

## **Situation of Roma in Bulgaria - United Nations Development Programme National Report**

### ***1. Introductory background: Brief historical notes about Roma in Bulgaria***

Roma are considered to have settled in the Bulgarian lands during the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Sources show that a great part of the Gypsies settled in the Balkans under Ottoman rule as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century and they had permanent homes. They practiced different trades but mainly those who worked for the Ottoman army enjoyed tax privileges, e.g. guns transportation, the army supply, musicians, trumpeters, craftsmen, etc. At the same time, a great number of Roma subsisted by agriculture participating basically in the season agricultural activities (hoeing, sowing, harvesting). The settled way of life led to intensive everyday relations with the local population, to mutual knowledge of each other and inter-influence of their cultures, to gradual rapprochement of their way of life - a prerequisite for their better acceptance and gradual integration in the Bulgarian society (Ilona Tomova, 2000:13, IMIR's archive).

As early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century the share of the Gypsy Muslims increased compared to the number of Christians. Obviously, the basic reason for the change of their religious affiliation was the economic constraint and the desire to enjoy the social privileges of Muslims in the Ottoman Empire (Ivanov, 1996).

In spite of some restrictions, the state of the Roma in the Ottoman Empire was incomparably more favorable than the position of their confrères in Western and Central Europe where they were subjected to systematic persecution, killing and assimilation. The slave status of Roma in Wallachia and Moldova increased sharply in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was preserved until the middle of 1860s. Against this background the preservation of language, culture and the traditional lifestyle of the prevailing part of Roma in the Bulgarian lands was feasible and a realistic option.

The centuries-old co-habitation of Bulgarians with Roma within the Ottoman Empire led to the appearance of a flexible system of social regulators for their interrelations targeted at widening the good-neighborly contacts and the reduction of the probability of a destructive conflicts outburst. The successful adaptation of Roma to the economic life was conducive to this.

After the Liberation (1878) the process of Roma integration in the Bulgarian society kept on running at a different speed and with some inconsistency. Under the influence of the socio-economic changes in the country the tendencies for Roma to settle as well as to find themselves included in a broader scale in agricultural activities were gaining momentum. This contributed to a change of some crafts that were essential for them in the past. Trades fell into crisis but, in return for it, the number of Roma who worked in industrial enterprises increased. Thus, for example, in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a traditional stratum of Roma textile workers was created in the town of Sliven whose descendants are famous even today for their labor discipline and strive for education. A lot of Roma worked in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in brickyards, in the tobacco industry, in the sphere of construction and in road and railway building. The percentage of the literate Roma increased, especially among the young men from the groups living among the Bulgarian Christians (Tomova, 2000:16, IMIR's archive).

The first Gypsy choirs and amateur theater groups emerged after the First World War. The Roma cultural centers in Sofia, Sliven, Shumen, Varna, Lom, etc. carried out an active educational and cultural activity.

As early as 1940 Roma in Bulgaria became victims of a number of discriminatory actions. They were forbidden to visit the central regions of the capital and the big towns, nor were they allowed to command the services of the urban transport. Their food rations strongly decreased. Some Roma from Sofia and other big towns were sent to labor camps. Although Bulgaria was an ally to Nazi Germany it did not allow its Jews and Gypsies to be deported to the death camps or to be killed because of their ethnic affiliation.

During the communist regime a number of inconsistent measures against the Roma were taken which had a contradictory effect on the community. Anyway, most of the activities in the field of education, housing, health protection and culture are interpreted even today as positive achievements for the Roma community and that is why some of the Bulgarian Roma have been permanently well-disposed to the left parties, successors of the former communist party. According to some data from a survey conducted in 1980 almost 84% of the Roma at the age of 16 through 60 "belong to the permanently employed in one or another economic organization", which actually means that part of the women exercised their legal right for a paid leave while bringing up a child to the age of three if they had worked at least seven days during their pregnancy. 88% of Roma men had been permanently employed. Today, 12 years after the fall of the communist regime, some of the Roma families subsist by the pensions of those who worked during the time of the previous rule.

## ***II. Demographic state of Roma minority in Bulgaria***

### ***Number***

The specificity in Roma behavior during the census campaigns is that they do not declare their real identity but the one they have a preference for. The possibility for a free self-identification distorts the real data on the number of the Roma community and it also leads to changes in data on the number of the other ethnic groups.

According to some free lance experts on minority studies the complicated socio-economic situation in this country and the delicate geo-political situation in the Balkans as a whole, require a precise demographic picture of Bulgaria, especially in regard to the strength and the regional distribution of the minority communities.

