Welfare considerations.
- **Moderator: Why do you think these problems exist, that is, why do they occur? Who is responsible for them?**
- We all are. Actually, I think the responsibility is on the system that we inherited from the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and which obviously does not function well, but there is neither strength nor financial resources to change it. Because a situation like this suits people in the positions of

power. Because I as a person... I simply cannot accomplish anything in the court whereas a man with money can do what he pleases.

- The responsibility is not on individuals.
- If someone becomes successful, that person is immediately perceived as a criminal, a thief, even though he is not one. On the other hand, you could be a criminal and treated as a gentleman, it all depends on connections. We are all convinced that as an ordinary person you cannot do anything. We are all following a well-beaten path, waiting for something to happen.
- **Moderator: I would like to hear now, briefly, your thoughts on Croatia are joining the European Union? Is that good for Croatia?**
- Briefly, it's not.
- I will repeat one of your questions in order to explain this. Rule-of-law, that's what we need. And for that reason we need the European Union.
- **Moderator: Why rule-of-law?**
- It's obvious we cannot do it ourselves. Some supervision should be introduced, rules from outside and then when you put it all together... things will get in order one by one, employment and everything else.
- I believe it should be better in that regard, the only thing I'm worried about is that when Germany introduced Euro all prices were simply copied, bread used to cost 4 German Marks and now it costs 4 Euros. I think, if that was to happen here... I was in Slovenia recently, can't tell how much they are in the EU, nevertheless, you don't pay for anything there ... if that's how it's going to be, then it should be better. It should be easier to cross borders, less waiting in lines for tourists. We would probably get incentives from the EU. Regarding education, I think it should be better, some scholarships from abroad.
- I believe it is good for Croatia, this Europe, I think we should join it. Croatia is already lagging 50 years behind, and if we continue this trend of educating people, it would take us another 300 years only to have all citizens complete high school education. Europe has much more to offer to us, regardless of what people say about losing our identity. New member states have not lost anything of their identity and I am for joining the EU.

Government, policies and the country's resources

- **Moderator: What do you think about ways in which Croatian Government spends budget resources? What do they spend money on?**
- We can't know that. Nobody knows that.
- As far as we know, that's the same question as how they spend money...
- What we do know, the money given to the Catholic Church, that's terrible. That's what is known and documented.
- They've just had it in *Latinica*, how so and so many millions or billions of Kuna were invested in a convent in Đakovo, and for only 30 nuns.
- Nah, these are mere trifles.
- Since its first days, the Church has always lived off money from the people, someone must finance it. We are all consumers of that religion.
- You have to give something.
- Yes, but how much.
- But not too much. Too much is too much.
- In some countries they have a system of church taxes where you designate to which church you wish your taxes to go. For instance, why would all our money go to this church? There are other religions and institutions or whatever. On your tax return you have to indicate to which church you wish your church tax to go.
- What I find hard to understand here in Croatia is that simply because you live here, you must pay television subscription fees to HTV (Croatian Television), even if you don't watch it. I, for one, don't watch HTV at all, I watch satellite channels. Why should I be obliged to pay subscription to them merely because I live here? I find that insane. Likewise, why should I pay a church tax to the Catholic Church if I don't believe in it?

- **Moderator: All right, now I would like to hear, in your opinion, what does the Government unnecessarily spends money on?**
- The thing is, whatever is spent in the country, if we pay for it, it should be transparently presented to the people, to the citizens whose money is being spent. Like it's done in all other countries, but not here in Croatia. And why it isn't done here, that's the question for the politicians.
- Just like we are obliged to fill a tax return, so should they have some tax information sheet.
- It's hard to say anything now since the spending is not transparent.
- There's a budgeted amount, they allocate resources in this and that way. Some people are fine with it, some are not.

- **Moderator: All right, and what should the government spend money on?**
- On the endangered social groups.
- On low-income families with many children. On self-supporting mothers, on children in orphanages. Particularly on the pensioners. On anyone in need of help. Because what they are getting now, what good can it bring to them if their pension goes up by 30 Kuna? When you calculate the increase in percentages, that's shameful.
- All this is ok. But we have so many elderly people that I doubt this could be easily implemented.
- That's all right. But we still haven't adopted the principle that exists abroad and according to which throughout your life you put aside some money for the pension. We did not have that system. It might sound cruel, but according to it we should wait for this whole pensioner generation to die and then...
- Ok, but still, how do you increase pensions so that everyone gets a fair amount? I mean, an increase of 30 Kuna is really...
- I know people who worked their whole life and now have pensions of 800-900 Kuna.
- Only if pensions go up in percentages. People with higher pensions get higher amounts.
- I think they should spend money on the handicapped children, that's an actual problem. It is horrible that no help is given to them, that they have to buy everything. That mothers or parents cannot go to work until the child turns 7 because someone has to look after the child. I find that terrible. At the same time, we spend large amounts of money on stupid shows, stupid spectacles such as beauty pageants of which there is a thousand of them, unnecessarily. Miss of this, Miss of that...
- Or, take Dinamo's stadium for example. I love football, but now it seems we will have no team to support on that stadium, and the stadium is there.
- Or, the promotion activities when HT changed name into T-Mobile, they spent 20 million Kuna on free movie shows, theaters and other promotional activities. I understand that when you re-brand you need all of that, but do you really need to spend 20 million Kuna? I think they would have done a better thing if they placed advertisements in newspapers saying that instead of large-scale promotional activities they would donate money to this and that. I think they would have made greater promotion for themselves with such a thing.
- Like the (presidential) pre-election campaign, they spent an awfully lot of money on marketing and commercials, really way out of line.
- They have to fool people. It takes a lot of money to do that in a situation like ours. You need to fool people.
- It doesn't take too much to fool people, only two or three movie tickets. A few rights that I will never make any use of and you make me a happy person and I will vote. You can easily fool people, especially masses.
- They were giving away sausages, fruit and similar things.
- I would add to this, since I'm in IT business, that not enough is invested in information technology. It's a shame that here in Croatia I cannot purchase anything via Internet, while in Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, even Macedonia, you can make a purchase via Internet. It's ridiculous, like we are God knows what, cut off from everything.

Your identity as a Croat

- **Moderator: Now I'm interested in what it means to be a Croat?**
- It means that both your parents are Croats. That's it.