The exact statistic data is still more indispensable for the central and local executive authorities when they prepare and distribute their annual budgets especially in regard to those budget items referring to social assistance, employment, education and health protection.

According to data from the latest census in January 2001 Roma in Bulgaria are 365,797 people, i.e. about 50 000 more as compared to the data from the census in December 1992. This gave the National Statistical Institute (NSI) the grounds to issue a statement that the only ethnic group in Bulgaria which has increased during the ten-year period is the group of the Roma and the reason for this is the comparatively higher birth-rate among them.

In fact, due to some objective reasons, neither of the announcements of the National Statistical Institute corresponds to reality. Right after the 1992 census, according to the expert estimations of Bulgarian sociologists, the social and the employment services, as well as some European researchers on Roma,

their number varied between 600 000 and 750 000 people. By the end of 2001 the expert evaluations (data from sociological polls, labor offices, social assistance service and Ministry of Interior) varied within the same range without any essential change. Regarding the birth rate among the Roma community, it has been affected by the general tendency in this country and it has slowly decreased since the beginning of the 1990s, but at the same time the death-rate has increased among this ethnic community.

In 2000 the average life birth coefficient was 7,9 per 1000 population, while for the Roma group this coefficient decreased from 13,0 to 10,0 and even less. While the average coefficient for infant mortality (children under the age of 1) is between 16,0 and 14,0 per 1000 persons, with Roma population living in municipalities hit hard by the crisis, this coefficient varies between 20,0 and 33,0. Some specialists even claim that from the end of the 1990s a tendency towards an increase in the birth-rate among the Roma community started again. Roma react to the extremely difficult economic situation and the discriminatory attitude towards them in a way that is traditional for the threatened minority communities of pre-modern type - by an increased birth-rate.

As the data from the Bulgarian segment of the regional Roma survey shows, the average number of children in Roma families in Bulgaria is 2,64 in 2001 (table 1), this number increasing with the advance in age, with people up to incomplete primary education and with the poorest ones - up to 3,23.

**Table 1: How many children do you have**

	Age				Education		Number of household items			Total
	15-25	26-40	41-55	Above 55	Up to incomplete primary	Primary and above	1-6	7-9	9 and >	
Mean	2,53	3,17	3,87	3,21	2,22	3,23	2,47	2,10	2,64	
Valid N	N=183	N=337	N=268	N=190	N=415	N=558	N=375	N=291	N=314	N=980

There are two reasons for this recorded increase of Roma population - according to A.Zhelyazkova's analysis - by 50 000 (Zheliyazkova, 2001). The first is the changed prestige of Roma identity. For the past 5-8 years **to identify as Roma and to belong to the Roma community** has gained a higher prestige. Roma are aware that the international institutions are interested in them, that they launch specialized funds to support them, and that national institutions and society as a whole are forced to pay attention to the Roma and their problems.

On the other hand, the formation of an underclass among the Roma community, especially in the town ghettos, additionally stratifies the community. In this context the choice of Roma identification is also a demonstration of a belonging to the community as an attempt to resist the rejection of the macro-society.

That is the reason why thousands of Roma preferred to state their real identity instead of someÿ preferred by them so far, i.e. a Turk or a Bulgarian (depending on their affiliation to the Muslim or Christian confession).

According to some anthropologists' data from 2001 only 12% of the inhabitants of a Roma colony in the town of Sliven identified themselves as non-Roma, i.e. Bulgarians or Turks, and more than 72% declared their Roma identity. In this particular region, eight years ago, 40% of the Roma chose the Bulgarian or the Turkish identity.

According to the data from the Bulgarian segment of the Regional survey on Roma in the five countries in Central and Eastern Europe conducted in the end of 2001, 85% identified as Roma, the basic factor for preserving the identity being their residence in a remote (isolated) region and in a small settlement (a town, or a village). The next but less important factors are the differences in education and prosperity.

The number of those who do not feel themselves Roma is small (and this not representative). Despite that however, it gives certain idea of the reasons for the non-Roma choice on the issue of self-identification. 51% of those 14%, who do not identify as Roma, self-identify as Bulgarians, 46% as Turks and about 35% as Bulgarian-Muslims. In most cases these are Roma living within (or close to) the ethnic group they tend to self-identify with (respectively Turkish or Bulgarian). Roma who self-identify as Bulgarians have higher education than those choosing other (Turkish or Bulgarian Muslims) identities. Supporting the above hypothesis is the fact that all respondents having chosen Bulgarian identity live in the capital.

Territory is the basic differentiating factor followed by the level of education. This division in identification between Bulgarians and Turks is also determined by the religion professed by Roma, but most of all, by the ethnic and religious affiliation of the surrounding majority.