- It means that we belong to a social community which differs from other communities by religion, culture, language.
- By talented athletes.
- **Moderator: What does it mean for you personally?**
- To me personally it means to be a Croat, to work, pay taxes, be an honest citizen and love this miserable country regardless of everything.
- I look at it by looking at what's the point of life in general. I mean, if the whole life is somehow alienated, why live like that?! All that makes no sense to me. One needs to have a balance between work and pleasure so that one's life is better, not alienated...
- Look here, not all people can defend on the lowest levels, on the level of an individual, that every man in this country is trying to cheat on the state and then boasts of being a big Croat, but not paying taxes. Not paying... what makes one a Croat. Either you work in the interest of the community or not.
- **Moderator: What else? What else makes us different from others?**
- Well, this recent history when we had war here. Like we didn't have our own state. Whereas Italy, to take it as an example, Italy did not give any thoughts to it in its recent history. Here, it was a very important issue 10 years ago. We strived toward it. It was very prominent in the society. I was in puberty at that time and remember it. Whereas people who were younger, that's it. Then again, with time...
- **Moderator: How would you describe our nation?**
- We differ across regions.
- **Moderator: Which regions ...?**
- I think this is more-less known to everybody. Not like I have something against people from Dalmatia, but when we go to the seaside, they don't do anything the whole year and then in summer they want to make big money from tourism. In winter, wherever you go, there's not a soul to be seen. I have no idea what these people do the rest of the year.
- That's not true.
- I am not from Dalmatia, but I've been on Pelješac and Orebić. People live hard there; they earn living as sailors on ships.
- I don't think it's important what people would do there...
- They have no other opportunities, no jobs, only tourism in summer. It's a twisted picture of reality, I say that even though I am not from Dalmatia.
- Just as they wrongly perceive people from Zagreb to be arrogant and conceited.
- I know many good people from college, but most of them, when they come to Zagreb say how dirty Zagreb is, how it makes them sick, but then they stay and live in Zagreb, something I find really disgusting. When I go to the coast, I don't say how dirty the sea is or how it smells or such things. I mean, Croatia is Croatia.
- **Moderator: How else would you describe our nation?**
- As little children, we had to know every single date from our history because it was terribly important to know everything from the history. Because we are such a small country, though I don't think Austrian children have to know all the minute details from their history, whereas we Croats have to know everything, that national pride of ours. In some people that pride is prominent, in some not, nevertheless, pride has been forced upon people here.
- It's exactly for that reason that our people achieve great success abroad. A lot of people leave Croatia because of the bad situation here, but also because of their very good knowledge.
- **Moderator: Would you describe our nation as diverse?**
- Well yes.
- **Moderator: Why yes?**
- We've just talked about it, every region is completely different.
- Also, there were many different influences throughout our history, be it Hungary, Austria, Italy. We have always been under the rule of some other country and that's how our regions were

formed which are relatively slightly separated. For e.g. Dalmatia is more Italy, Istria as well. Zagreb is more Germany, Austria, down south Hungary, Serbia.

- **Moderator: Do you think we are a tolerant nation?**
 - No.
- **Moderator: Why not?**
 - We are not. You can tell it straight away.
- **Moderator: How can you tell?**
 - From the way we treat others. Even by the color of the skin.
- **Moderator: Toward whom?**
 - Black people this, Black people that.
 - And we even don't have Black people here!
 - Then the Roma, Serbs, children with AIDS... anyone who is a bit different.
 - Religious tolerance is particularly non-existent. It does exist, but the overall impression is that it does not.
- **Moderator: You disagreed?**
 - I disagree. I spoke with a young imam from Zagreb who also happens to be a teacher at a high school near the mosque. He said that young girls who attend his high school never had any problems, none of them ever heard a bad word. Many of them came from Slovenia where they were teased, their veils pulled down. He said he was quite satisfied and that Croatia was a very tolerant country.
- **Moderator: Is that also your personal opinion or are you just sharing his views with us?**
 - I think it is. I don't pay heed to outbursts by skinheads or drunken kids in parks because that happens everywhere. Nevertheless, I think on a global level the situation is tolerant.
 - I think it differs from one person to another.
 - I would say it also depends on the issue. We are tolerant of some things and not tolerant of other things. A sort of average tolerance.
- **Moderator: What are we tolerant of and what not?**
 - We are talking here only about religious tolerance and tolerance of the color of one's skin. We all live in a hurry; everybody is trying to cut lines. A month ago I had this situation in a shop. There was a line up and I was waiting to be served when this lady started pushing her way in front of me. The saleswoman said she couldn't believe how tolerant I was given my young age. Usually everybody is in a hurry, there's no line. This much about that.
- **Moderator: How do we treat people who are different?**
 - Rejection.
 - Mockery.
- **Moderator: What makes you think so? How can you tell?**
 - They don't want to have contact with you if you are different. For example, I come from the Vukovar region. I have an experience with them. I mean no harm to anyone. However, there are a lot of people there who suffered a great deal in the war...
 - For example, you have a group of people and if some person is in any way different, the group will mock him.
- **Moderator: How do we treat foreigners in our country?**
 - That depends on how much money they have. Tourism is the best example. I come from the coastal region and people there always make fun of Czechs because they buy things from stands, whereas Italians will spend all his money and that makes them super people... Therefore, how good you are depends on the amount money you spend. In the days immediately after the war, the situation was quite different - Czechs came to our coast, other tourists didn't and nobody mocked at Czech. They are good when they come here, but when more tourists come, then it's important how much they spend...
- **Moderator: What do you others say?**

- I can't tell how many tourists come to Zagreb, I don't have communication with them. But I am thrilled when I can talk to a foreign person. Sada ne znam koliko turista ima u Zagrebu, nemam komunikacije s njima.
- Most of our people like to talk to foreigners.
- **Moderator: What about immigrants in Croatia?**
 - Depends which side of the world they come from. At least that's how it seems to me.
 - I don't think we have much communication with them. Foreigners from western countries come to do so-called higher ranked jobs, they come as experts and not as manual construction workers. People from Bosnia and the east come as manual workers. That's a huge difference.
 - I'm fine with everyone behaving in accordance with the city culture and respects the town and country in which he lives. That person can come from Turkmenistan as far as I'm concerned.
 - Right.
 - I'm fine with the person as long as the person is a cultured one.
- **Moderator: How do we treat people who don't share our religion?**
 - It depends on the environment.
 - I have a Muslim and a Jewish friend and they are both fine. Orthodox people are also human beings; I don't think anyone pays attention to it, not in my circle of friends and acquaintances. People don't waste time on that. I think we've all had enough of war and disagreements. Now we all have other fish to fry.
 - I believe it was different during the war, religion was much more important. Now, people of other religions can be successful as well.
 - Even though I believe there are still some open wounds in Croatia, like this young lady said. I come from Lika. There are quite many Orthodox people there, whereas I am a Catholic. Religion was important there before the war as well. Let's say you are of the age when people get married. The first question would be whether you girlfriend was Catholic or Orthodox. Since World War Two.
 - This is less prominent in Zagreb. People somehow live faster. When I go down there to Vukovar, somehow everything is slower, time passes slower. People don't have jobs there so they talk about it all the time and always go back to the war. Religion is much more prominent there and you pay attention to who's who.
 - I would just like to say that what she mentioned about Zagreb applies to Istria as well.
 - They are oriented toward Europe.
 - They care little about where you came from and what your religion is.
 - Italians feel (?).
- **Moderator: In your community, that is, in your surroundings, do you have many minorities?**
 - We do....
- **Moderator: Can you tell us which?**
 - There are Roma people. Specifically, in my neighborhood there's a guy from South Africa. I don't know exactly.
 - There are no minorities in our surroundings.
- **Moderator: How do you feel around them?**
 - Super.
 - That's right.
 - They don't talk much.
 - They see it all differently. I thought I was terribly conservative regarding religions but then I had a talk with a Muslim friend and he opened my eyes regarding some things. Many things are misinterpreted. I think it would do well to everyone to talk with a member of an ethnic minority and get rid of some of prejudices.
 - It would be best if everyone could spend some time in a small community, small place. All this is mere empty speech. Nothing of this...
 - I think it all depends on the country. Islam is more prominent in some countries, and less in others. In some Asian countries it must be really terrible to be a woman. I don't think it's the

same thing to be a woman or a man. We see it differently here. I think it's easier to be a Muslim here than in some other countries.

- **Moderator: In your opinion, to what degree are the minorities you've mentioned integrated into our community?**
- What do you mean by that - how well they feel, how much they have adapted?
- Yes.
- That also depends to a high degree on their financial situation.
- I think it is not that important. A person who comes here does not have to declare public who he is. That person lives here as he would live in some other place. For example, I go to live in a foreign country. Why would I have to make public announcements that I am a Croat? I would live like all other people. I could join a Croatian association. Why make mountains out of molehills?
- It depends on how much respect for our country they come here with. How much they respect us, our laws and rights. It also depends on them, not only on us.

The Roma

- **Moderator: In your opinion, what are the greatest problems/challenges that the Roma face in Croatia?**
- These that I've written down, the same, normal people, working people, tidy, polite, yet there is always someone who would associate the Roma with beggars.
- They make a very small minority, these educated ones as you say. I think they make a minority.
- No, I have a friend who is a Rom, has a college degree and is in no way different from us others. The society accepted him very well. However, usually when someone is associated with the Roma, you picture large refuse items, someone begging for money or someone pulling you by the sleeve.
- Can I add an observation? As soon as we start talking about the Roma, the word 'normal' is mentioned. Meaning, we have to tell them what's normal. It is not normal to steal, but in countries where they live, they live like that. They live like nomads, and now we should make them adapt. But who's to say that we are right and they are not?
- I would not say that we differentiate regarding the Roma who live normally, I think we differentiate between these Roma and the ones who live like nomads. Your friend is accepted by the society and I don't think they perceive him as a Rom who begs. We always have in mind the Roma from the bottom of the social scale.
- It is an offence to call someone Cigan (Gypsy). That is a serious offense, but it should not be.
- **Moderator: What do you think would be some other problems that the Roma face?**
- Here's one problem. Newspapers, crime section. A person kills another person, they write the killer's name and surname. When someone robs a betting place, again they write the name and surname of the doer, however, when a Rom commits a crime, they write not only his name, but add that he is a Rom. In other words, they don't write that a Croat or a Serb committed murder. However, no matter what crime was committed, they will write that two young Roma boys did this or that.
- That's belittling.
- Even worse. You have to give that to me. I don't know whether they would mention it if some awful Rom does something, would they say that this and this Rom.
- I think they have no prospects. These children, I don't know if we have even 1 or 2 schools for these children. Because most of the teachers who are not of Roma ethnic belonging probably don't want to teach these children under such conditions. Basically, they don't have anyone to educate them. They have only a handful of teachers. I don't know if what I'm saying is correct, I'm saying this based on some information from the newspapers. But they have no prospects whatsoever.
- But the Roma should not be segregated and taught in separate schools. That should not be done.
- There's a catch – language. Because not all of them speak Croatian.
- All right, but you can arrange for additional language classes for the Roma community. But I still don't think they should have separate schools. True, their achievements in school are lower than

of other children, but it's probably because their parents don't make them study at home given their different worldviews, culture and civilization. We can't make them adopt our standards. We have to let them live the way they want. They are people just like we are. Besides, they have no social protection, nothing. And the government is not helping them realize their rights either. Although there have been talks about it, but I'm referring to direct impact on those people who beg and who are seen by everyone to beg. And that's why people treat them in such a way. The government is not doing anything to help them. But they too are citizens of this country.

- I know a kid who begs on Kvatrić every day. Regularly, at the end of the day he comes to the cashier in Konzum with 200 Kuna in coins. She asks him how much he's got and he says I don't know, 211, and she gives him paper bills. I asked the cashier how she could be certain that the kid would not cheat on her and she said that the kid was a regular every day. And every day he has between 200 and 300 Kuna. If you take that they have 2 or 3 children on average, then those families who beg are not really without money. So I really don't know, it's all rather weird. I don't know who gets that money since their living conditions are so poor. I don't know on what that money is spent.
 - It is sad to see children beg from such an early age.
 - We find it pitiable, they find it normal.
 - Such kid would rather beg than go to school. He probably sees it like this, I am 7 and I earned 300 Kuna. Why go to school until the age of 18, have a vocation and still be without a job...
 - Sometimes I envy them because they are not slaves to the system. They don't feel the pressing by the system like the rest of us. They don't feel it, they are nomads. They don't need employment. They can go to a solid waste deposit and work there. In my opinion, that's a freedom the rest of us will never have, because if we would do something like that the society would condemn us and we would feel very bad, whereas they pay no heed to the opinion of the society. I think they are free, much freer than we people from the system.
 - Yes, but go to a public kitchen or try collecting scrap iron. People will immediately...
 - That should not be a problem. We are all people, we should respect each other. We should judge people as people, and not by what they do or which position they have. But people don't understand...
- **Moderator: What kind of interaction have you had (or still have) with the Roma?**
 - Well, when I was in Zadar during Christmas holidays as a little child, they had petards, that was... they had all the forbidden things. Old and young ones. And I used to buy those petards.
 - **Moderator: What type of interaction would that be...?**
 - Business interaction.
 - (laughter)
 - **Moderator: What experience do you have?**
 - Cash and carry. You get what you pay for.
 - In that respect, they had less problems than regular people when the police caught them sell forbidden things.
 - If the police caught one of them and chased him away, he would come again tomorrow.
 - The family that participated with Severina in the *Mjenjačnica* show, 17 children and 3 grandchildren four years of age, live close to my house. They live at the beginning of my street. I did not know they lived there until a few months ago. We don't really have any problems with them. These kids run around, but make no trouble. I even went to their house with some clothes for them. They are polite.
 - **Moderator: What about the rest of you here have you had any interaction with the Roma, direct or indirect?**
 - There was one guy with me in the army. Everything was normal; his father held a high position in their community and had a lot of money. Normal guy, just like every other normal person, he did not stand out in either positive or negative way, everything was ok. Although people would say he was Cigan (Gypsy). That's how they would tell him apart from others. When they would talk about him, that was the first thing mentioned, before saying his name or surname.
 - When I was in high school I had many friends... they always talked about incidents with the Roma, they always used to fight. I don't know, it was not really the positive things.
 - I have a story from Zadar when some Roma tried to save some dogs. To cut the long story short, some young guys wanted to kill some dogs. Stray dogs. And the Roma saved the dogs.