During the latest 2001 census the number of people who declared their Roma affiliation went down by 23%. In the capital alone, 18% of the Roma have not declared ethnic affiliation - identity is vague, unclear or unimportant, and 11% of the younger Roma aged between 15 - 25 did not take part in the census.

The second reason for the apparent increase of Roma population is the lower intensity of the mechanical decrease (external migration) of the population.ÿ Bulgarian, Turkish and Jewish communities are intensively leaving this country because of the heavy economic crisis and poverty. Roma are doing so as well, but with a lower "success rate" due to their marginalization and extreme poverty, i.e. very often they are sent back to the country.

2002 data shows that Roma are not very mobile as a whole and almost 72% were born in the same place or in the neighborhood where they live now. It is only ¼ of the Roma interviewed that are mobile in terms of territory but most of them lead a settled mode of life. Women are much more mobile because they change their place of residence after they get married, the same being true for people from villages - 39%. Unlike women, about 4/5 of the men living in a municipal town, in the capital or in an isolated quarter within the town remain there.

According to data of the National Statistical Institute about 86% of the Roma have declared that they do not intend to move to another settlement in the near future (the respective share for Bulgarians is 79%,

and for Turks - slightly over 82%). This actually is a realistic assessment for lack of opportunities to move to another place.

According to a 2,5% sample of the National Statistical Institute by 1.3.2001 the bigger part of all Roma migrants moved from cities to villages and from villages to other villages. According to this data villages are the settlements preferred by Roma during their internal migrations and migration from towns to villages is mostly pronounced for Roma among all ethnic groups in Bulgaria. This is a major finding given the opportunities for employment in agriculture and possibilities for subsistence agriculture as survival strategies. If this tendency proves to be stable, it should receive the necessary attention and support from the government (access to land for Roma families settling in rural areas, access to working capital, training in agritechnical skills etc.).

While studying the migration processes it is important to know Roma's evaluations on settlements which are reduced, in general, to such characteristics as "creation of appropriate conditions for labor activity", "material and living security", "child upbringing and education", etc. As a whole, however, Roma have a more negative assessment on life conditions in the settlements than all other ethnic groups. This is due to the poor opportunities of Roma to profit from the existing potential of the settlements (data of the National Statistical Institute).

### *Attitudes to emigration*

Regardless of the difficulties, which Roma face after leaving Bulgaria, there exist explicit dispositions among them that they must leave Bulgaria in order to find an economic and social alternative in Europe. Of course, a great part of them will not be able to make these attitudes true because of poverty and the objective impossibility to implement such worldly plans.

According to specialists' prognosis 20-30% of those Bulgarian Roma who have some education, qualifications and development prospects will make an attempt to leave this country in one way or another (Such are about 30% of the entire Roma community in the country).

Further to the NSI's data from the 2001 census /2,5% sample/ a prognosis has been developed stating that 6% of the Roma population will be among the future emigrants from this country.

An important fact is that among Roma in Bulgaria, where settling dates back to the period of the Ottoman Empire and the last Roma-nomads (about 30-50 000) settled during the 1950s, a process has gradually developed for the past ten years, which we can conditionally call "renomadization". Being shocked and out of necessity Roma come back to the traditional for their community value, i.e. free mobility in order to make a living. This *renomadization* started with their brutal and ill-considered social and economic marginalization, especially for the rural Roma after adopting the Law for restitution of agrarian lands. It finds expression in the movement of the unknown number of Roma families from villages to towns and vice versa trying to survive, in their illegal crossing of the borders trying to reach neighboring or more remote countries for "black business", and their already traditional trespassing of borders moving to the desired destination - France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Great Britain, Germany, etc. "Renomadization" is an additional factor, which makes it impossible for statisticians and census takers to adequately present the number of Roma in Bulgaria. It also should be treated in the framework of the possible migration to rural areas with settlement (and employment in agriculture sector) as a sustainable option for poverty alleviation.

### ***Family structure in the Roma community***

According to Bulgarian legislation, in exceptional circumstances citizens above the age of 16 but below 18 may get married provided parental consent is explicitly declared.

The main part of marriages among Roma occur at the age of 15-20. It is not rare to see marriages contracted under the age of 15. According to 1995 IMIR's research data, 40% of the Roma get married before they reach the age of 16, 32% marry at the age of 17-18, and 22% marry between the age of 19 and 22 (Tomova, 1995: 33-46). This data is generally supported by the results of the regional Roma survey, which show that 54% of the young aged between 15-25 are married. Compared with the small city and village twice as many live in the capital alone.

According to another IMIR's survey conducted by sociologists in 1999-2000 57% of the group of the 17-29 years old respondents got married before they reached the age of 16. An interesting distance can be observed - the number of early marriages increases and at the same time the percentage of Roma who got married after they had come of age (18 years old) has also increased to 27%.

This early marriage practice is traditional but, unfortunately, it becomes domineering under the conditions of extending poverty. Respondents mistrust all outsiders who are interested in these matters and usually they give information which is "acceptable" to society.

Another new tendency for 2000 was the further increased number of the so-called "customary marriages", at the expense of the decrease of the formal civic marriages. The number of unmarried mothers, divorced women and the comparatively young widows who bring up their children alone has also increased. It seems however, that the reasons behind this change are rather economic than habitual: access to social assistance and other sources of state support is easier for unmarried than for married mothers. This fact should be taken into consideration when conclusions on the performance of the social assistance are made (especially in the context of ethnic discrimination).

The latest data points to a high percentage of married or living with partners (76%) and a low percentage of the divorced (4%) against the average values for the country. Those who became widows/widowers are 9%, the bigger part of them (15%) are women and 4% of the men have become widowers.

The extreme poverty Roma are facing forces them to abandon the model of the nuclear family in order to survive within the big family or the big clan. This in itself is an extremely interesting and worth in-depth analysis fact with long-term consequences for the family relations models, generational relation authority and power distribution etc. Table 2 summarizes data from 1995 IMIR's survey on the average number of children in Roma families within different age groups.

Age of married couples	Coefficient for the number of children
17-29	2,34

30-39	3,33
40-49	3,95
50-59	4,3

The Bulgarian segment of the regional Roma survey shows that the highest coefficient for children of Roma families does not exceed 3,23 with the poorest and 3,21 with the illiterate. The fact that the number of the children for people with "up incomplete primary" education is substantially higher than for those with "primary and above" may also be evidence that focusing on education in the long term can be an important element of sustainable family-planing policies (the issue of "affordable number of children").

According to a 2001 survey conducted by A.S.A. (comissioned by UNDP Sofia) reproductive attitudes of Roma tend to get closer to Bulgarians' and Turks' dispositions in terms of "the two children model" - 51,1%. 25,4% of the Roma would like to have three children, while with the Turks this percentage has dropped to 14,7%, and with Bulgarians to 11,7% (A.S.A. 2001: 22).

The correlation between the number of children and the education of their parents is shown in the following table 3:

<b>Table 3: Relation between the level of parents' education and number of children</b>	
Education of parents	Coefficient for the number of children
Secondary	1,8
Primary	2,6
Elementary	3,3
Illiterate	4,4

Roma very rarely use modern family planning methods. The diaphragm is most often used - 9% of Roma women use it. These are mainly the Roma living in big cities - Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Russe, Burgas, as well as those with preferred Bulgarian, Vlach or Turkish self-identification. Usually, in the traditional Roma families, husbands and mothers-in-law are the main opponents to diaphragms and the "Anti-baby" pills. Women use "Anti-baby" pills in 2% of the families and in another 4% of the families men use condoms. Contraceptives and preventives are most often used in the families whose members have completed secondary education - four times more often than among illiterate matrimonial partners or those with elementary education only. Abortion is the "universal means" for family planning among the Roma. In one family out of five, the woman has procured at least one abortion. Almost two-thirds of the women have had more than five abortions.

The average age of female Roma when their first child was born is much lower than the average one for the country (23,5 years old as a whole and 24,1 years old in the cities in 2000) and it reaches 17,84 among

those who are the youngest, 18.44 among those who did not complete secondary education and 18.48 among the poorest (table 4). As in the case of the number of the children, respondents with "up incomplete primary" education have their first child earlier than those with higher levels of education. The same correlation appears regarding family well-being (reflected in the number of household items possessed): the poorer the family, the earlier the first child is born. Understandably, the age the first child was born is lower for females than for men. What is interesting is the negligible difference between different types of settlements. Unlike the number of children (where we have a clear tendency towards higher number of children in villages and smaller in big cities and capital), the difference between the capital and other settlements is less pronounced.