- One lived across the street from me, his name was Šaban. He was a window cleaner in Zvonimirova street and was singing all the time. I never met him personally. But whenever a truck would pass by, he would hang out on one side of the truck, flap his legs and shout to people. He had some ten children. The little one was in the push-chair. And that little kid 2 years of age swore like a trooper. It was a beautiful child, but horrible. Though Šaban seemed like a nice guy, a merry fellow.
- **Moderator: Do your friends and family members have similar experiences and attitudes?**
- I don't know.
- A cousin of mine is a student here in Zagreb. He has some kind of hatred for the Roma so he never had any contact with them. But then, the things he hates are very important things in the world. I don't understand why. One day it happened that the Roma came to collect scrap materials. I was on the first floor and a woman came to ask me to help her switch on her cellular phone. My cousin and I were roommates. I told her it was no problem and I put her cell phone on his bed – he did not want to sleep in that bed afterwards. That's how much of a problem this was. I think this is an extreme example of how people can be... and I don't know why, I never understood it.
- **Moderator: Try to think about your interaction with the Roma. For instance in the street or in a store, tram, etc. What runs through your head when you interact with them?**
- Most often I watch children and think how beautiful they are and how I wished to bade them and give them a candy. That's the first thing that comes to my mind. Their children are all so beautiful and I feel terrible when I see them.
- I know these few Roma that I see in the city center. When I'm having coffee in a bar, they go from table to table and beg. When I see them, I feel like taking my cell phone and covering my coffee cup with my hands because they beg for money, but if you don't give it to them, they might spit in your coffee. I know of several such cases, perhaps you know a few of them with longer hair, around Cvjetni trg. The ones who go into bars. They take a good look of tables. So, you grab for your cell phone first or cover your coffee cup. Because such cases really happened. It happened to a friend of mine.
- One kid, Željko, played music to me. I gave him some money and then he played to me. He stole a scrounge directly from a woman's hair and gave it to me as a present. I found that really cool.
- **Moderator: What do you others say? How do you feel when you run across them?**
- It depends on what he is asking for, if I run into him and he tries to sell me those water flutes, then he's pestering me. I tell him that I won't buy it. Then he pesters me more and then some negative feelings develop. Otherwise, any other contact or anything else, I think everything is ok. I look at people as human beings. At least I try to react to each situation.
- It depends on an individual. The ones from my block are really ok and there are no problems. These few kids, these three or four for whom you know what they look like, they are really terrible.
- When I see them, usually they're begging for money, but from door to door. Basically, my questions, they are not there to get money but to tell them to come the following day and I will prepare some clothes. And food, most often food. They don't want that. They are only after money. But we, of course, would not give money to them.
- I also know of a situation, a friend told me about a woman who begged for her child. The woman asked money for a sandwich and my friend said that she would buy her a sandwich in a shop and then the woman declined the offer.
- He cannot eat 100 sandwiches in one day, he can have only one sandwich a day. He needs money just like the rest of us. He has obligations to meet. Things he needs to buy or something else. Perhaps he needs money for the child and you want to give him a sandwich, of what use would that sandwich be?
- This whole culture of theirs which originates from India and implies many other things. It is so different that our people can hardly understand their view of the world. Because they have something that...
- To them it is normal. It is normal to beg. It is their job.

- It is normal for them to be outdoors on -10 degrees Celsius with a small baby wrapped in a blanket. That baby would not catch cold whereas we...
- A friend of mine lives near them, and it happens that when I look from my window at 6 a.m. a man is riding his motorbike with two small children and children don't wear shirts. It's already September... but they can take it. However, when they are 40-50 years old... they don't live as long as we do. It happens that their kidney, liver and such organs stop functioning.
- **Moderator: What about closer contacts, let's say in restaurants or in classes, at school, at work?**
- I wanted to say that I wonder when I see a young child begging, if he does not collect enough money that day, would someone reproach him.
- Like in a company, normally.
- I went to elementary school with a Rom guy, but he was no different than the rest of us. Nor did he show that he was different. And everybody said he neither begged, nor was impudent, nor violent.
- I think it is good that every child gets to know all kinds of people and to learn how to converse with people from all walks of life and to approach everyone as normal people. I think that's really needed and then adolescents would not make such excesses like when they go to Ribnjak to fight with anyone who is not like them. I think that's good. Just like every child should have friends among the rich and the poor.
- **Moderator: If several Roma families were to move to your neighborhood or your apartment building in the near future, what would your reaction be?**
- I would expect more Roma families to move in. Somehow I don't see only one family moving in. I always think of them as a bunch of families.
- I think their nomadic way of living demands it, because when you move to another town you cannot immediately have your own house, but the whole extended family comes and so there is a bunch of them. Croats and most other people do the same. You ask your relatives to help you. That's always been like that, only we look at it...
- If they come here and behave normally like the rest of us, then there is no difference. If they construct some shabby huts in front and scream/shout all the time, then of course it would not be all right.
- Also that they do not keep chickens, pigs or something similar.
- I think we should accept them the way they are. If we want to accept other cultures and be accepted the way we are, then we should not judge them if they are not like we. Instead, we should accept them as they are. That is the level of tolerance which is very low in Croats. Because, as soon as you are different, you are rejected.
- If you are a Rom and behave similarly to us. There are also Croats who behave a bit... some weirdo moves in to your neighborhood and makes stupid things, a person you just cannot deal with, someone who makes troubles. Again, it's all...
- I think this depends more on the person, it's not a Roma thing.
- There are many more Croats than the Roma who are like that. We don't even notice the Roma...
- If some Italian would come and behave in such a repulsive manner, of course I don't know who. I think there's no reason to make this distinction between a Rom and a non-Rom. If a Rom is a normal person, what then? Everything is ok.
- It is easier to judge someone if that someone is different from us. Such person is easier to notice and isolate from the environment.
- But let's say you can choose between an Englishman, Italian and a Rom to move into your building. I don't think anyone would choose a Rom. I can't be certain, but that's my opinion.
- The problem is that people think their property would immediately be worth less, that they would not be able to sell their house if they needed to sell. That they would not be able to sell their land, that financially they are at a loss, that their children are at a loss. Because Roma children are less educated and then children who go to the same class with them have to repeat the same thing over and over again because the Roma never study anything and don't do homework, and so parents feel that their children are getting less from school than parents would want them to get. And then they want to protect their children by transferring them to another class which is only justifiable from their point of view, but from the point of view of the society it is not justifiable.

- **Moderator: Do you feel you have anything in common with the Roma?**
 - Yes. We are all people.
 - Every love toward music, and I'm not talking about music they listen to. But that something to make you feel better.

- **Moderator: What do you have in common with the Roma?**
 - There are very few similarities.
 - If there were similarities, we would not make such differences.
- **Moderator: What are the differences?**
 - Big differences in the way of looking at the world. We are all integrated into that system. That system has no influence over them. To a Rom it's all the same, I mean it's not the same. But he can work on the solid waste deposit just the same as in a firm. That is the freedom we don't have. The freedom to be where he wants to be and do what he pleases without worrying what other people will think about him. That he doesn't worry like we do, what to us, what we to someone.
 - They live day by day.
 - They live each day whereas we live in the past, the whole system in the future.

- **Moderator: Do you think our children have things in common with Roma children?**
 - They do, children do.
 - Children are children.
 - Well, I'm not so certain, hygienic habits are different.
 - Perhaps our children, most of them, don't have to be outside and beg in winter in the cold. Also the begging, the concern whether they will have anything to eat. Again, the fact that they survive off begging and collecting scrap iron. To our child it's important to have a play-station at home. It's understood that he has bread and milk. It's something completely normal, whereas in their families...
 - The government always takes care of our children, whereas they don't have social rights, since they are constantly moving, then their children have nobody to take care of them. They have to get by this way or another. They will get by this way or another. Only, it might happen that people will ask to give him a mobile phone, and he has to get by since the child is forced to...

- **Moderator: Do you think the Roma would like to integrate more into the society?**
 - No.
 - No
 - No.

- **Moderator: What makes you think so?**
 - Because of their way of life. If they wanted to get more integrated they probably could, but I think it suits them like this.
 - Some of them succeed...
 - Those who want, they can. I don't think everyone succeeds, but all depends on how much one tries.
 - I don't think they want to get closer to us but to be closer to us, that we don't make such differences and have such prejudices toward them. I don't think their goals are to become bureaucrats, clerks. Instead, that they are not immediately regarded as thieves, or beggars for money. When I get on the tram, all older ladies hold tighter to their handbags.
 - I have an acquaintance that dates a Roma guy but cannot admit it to her parents.