**Table 4: At what age did you have your first child and at what age your children should have their first child?**

		How old you were be? (respondent)?	How old should your children	
			Son	Daughter
Total		19,42	21,7	19,42
Respondents grouped by:				
Gender	Male	20,85	21,25	19,60
	Female	18,20	20,92	19,27
Age	15-25	17,84	21,31	19,39
	26-40	19,35	21,11	19,52
	41-55	19,95	21,08	19,63
	Above 55	19,59	20,81	19,00
Education	Up to incomplete primary	18,44	20,35	18,69
	Primary and above	20,17	21,61	19,99
Type of settlement	Capital	19,02	21,61	20,40
	District center	19,30	20,74	19,16
	Small town	20,20	21,71	19,85
Location of the area where the	Village	19,02	20,88	19,22
	Inner city	18,96	21,36	19,44
	Periphery	19,40	21,06	19,38



respondent lives	Remote area	19,39	20,19	19,32
	Gypsy colony	20,00	21,43	20,40
Number of household items	1-6	18,48	20,46	18,73
	7-9	19,34	21,22	19,62
	Above 9	20,65	21,71	20,17

According to parents, the preferred mean age for the daughter to have her first child is 19,42. Generally speaking, the younger, the better educated, those living in a small city, in the capital, or in an isolated Roma settlement with smaller household - up to 4 members, as well as the richer people give a *higher average age* for their daughter or son to have their first child. Comparison of data on the respondents' average age when their first child was born and the preferred average age shows approximately the same figures (Table 4 above). The data also proves the hypothesis that Roma families' aspirations concerning their own children do not exactly repeat their own experience. The age at which they are expected to have their first child is slightly higher than the age at which they had their first child. But most interesting is distribution by sex. For women the difference between "their age" and the "envisaged age for her daughter" (18.20 vs 19.27) is higher than the difference between "his age" and "envisaged age for his son" (20.85 vs. 21.25).

The early and frequent births, the numerous abortions and the unhygienic way of life are the main reasons for the high mortality rate among Roma women in fertile age (from 18 to 39) in this ethnic community.

### ***Family hierarchies***

Family hierarchy gives preference to the tradition for men to be head of the household. When, however, respondents were asked the question "Who keeps the money in your household?", women were more than men, mothers were more than fathers, and only a negligible part of spouses (5%) were less than husbands. Therefore women and wives play an important role in the family, which, in principle, has not been formally declared (Table 5).

	Who is the head of your household?			Who is keeping the money in your household?		
	Gender of the respondent		Total	Gender of the respondent		Total
	Male	Female		Male	Female	
Myself						
77,3%	30,3%	52,8%	51,4%	58,9%	55,3%	
My husband						

2,3%	55,4%	29,7%	6,3%	24,5%	15,7%
My wife					
2,1%	,4%	1,2%	21,7%	1,6%	11,2%
My father					
14,1%	8,0%	11,2%	7,8%	4,0%	5,8%
My mother					
2,1%	1,8%	1,9%	7,8%	5,1%	6,6%
My grandfather					
	,2%	,2%	,2%	,2%	,2%
My grandmother					
,4%		,2%	,4%		,2%
Somebody else - who					
1,3%	3,7%	2,5%	3,6%	4,2%	3,8%
N/r					
,4%	,2%	,3%	,8%	1,6%	1,2%

When important decisions are to be made a tendency of solidarity, as well as some comparative democratism can be observed in Roma families. According to the largest part of the respondents, important decisions are made by *the head of the household together with the spouse or the husband* - 38% and according to 24% of the interviewed decisions are made with *the participation of all household members excluding the smallest children* - 24%. The summarized data leads to the conclusion that better education and richness are important factors for a more democratic family decision-making and vice versa - illiteracy or lower education and poverty contribute to more authoritarian family decisions. It is also interesting that "The oldest member of the household decides" option receives very little support (only 7,6%) as well as "The men in the family decide". It may reveal a tendency towards departure from the traditionalist family model to a more modern one. Seen through this angle Roma families decision-making patterns are more modern and inclusive than they are often perceived to be. This hypothesis is supported by the high percentage the "joint" option - head of the household together with his/her spouse decide" - receives (37.9%).

### III. Socio-economic status

One can get an overall idea of Roma's self-evaluation on their social and economic status, and their life self-confidence from the answers to three closely related questions, "What is your life now as compared with the first years after the fall of the old system?" "How is it in comparison with the life 5 years ago?"

and "How will your life be in 5 years from now?" The responses outline from an interesting perspective the deterioration of living conditions of Roma after the collapse of the central planning system.

### *Life chances*

A negligible part of 1,8% Roma evaluates their state as better now. For the definite majority (79%) life was better in the first years after the old system collapsed (and when life was still dominated by the momentum of the old system). Five years ago things probably reached a certain level of stabilization (28% respond "it is the same" - now and 5 years ago). At the same time, there is a slightly increase in the share of respondents for whom life now is better than then (from 1.8 to 4.8%). This "margin of optimists" however, is too small and cannot offset the decline of living standards encountered during the years of transition. As far as expectations for the future are concerned, the keyword seems to be "uncertainty" - 79% are not responding to that question. The only (although minor) optimistic sign is that only 1.8% expect things to worsen farther. On the other hand this small margin of "pessimists" may simply indicate that life hardship has reached such a level that there is no space for farther deterioration.