- **Moderator: I would like you to be honest with me when I ask the following question. Do you think our society treats the Roma fairly?**
 - On the declarative level yes, but not in practice. What that means is that the impression from the media is how we want to help them, but I don't think there are any improvements in the field.

Either these people are not*** in the system, or the system is too complicated. To go from one office to another and demand their rights, that's the last thing they would do. They probably even don't know that they are entitled to a health care and welfare. That they should have rights regarding that.... I'm not sure...

- Well, even we have problems with it sometimes, let alone them. I know what it looks like when I need something and go from one office to another and the woman working there does not know what exactly I need but I should know it. How would a Rom know it?
- But if they move from one town to another and don't report residence, then they have no rights.
- I think it is done in the wrong way these days. Everybody's talking about integration. Let's integrate them, let's do this... it's a bit wrong to say that.
- I don't think we should integrate them, but accept them as a community.
- Since they live like they do, in their own way. Let them abide by laws as much as they can, nobody abides by laws fully. They break laws in their own way and that's it.

- **Moderator: Do you think that the Roma are different than other minorities in our country?**
- Yes.
- Yes.

- **Moderator: In what way?**
- By their way of living. If someone is Hungarian or Serbian or Bosnian, but if someone is a Rom you can feel a slight difference.

- **Moderator: Are there any similarities between them? Which ones?**
- They have a strong will to preserve their cultures and live their own way without integrating into the system. To preserve their own culture even though they don't have own civilization or some... instead they live that life, regardless of sufferings, poverty and everything else. They live and that's it. That's what makes them different from others, in my opinion. Because they do not wish to assimilate into the system like others but want to keep their own ways. I think it is fully fair that every community in Croatia has her ***. In fact, minorities represent the wealth of Croatia, not a problem as we believe.

The Government and the Roma

- **Moderator: Do you think the lives of Roma have improved in Croatia in recent years?**
- I think things remained the same.
- That's probably the impression based on the newspapers because some schools, one or two that exist in Zagreb. I don't think that before there existed a Roma school.
- I think there existed, but it was only their teachers who taught them. But there was something in Međimurje I think, where the majority of children were Roma children and then others expressed revolt saying they didn't want their children to be in same classes with the Roma etc. I think they are rather primitive. It's an ugly thing to say, but I don't know...
- They work by the program that they should. But then children who go to the same class with them are deprived of the education because they (the Roma) in eight grade can do only a simple math and our parents want their children to be preparing for the high school.
- The worst thing is that these parents are not doing it for these differences.
- I don't think they were looking at education and the quality of education but...
- It would be better if they would be looking at it.
- That's how parents reason. I am also in favor of children going to same classes, but a parent wants the best education for his child. If I were a parent and my child was in such a situation, I would also probably try to protect it. Not because I don't like the Roma, but because I would want the best possible education for my child. To get a good background for high-school and later on college.
- I might be mistaken, but I think it's not so important to them. To the majority of these parents that education... I read just the other day in newspapers about this husband and wife. The wife is I believe 15 and he is 17 and they already have 2 or 3 children. He is now attending an evening

school to be trained as a cook, but when they asked about the wife, what she would do with education, she only needs to know to write her name. In their culture education is not of primary importance at all. That's it... they are not even trying to put their children through school and things like that. Again, I say I think that applies to the majority.

- **Moderator: In your opinion, would it help society in general to help the Roma?**
- Yes.
- **Moderator: What makes you think so?**
- Because our tolerance toward others would become higher and the understanding that democracy in all aspects of the society should be allowed. It means if you have a catholic education in schools, then other communities should be allowed to have their instructions as well, not only the Catholic ones. It should not be seen as a major catastrophe if there is a request that some community has religious or any other type of instructions in school... that should not represent a problem to the society. It would help us to understand ourselves through understanding others. To understand what we are like toward others. Only then would we understand the main point/gist.
- I think it is again about financial resources because now every school, every religion...
- Yes, but you have to allow it because that's the point of democracy to allow everyone to have it because they are taxpayers.
- I don't think religion is an issue here because we don't have that many different religions here.
- There are; for example, I practice yoga. I read headlines in newspapers that compare yoga with drugs, the Catholic Church is getting weaker. Why wouldn't I want it, they wanted to introduce yoga in schools and all of a sudden Catholic Church protested that yoga is God knows what, but why wouldn't I want my child to practice yoga. There are many people who practice yoga. But it's not just about yoga; there are many other things that we should deal with. We show no will to let go of our ways and understand others, instead we impose our ways and reject others as we have always done.
- Well all right, that is a church matter. The Church is...
- Catholic Church is interfering too much with things that are its business and with things that are not its business.
- It actually is not interfering with things that are her business.
- It shows that tolerance in this country is at a very, very low level, much lower than we believe it to be. We as individuals are tolerant, but as a society we are very intolerant.
- **Moderator: Assuming that you think the lives of the Roma should be improved – who should be responsible?**
- I think it should be the Roma. They themselves should make that one step further in order to get closer to us. At least in one part in which they can, at least one bit that...
- **Moderator: What should they do?**
- I don't know, introduce themselves to other people. So that people understand they are not just people who don't wash, but present their culture and all other things that make them Roma. I believe every community has something to offer, but people see a lot of negative things and the general impression of the Roma is formed based on the negative.
- And generally regarding education for their children, for example when their child is 7 or 8 years old, they should enroll it in school. I don't think there are all that many cases when a Rom would take a child to school that the school would not admit that child. On other hand, the number of Roma to go to school is also very small.
- **Moderator: What are some ways in which we could help the Roma?**
- First, we should approach them as the social problem, but they should take care of themselves. To preserve their tradition. Yes, exactly what you mentioned, that they are not dirty and such things.
- I think the government should help the Roma to help themselves in those segments in which they want to be helped. And not that we create programs for them which are not possible to carry out. Because they in their community should identify their own problems. Because often people create programs, but don't know what the Roma live like and what they want in life. Perhaps they don't want...