Not less pessimistic are the answers of the respondents on the opportunities of their children vis-...-vis the other children in Bulgaria, as well as the opportunities of their children vis-...-vis themselves when they were their age. In both cases the chances are perceived as lower. The assessment of the opportunities of the children in two major fields (crucial from human development perspective) - employment opportunities and access to education - are extremely low (median of the assessments respectively 2.83 and 2.71). Respondents do not see any sphere in which Roma children may have better opportunity than their majority counterparts, which may be an indication of stable perception of deprivation. Even concerning personal values (family and friendship) their chances are perceived as lower than that of the majority.

Seen in retrospective, the issue of life chances does not look more optimistic. Roma children are perceived to have less opportunities not just vis-...-vis their majority counterparts but vis-...-vis their parents as well. Here the ranking is the same with a slightly different magnitude of the values. The opportunities have deteriorated most significantly concerning employment and education. (median of the assessments respectively 2.73 and 2.63). This proves the hypothesis that the transition to a market economy has not affected in a positive way the Roma population. Roma are "net losers" in this respect.

When questions refer to children's chances as compared to their parents' opportunities in their child life, one can feel despair and nostalgia for the past. Parents assess their children's chances as quite meager compared to their chances some years ago with reference to: 1. Finding a job, and 2. Providing education for their children.

### *The issue of unemployment*

The differences in education, professional qualification and psychology of the population in Bulgaria determine the different levels of unemployment, which get aggravated by two more factors - geographical (i.e. settling in regions with poorer infrastructure) and demographic (the presence of families with many children which weighs heavy on the real poverty).

If the average unemployment rate in this country varies between 18% and 25% (the present Government has already acknowledged levels up to 28% as average), the unemployment rate among Roma has

reached levels higher than 80%. According to IMIR data it could be claimed that the level of unemployment has reached 95% in some settlements and parts of towns with compact Roma population (Tomova 2001; Mitev 2001).

According to the latest IMIR survey conducted in 1999, 65% of the Roma living in some big Roma districts and villages with a significant percentage of Roma population are unemployed. Over 25% of the unemployed Roma have never managed to start working, 10% have been unemployed for more than 10 years, unemployment lasts from 5 to 10 years for 45% of the Roma population. For some other 14%, it lasts from 2 to 4 years and hardly 10% have remained jobless for the last 12 months.

The data from the current survey generally confirms these figures: 58% of the interviewed Roma claimed to be unemployed, 20% - pensioners, 15% - employed, 2,5% - in maternity leave, 1,5% - housewives and 0,5% - university students. However all data on unemployment levels should be treated with caution given the possibility of different interpretation of the term "employment" - whether it means for the respondent "wage contract" or any kind of "income generation activity".

That is why the survey approached this issue from various angles asking different questions related to employment/unemployment issues. One was "What is your current socio-economic status?" The responses to it outline a relatively high level of employment - 14,8% on average (here we should take into consideration the fact that the respondents were interviewed at home and there is a high probability that a significant part of the employed were at work during the interview). Another important question was "What type of work/activity did you do to earn money in the last 6 months?" Its last option - "I did not earn any money last month" - provides us with a reasonable estimation on unemployment and (often informal) employment. Almost 50% on average choose that option. It is interesting however, that in the capital 60% "did not earn money last month" but only 37.5% responded "unemployed" on the question of their socioeconomic status. It means that a part of people were involved in economic activities without receiving monetary income. In villages, the opposite, the share of people who "did not earn any money" is substantial higher than the share of those who considered themselves unemployed (44.2 and 59.8 respectively). It means that people still tend to perceive "employment" rather in the context of "wage employment" and not in broader income (often non-monetary, in-kind) generation activity.

Another dimension of the employment/unemployment issue is provided by the responses to the question "From which of the following sources does the household usually receive money during the last 6 months?" It reveals the sources of income families have access to (not the share of the household revenues coming from the respective source). Social assistance, pensions and occasional job(s) without contract dominate these. Unemployment benefits are mentioned only by 8.3%, which seems to be correct a figure and it outlines the fact that most of jobless Roma are long-term unemployed and are not entitled to unemployment benefits anymore. Concerning employment, it is dominated by occasional job(s) without contract followed by regular wage jobs with a contract. These figures give a certain impression on the magnitude of employment/unemployment in the Roma households, which should be analyzed against the background of data from other questions.