- Well, if the government starts some program, it will do it in the wrong way.
- **Moderator: Do you think it should be the Government's responsibility to spend extra resources to help the Roma?**
 - Financial resources are not the main problem, it's more the approach. They can invest loads of money in education, but there will be no results.
 - We have "educated" people who cannot find a job, how would the Roma find one. What would a Rom do when he completes school?
 - People would rather employ a Croat than a Rom because of the intolerance toward the Roma. I believe that's how it always happens. Because people regard the Roma and other people, I think this is often the case with the Roma.
- **Moderator: Do you think government should help the Roma less than it helps other groups that suffer from poverty and other minority groups?**
 - It shouldn't. That would then again be a type of discrimination, if the government would help them less or more. Regarding social issues, all people should be equal.
- **Moderator: What about the local community, what could be done at the local level to improve the lives of the Roma in your opinion?**
 - There are so many Croats who need help. We don't know how to help our own people, let alone others....
 - What you've said, equal help to everyone, I agree with that. But take for instance a person who is trying to find a job, someone who lost a job, and now you give the same amount of financial assistance to that person and to a person who's sitting and doing nothing. The first person will be furious and with a reason. Some distinction should be made regarding that.
 - Assistance should not be in the same amount, but according to the needs and wants.
 - You're looking purely financially.
 - A Rom cannot become a director, it depends on his qualifications, whether he can get such a job.
 - There are Roma who are directors and very rich people.
 - I agree with that, but we are now talking about the poor Roma. Leave the rich ones alone now. They are doing fine. They are certainly doing better than we are.
- **Moderator: What do you think the overall unemployment rate is of the Roma in our country?**
 - 90 %
 - 80 – 90%
- **Moderator: That's right, 89%. Why do you think it's this high?**
 - This way of life suits them.
 - They are not trying hard. When we lose jobs and sources of income, we eat our hearts out. They are not like that. It does not bother them that a child must go to school, that it must find a job. To them it's important to find out about the collection of large refuse items before others.
 - From what I've seen, they don't really feel like working. A Roma woman came to my former boss who is a really free-spending man. He told her he would give her 200 Kuna if she would clean his window. She told him no way and left. I said I would clean that window for 200 Kuna. She turned around and left. Such examples provide ground for prejudices.
- **Moderator: Other countries have made great efforts to integrate minorities into communities for reasons of equality and because they believe that when people live side by side, and get to know each other, fears and suspicions subside. How do you feel about this regarding the minorities in our country? Do you think fears and suspicions subside when people live side by side?**
 - It would take many years.
 - They should prove to us that they deserve a chance. Only, the way they live and reason say that it's better to beg people for money. In comparison with other poor countries, we Croats are not really that poor. We belong to the upper division. Where they came from, that whole civilization heritage that they brought from India, it is not all that important to them. They don't consider it important to go to schools, when they are bored of one place they move to a new place. I don't

think it's important to them to integrate. You cannot integrate if you live like a nomad. What would it look like if you integrated in every place you lived at, you would not know where you belong? The best way to integrate is by not integrating at all.

- **Moderator: And for the Roma, do you believe that our country would benefit if the Roma would integrate?**
- I think it wouldn't. That culture of theirs should be a wealth to us, not poverty. They make us wealthier, so that we have all these things...
- **Moderator: Do you think a “separate but equal” system – as related to living and school and health care etc., may be a better way to move forward?**
- Definitely not for health care. Only if it would be in a Roma settlement
- Depends on segments of their culture. Their culture should be nurtured. Similarly to what Croats do in foreign countries, like Croatian communities where they gather. As has been settled in other European countries, there would be more tolerance.
- These other minorities are fighting for own schools. The Roma are not really interested in that. If we establish schools for them, then it will be imposed upon them.

The Decade of the Roma

- **Moderator: Have any of you heard of any national efforts to improve the lives of the Roma?**
- I think Vesna Škare –Ožbolt said she would hire 30 lawyers to work on the Roma issues and help them. That's what I've heard of recently.
- **Moderator: Others, have you heard of anything ...?**
- Nothing, except for the sewage system and street lighting issues. Other than that, nothing particular...
- **Moderator: What about any international efforts or EU campaigns?**
- I heard that basically there was a pressing to solve the Roma issue and to give them all the social rights and try to help them because obviously they themselves could not help.
- **Moderator: In your opinion, how should they be helped? Based on your observations, what should be the specific goals of such a project in Croatia?**
- Certain things should be explained.
- The project should start from the very bottom. They should be completely changed which would be a very hard thing to do.
- They should be explained that there's a will to help them. And then they should say what exactly they would like, what would be great for them. They should be instructed where to turn to if something does not suit them, so they know exactly how and where to, so they can identify the starting points. Then they can act on their own.
- There are some Roma communities to which they can go for help.
- This is about helping people who live like nomads. So they can register in Dubrovnik even though they live in Zagreb, and have social rights, and that there exist bureaus which would take care of a certain number of people. That way they would be able to move within the country like we do.
- **Moderator: Are there any other specific goals, activities that should be included in the efforts?**
- From what I've seen on the television, I have no idea what they actually want.
- They can't pay for their utility bills and so their hygienic standards are below every minimum. I think government could help at least with that, somehow finance it, at least so they would not be so obviously dirty. I believe they would want to be able to take a shower from time to time; everyone loves to have a shower.
- I don't think they are much of consumers.
- You said before that they didn't care how much money they had, well I don't think that's true.
- Not so globally.
- I don't think there's anyone who doesn't care about that.
- They are not after building a huge villa and having a pool. They need resources for a normal life.

- I saw Šaban work hard from dawn to dusk. I don't think any of use would clean windshields from 6 am till midnight. I've never spoken with him, but a neighbor told me Šaban had 5 children. He said children need to have something to eat, they need this and that. He is by no means taking it lightly.
- By some logic of mine, why does he have 5 children? My logic would be, if I am not financially in good standing, why have 5 children?
- When you think of it, no electricity, no water, no television, what do you occupy yourself with when you go to bed? So all these poor communities have high birth rate.
- Would you want this for your children?
- No, I would not, but that's different.
- If you are a human being, you can think about it a bit.
- I know this man, a Rom. He has two wives, two houses, one next to the other, one wife lives in one house, the other wife lives in the second house. In one house he has 7 children, in another 8. He shares his time between houses.
- The children are his treasure.
- Children are a treasure.
- It's not the same to have one and seven children.
- **Moderator: Have any of you heard of the “The Decade of the Roma Inclusion”?**
- It sounds familiar to me.
- There was something on TV, on central news. There were some gatherings. Mesić (the President of Croatia) was present.
- **Moderator: What did you hear?**
- I don't know exactly, but there was some initiative.
- I know about it only by name

- **I will give to you now a little background on the Decade of the Roma Inclusion and I'd like to get your thoughts and reactions.**

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

- **Moderator: What is your reaction to this effort?**
- The question is who will do it and whether that's imposed upon the Roma.
- **Moderator: To what degree do you believe it's necessary?**
- I don't think that's important to them. I think this effort is necessary. They should be given an opportunity.
- Have you talked to the Roma about that?
- **Moderator: Not yet, but we'll have a Roma focus group as well.**
- You should have had that one first and then tell us some things because we really don't know much.
- **Moderator: We are interested in your thoughts about this topic.**
- And we are interested in theirs.
- **Moderator: Fine, we are interested in theirs as well, but also in yours...**
- Perhaps they know how to help us, how to change us. We're fully indebted – loans and current account overdrafts. Everybody works 20 hours. How can one help these people?
- What I'm interested in is how many of them have a job. It's a strawberry picking season. For instance, you have a farmer come and say he needs 20 people, I would really like to know how many of them would go and work 10 hours a day for 150 Kuna.
- In a Slavonia village during harvesting/picking seasons, you work the whole day under the sun for 80 Kuna. There are also some Roma families there, but they don't work in fields. Our Croatian families do.