The issue of the "length of unemployment" was explicitly addressed in the survey in a question "When was the last time you had a job?" The results confirm the long-term nature of Roma unemployment - the median for both men and women was 1996! Breaks by different groups are also indicative: the median for the youngest (up to 25) was 2000, for 26-40 years of age it was 1997, 41-55 - 1996 and for respondents

above 55 - 1992. For those possessing an education primary or lower, the last year they had employment was 1995, and for those with higher education - 1997.

Some of the unemployed Roma have been engaged in different spheres of the "shadowy or black economy", but this is sporadic, payments are extremely low and unregulated, and talking about social and health security is out of the question. The activities are often illegal (e.g. production and bottling of alcohol, trading with currency or stolen goods, drug-selling, etc.) and some of the people involved in these activities come within the provisions of the law.

### ***Traditional skills - competitive advantage or disadvantage?***

The issue of the potential competitive advantages of the Roma labor force and the extent to which traditional elements of Roma culture and skills can be marketable today is extremely sensitive. Often traditional skills are perceived as one of the possible ways out of Roma misery. Unfortunately, the data does not give much ground for optimism in this respect. On the question "What traditional Roma activities practiced in your close community could be a source of income today?" the three options receiving greatest support are handwork (76.6%), commerce (70.4%) and music (although the support for this option is far lower - 51.7%). Demand for low-skilled labor is understandably lower in the big (presumably industrialized) cities - and data also confirms that. Roma interviewed in the capital dominate among those who stated commerce (96%), fortune-telling (56%) and healing (33%) as potential income sources. On the one hand, this profile of Roma labor explains the trend for migration towards villages outlined above.

These results reveals several interesting things. First, among the whole set of professions Roma tend to choose (rely) on activities not requiring almost any qualification (even handicraft receives unexpectedly lower support than handwork, i.e. unskilled manual labor). At the same time such skills are less and less marketable in the current economic environment (and will be even less in the future). Second, the results of this question either reveal inadequate idea of the market requirements (expecting that unskilled labor may be a source of income) or an adequate assessment of their current (drastically reduced) opportunities. In both cases the message is rather pessimistic: traditional skills cannot be perceived as a source of possible competitive advantage and employment-generation strategies should be based on some other grounds.

By selling scrap iron and paper 20% of the interviewed found some means of subsistence for their families, most of them being men, without primary education, with large families and extremely poor. There follow 13% of the respondents, who subsisted by gathering herbs, 12% were engaged in agriculture (given that almost half of the Roma in Bulgaria live in rural areas), 10% were engaged in construction, 7% - in industry and 5% sent their children to earn money in the street. The low share of Roma engaged in agriculture rather outlines the magnitude of the problem with access to productive resources (land and working capital).

Hardly 2,2% of Roma are engaged in education, 20,5% of them live in the capital.

During the central planing system a significant share of Roma used to be employed in agriculture. However, with the collapse of the old system and the land restitution these opportunities virtually vanished, contributing to high poverty levels among the village Roma who are half of the total number of Roma population in Bulgaria. According to some statistical data before the forced collectivization of

agricultural lands at the end of the 40's, about 75% of the Bulgarians and 86% of the Turks who were living in rural areas, possessed their own land and their main livelihood was agriculture. It was never the case with Roma. Still, during the past 40 years over 50% of the Bulgarian Roma lived in villages, they had their own houses and gardens, and made their living as hired laborers in the co-operatives. Restitution left thousand of Roma without that source of income, marginalized them, and deprived them of the possibility to nourish their children, to dress them or to send them to school. Moreover, it proved that in many villages Roma houses were built on land that was a municipal property or belonged to somebody else.

The nearly 100% unemployment rates in villages led to a rupture in the interethnic relations in the Bulgarian villages. Roma began pilfering from the agricultural produce of their neighbors, from their houses and their animals which increased sharply the negative attitudes of Bulgarians, Turks and Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks) (i.e. all other ethnic communities) living in the same village, reaching at places to xenophobia and some aggressive acts. The process of "renomadization" probably aggravated the problem (unlike the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, today's nomadic style of life cannot provide any sustainable source of income "fitting" in the existing economic structure of the society). If not approached adequately, the problem of Roma rural poverty (resulting from the systemic changes in the 1990s) will be augmented by the emerging Roma migration to rural areas. If not provided with self-employment opportunities (land from State or Municipal land funds), these people may enter the "renomadization" process with all its negative consequences for interethnic relations.

That is why it is hardly surprising that the ranking of the problems the Roma are facing is led by employment issues. On the question "Which of the following problems are seriously affecting you and your household?" first is "economic hardship" followed by "employment opportunities". This is not a novelty. The interesting thing is that "Discrimination in access to employment" is third in the rank. It is possible that the complex issue of employment opportunities (related to adequacy to the demands of the labor market, education or qualification level) is "oversimplified" by the respondents through the easiest "discrimination" pattern.