- I know several Roma who went as season harvesting/picking workers to foreign countries where they worked for higher wages. They probably have their own calculations.
- **Moderator: If there was a referendum and you had to vote yes or no to this effort, which way would you vote?**
 - What does no mean? That you are not for it.
 - I would vote yes, if the other option is no effort at all.
 - Yes.
 - I would cross out
 - And not waste heaps of money if they are not interested in.
 - Let them create projects which they themselves consider necessary. Because they know how we treat them.
- **Moderator: If you knew that this effort was going to cost 1-2 million Euros a year in the next ten years, would that be too much money?**
 - No.
 - Who's financing it?
 - If the World Bank would finance it, then ok. If this effort would cost our government additional million or two, do you consider it a lot?
 - I don't know how big our budget is.
 - 63 billions of Kuna
 - A little bit under one billion of Euro
 - It's in that range, I am not sure about the exact figure. Between 60 and 70
 - That's a lot.
- **Moderator: And if it would cost more, for instance between 10 and 20 million of Euro, which way would you vote?**
 - Depends on how big their community is. We should see how many of them are there. And then, based on the size of the community, I would allocate resources to realize the goals. If resources are not sufficient, the project will not yield results.
 - Here, whenever something is to be done, when there are some works, there is something fishy and the job is given to someone through a questionable practice
 - Furthermore, they try to make savings on some materials and houses begin deteriorate after only 5 years
 - Other minorities might express revolt if they don't get assistance
- **Moderator: Do you believe there's a way that you and your community could make a difference in light of a program of this nature?**
 - What do you mean by our community?
- **Moderator: Your environment. Local communities or you personally. Is there some way you could join the effort and help?**
 - Financially.
- **Moderator: What could you do?**
 - I could teach their children, no problem, in my free time.
 - Humanitarian initiatives have always been a good thing, that was always good for me too.
- **Moderator: How might this effort help our country, if at all?**
 - I think it would improve the image of Croatia in the world.
- **Moderator: Do you think it might hurt our country?**
 - No, I think most people should not fear it, it should be a higher goal than other issues.
- **Moderator: I would like to read to you some of the specific goals that governments are thinking about related to this effort. Briefly, what are your thoughts?**

Education

- **Reduced price for preschool programs/books/transport/school lunch for poor Roma children – what do you think/how do you feel about that?**
- Ok.
- **Moderator: How important is that?**
- Very important.
- **Why?**
- Because they could not afford paying for it given their financial standing.
- Some could, some not.
- I don't quite agree.
- **Moderator: Can you explain?**
- That reduced price, that's not going to make a difference to them. Even if it's a reduced price, they still would not, if they pay less that still does not make any difference to them.
- Regarding that we would differ from the very starting line, why would my child pay much more than some Rom for his child.
- All right, but they don't have their own country.
- But do we have privileges abroad. I don't know how it's arranged abroad
- Those who are poorer, whose parents earn 2000 Kuna, and those whose parents earn 25 000 Kuna, that should be the criterion. Not just you are Roma so you pay less, and you are a Croat, albeit a very poor one, but that does not count, because you are a Croat you will pay more, that would not be just.
- Very likely the idea is to stimulate them, to make them more interested in, that's the sole goal.
- Modern children are much more progressive than children before, they all know how much something costs, how much you'll have to pay for something.
- **Including elements of Roma culture into the school curriculum**
- That can be done.
- **Moderator: Why yes?**
- Well, that sentence says it all, you include it in the curriculum and other children learn something about it.
- But also some things just for them, for instance how it used to be that you had catechism only in churches, so can they now be offered some special classes.
- It would be good if my child would go one day to some Roma performance so these performances are not only for the Roma, they know their own culture, they don't need performances to know it.
- That's right, presenting their culture in a good light, not always in bad one.
- **Loans and scholarships so Roma youth can attend university**
- Terrible.
- Yes.
- **Moderator: Why horrible?**
- I'm not ok with that.
- **Moderator: Why?**
- Well, loans and scholarships to the Roma? That implies full-time jobs and they take it one day at a time, a loan is something you pay 100 units of something and several years down the road you pay back 200.
- **Moderator: What about loans?**
- I will borrow as much as I need to pay back, that's ok. A loan is not really.
- We should help the poor, but they must pay back.
- So what, you will give him a loan, but what if he won't be able to pay it back, what will you do to him?
- They don't have these connections like we do. They will immigrate to another country and that's it. Because when you don't have 20 Kuna, you can have a benefit to pay only half or only one third, you can't care less about the reduced price since you don't have even one Kuna.
- The bank will not give it to you unless you have a security.

- If you are unemployed, no regular income, you have to pay electricity, water and other bills, otherwise you get disconnected from these utilities, then you have no conditions for going to school, acquiring knowledge
- Scholarship is a different issue. It's a step further.

Employment

- **Micro-loans for Roma to start businesses**
 - It's an ok offer, but it calls for a considerable control.
 - If anyone wants it, let them take it.
 - I find the idea a bit unstable.
 - Because there are some people among them, some rich people who also have some businesses and let them expand businesses, then they would ask among their own kind, but not give loan to just anyone who walks into the bureau, hey here's a loan for you, would you like to start a business, what kind of business?
 - I saw on television, long time ago, a report on this one Roma guy who started by selling some figurines on Dolac that he himself made. The man now lives in an enormously big house, with marble inside, and he has a number of people working for him. J
 - If you are resourceful from an early age, no wonder some people become rich.
 - Such people don't need this program, neither micro nor macro loans. T
- **Enacting very strict anti-discrimination laws that fine employers for hiring and promotion of discrimination practices**
 - I find it a bit illogical.
 - That did not work anywhere, if someone does not want to employ a Roma person, he will not do it and I don't think there will ever be a law which could force him to do it. That's an American thing and I think it cannot be enacted.
 - You cannot force anyone.
 - Sometimes even young women cannot get a job.
 - They can always find reasons for not hiring a Rom.
 - I believe it depends on whether it's a state-owned enterprise or a private company. If I own a company, what if I want my man to have high qualifications
 - The disabled, although the law says you have to have a certain number of disabled people, deaf and blind, working in the public service sector, that's not enacted in practice. In past times there were such people in the public service sector, both the deaf and the blind, but the system is not sensible enough toward such people who cannot find jobs but are able to perform certain types of jobs.

Health

- **Free vaccines for Roma children**
 - Yes.
- **Moderator: How important is that?**
 - Very, given poor conditions in which they live.

Ambassadors of change

- **Moderator: Let's talk about some of the leader and prominent organizations in our country. Can you name any prominent Roma leaders?**
 - There was this guy... something beginning with S, I know what he looks like, but I have no idea what his name is.
 - He is kind of a big person.
 - I don't know.
- **Moderator: Do you mean Kasum Cana?**
 - Yes, yes, Kasum, silly me beginning with S, it's not S, but there is S in Kasum.

- **Moderator: And what about non-Roma? Can you name some prominent leaders in our country? Which of them do you think would be trustworthy and persuasive spokespersons on issues related to “The Decade of the Roma Inclusion”?**
- Puhovski, from Croatian Helsinki Committee.
- **Moderator: What were the reasons for naming these people?**
- What he talks about, he talks.
- Human rights, they should have human rights, because I think they have been denied basic human rights, the right to work, the right to education, and the right to housing. So it's directly related to the activities of the Helsinki Committee, they could do it.
- Though he has already spoken about these issues, if only he would be the person for that.
- **Moderator: Is there any other prominent leader?**
- Perhaps some association that would deal with such issues.
- **Moderator: Can you name any other person other than Puhovski?**
- Politicians are relatively unpopular, therefore they're out.

Messages

- **Our country is on the road to prosperity. We must make sure that this prosperity is shared by all. Moderator: What do you think about this statement? How persuasive is it?**
- I think every person decides for himself/herself how big your share will be in it. These are your abilities as a person and you yourself decide how prosperous you will be in the society. I think this is the same for everyone.
- **Moderator: Very well, what do others say?**
- Regarding «our country is on the road to prosperity», who says it is, and also why would we have to be sure that it is shared by all, why would all share it. Perhaps some people did not deserve to share it.
- **Moderator: The next statement reads: «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. « Again, please rate a statement and tell me briefly your thoughts. How correct is this statement, how much in fact does it reflect badly on our country?**
- This one is correct, this is true. .
- I think they are a community which has a poor living in this country, and it does reflect badly because they are part of our communities, if we don't divide communities into Roma and others. I don't know how large it is. I think it reflects more on the Roma, particularly on them, but also on the whole community because they are part of the community.
- **Moderator: Do you others agree?**
- Yes, I think that from the global perspective their abject poverty does not affect much our image as seen from outside. I mean, if someone sees how the Roma live, that does not affect much the image of Croatia.
- They probably also have the same problem in their own country.
- This part yes, but this other – this constant discrimination. We have to take into consideration the poverty and this constant discrimination.
- Yes, this can always be better, it can always be better.
- Or worse.
- **Moderator: «The way the Roma have been treated in this country is simply wrong. It makes me ashamed and I want it to change. » What causes confusion?**
- I'm not ashamed, but I want it changed. Also, it is the wrong way. (x2)
- Because, if it does not become better for these people, and we are trying to help them, and there is no improvement. It's a wrong way.
- **Moderator: But you personally are not ashamed of the way?**
- No.
- I have little influence.
- **Moderator: But you would want it to change?**

- Yes.
- **Moderator: «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. »**
- Yes.
- I would not say to every person.
- To those who want it.
- And deserve it.
- I think the government should help the Roma a bit more since they don't have their own country. They don't have anyone else to help them, I think they should be given more opportunities. Because we Croats get help from Croatia, Hungarians from Hungary, Germans from Germany, but they get help from nobody.
- **Moderator: «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. »**
- At school.
- It's not really likely they would prosper like our children.
- Upbringing is important for them to prosper like our children, they should have upbringing similar to ours, and they should integrate into the community.
- I think it is already in their genes.
- Not that, it has nothing to do with it.
- I think it has.
- If you look at how persuasive this is, it's less persuasive than I feel and I doubt it will be done.
- Adopt a Roma child and bring it up the right way.
- **Moderator: You think it will not?**
- I believe in that.
- I would not agree completely.
- If the question is whether something is very persuasive, to me it is not, for them to have the same opportunities to prosper like our children, only if they are given a chance. Because discrimination has always been part of the society, since the society exists.
- I think some of their traits are hereditary...
- I believe all children are the same when they are born.
- I am talking about intelligence.
- Hold on, let someone give birth to little Roma children and then have them grow up in a home of a businessman. Do you believe they would live as nomads?
- They would not live as nomads.
- It all depends on the environment.
- I think we all have the same starting positions, but the society in which we live shape us as human beings. Meaning, if you had an opportunity to study in college and if your parents expected things from you, to study. Then, be you a Rom or anyone else, you would have the same outcome. That has nothing to do, but that's another story.
- **Moderator: «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 than in the long run. «**
- It depends on how resources are allocated. It does not mean all of us should pay more taxes.
- More does not mean better. I want to say that the way in which they will be helped is more important than the amount of money to be invested in projects which never materialize.
- **Moderator: What do others have to say? How true do you think this is?**
- I don't think it will cost that much more, if it's from the budget. The whole budget is always spent, we will pay the same amount of taxes.
- I am not fine with this at all.
- **Moderator: Why?**
- So all taxpayers will pay higher taxes. How? Does it mean there will be more of them? Second, if I know something I will help educate the Roma and help them rescue from the poverty. Education, rescuing them from poverty.

- I don't think only education matters, discrimination is not only economic, you can have an educated man but with prejudices and he would not employ a Rom, but someone else. It's not just money.
- So this is about helping Roma exclusively through educating them, but nothing about giving them work.
- So it means we should give money and then everything would be ok, well, I don't think that's how it's going to be.
- These are two separate issues; this should be about education and rescuing them from poverty.
- There are also many very rich Albanians, but they are mocked at for their way of speaking, they could be richer than all of us, but to no avail when people perceive them like this and can hardly wait for an opportunity to make fun of someone.
- **Moderator: «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 before. » What is the problem?**
- Nothing
- These questions are not really good. I don't know what to circle, one or ten.
- Helping the Roma advance and integrate is quite simply the right thing to do – no.
- **Moderator: Why not?**
- Let them integrate if they want. This would mean we decide for them and they would be integrated this way or the other, this other is not an option. We draw a program, we put it into a wording and then you can have this and this if you want, helping them. I don't think that's how it should be done.
- We should turn them into us, and that's not what they want.
- The way of integrating, come on one more candidate for a loan. If you will behave like this, I will help you, if you will do this and this, then we will not help you. So this helping them integrate will be simply the right thing, to me that's, I won't use a harsh word. This other thing, we are an unjust society, if we continue to treat them... that's true.
- **Moderator: «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.**
- We are back to the issue of imposing this on them, if they don't want it, what are you to do then, ban them from the country so we become a super country.
- A true sign of a modern country is actually that what's not been written.
- No country is modern because in each society people are discriminated against. In the States it's the Black, there Asians, here the Roma. Therefore, this is not a sign of a modern country. Because discrimination is present in all, starting with women, color of one's skin, through all types. I don't know what to circle here, that is a true sign of a modern country, but this is not a sign.
- It should have been written "it should be".
- I am kind of optimistic.
- If you ask me, we've talked too much about the Roma, whereas we ourselves are not doing best. I understand that they are worse off and all that.
- **Moderator: This is the end. Is there anything else you would like to say about the topic we've discussed?**
- I saw a report about the Roma on TV. People living in that place to which the Roma moved complained that their property lost value. There was an interview with a gentleman, a Rom, who said that there were 17 of them, three adults and thirteen "pieces" of young children. So he counts his children as you count furniture. This is their attitude toward children and I think many of their problems lie in it. To them children are workers who work for them, instead of being their children to whom they will give love and everything else so that they develop into normal people. I think the way they treat children is a big problem and children end up with no wish or desire to advance, but follow the footsteps of their parents. I really don't know how they could be helped unless...
- Well, they've not seen a better world but their immediate surrounding, people don't treat them particularly nicely, and so it's only logical that you have an aversion toward the non-Roma, the same as non-Roma have aversion toward them. If someone thinks you a thief your entire life, as a dirty person, as a good-for-nothing, you will become one, that's a classic theory of labeling and it is true. Therefore, that should be changed.

- First, the way they write in black chronicle should be changed, that's the attitude of the media. If there was a theft, it should be that a man stole and not a Rom by this and this name. So what if it was a Rom, Croats also steal.
- You saw this girl that was raped in Gospić, she is black and so there was all sort of information in the media. It shows that discrimination is present on all levels, not just against the Roma.
- That's it.
- Against the Serbs, against anyone who is different. For example, because I do yoga people label me without even knowing what it is. It exists in all society levels and that makes our society relatively non-tolerant, probably due to ignorance. That's why there should be more cultural events, to present themselves in a good light, not only spitting in a coffee and such things. People in Zagreb don't see them because they live on the outskirts of the city because they don't want them here.