Regional dimensions of these attitudes are extremely interesting. The intensity of the "unemployment" problem is relatively lower in the capital. The same is with the intensity of the "economic hardship" problem. At the same time the dynamics of the intensity of "discrimination" as a problem is the opposite - it is the strongest in the capital and decreases with the decrease of the size of settlement. The logical connection however should be the opposite: it is normal to expect higher discrimination where economic hardship is higher and the number of available jobs is lower. This "reverse intensity" may be explained by political factors: in the capital with its concentration of NGOs economic issues easily receive political (in this case - ethnic or discriminatory) wording. In the long term this may create false impressions of the people of their lower employability: instead of focusing on the fundamental reasons (education and qualification) they may tend to concentrate on the "deprivation" interpretation. Also rather disturbing is the fact that "the lack of educational opportunities" is ranked fourth (1,95) on the scale of the tough problems of Roma households. There are two possible interpretations of that - an optimistic and a pessimistic. The optimistic would be that educational levels of Roma are good enough and do not constitute a problem. The pessimistic (or rather realistic) would be that the respondents do not adequately assess the real long-term impact of insufficient educational opportunities for their life chances.

### *Unemployment and life strategies*

Economists claim that when unemployment in a given community has hit more than 30% of its members for more than two years, one can observe degrading processes within the community and the community is not in a position to cope with them alone. For years the percentage of the unemployed Roma has gone far beyond this crucial limit. The degree of impoverishment within the community has assumed alarming proportions. Being rejected by society, Roma started concentrating in towns and the neighboring villages increasing their territorial isolation from the other population. Migrants and some of the local inhabitants live in nightmarish conditions, their health status has deteriorated, they are not able to make a living, their children drop out of schools, etc. This leads to inheriting of poverty by the young generation. We have good reasons to claim that during the past years we were the witnesses of the formation of an underclass among the Roma (Tomova: 2000:81).

The thorough interviews conducted by Dr. Ilona Tomova's team showed that, in a way, one can speak about a behavior, which is typical of Roma in the segregated districts. More and more illiterate young people grow up in these districts where wage unemployment rates have hit over 90% of the adult population, and these young people do not link their life ideas with labor. This circumstance makes it more likely for the inhabitants of the ghetto to rely on illegal income sources, which reduces still more their link with the regular labor market until this link gets quite interrupted.

One can mention here the fact that in the big Roma districts unemployment rates are higher and more lasting among women than among men - 16% of the men and 31% of the women that got into the sample have never had a job. According to this indicator the Roma community significantly differs from the average values for the country where for decades almost 100% of the Bulgarian and Turkish women have worked in the social sector during their work-able age. The officers from the social services point out that the officially registered unemployment among the Gypsy women is lower than the average data on the women's unemployment in the surveyed regions. It is obvious that a significant part of them has not registered as unemployed because of different reasons - lack of regular address registration, passing from one maternity to another, higher disability, irregular registration with the social services, etc. The process of "renomadization" will further aggravate this phenomenon. Sixty-six percent of the youngest Roma, i.e. aged between 17-29, have never worked, this figure reaching 77% among the young women of the same age group.

Data from the current research points out that 85% of the Roma have never thought to start their own business and those who tried but went bankrupt are 5%; 2% had some business for a short time but they sold it, and hardly 4% of the respondents declared to have a successful business. The important factor here is education, as well as the region, i.e. those who became bankrupted are twice as many in a municipal city than in the capital.

According to a number of surveys carried out by Dr. Tomova and IMIR's sociological teams unemployment has not hit evenly Roma from the different subgroups. The unemployment rate is highest among the group of the so-called "bare" Gypsies. The negative stereotypes of Bulgarians towards them are the strongest and most sustainable. Between 74% and 92% of the Roma known as "naked" are unemployed. It is most difficult for them to start organized labor activities, they have a low educational and qualification status and their labor discipline is the lowest.

Undoubtedly, "Bulgarian Gypsies" are best represented on the labor market. This is one of the best-integrated Roma micro-communities in Bulgarian society. It has participated in the industrial production since its origin and it has built its authority as a worker's stratum for a century and a half. A lot of physicians, teachers, musicians, lawyers, economists and human right supporters have come from these circles.

The lowest Roma unemployment (41%) is observed in the Hristo Botev district in Sofia.

In conclusion to this sub-paragraph it can be stated that further to the 2001 survey, employment has been placed before the good family and the children's happiness on the value scale of the Roma respondents, this probably being their pre-condition and an indicator for the burden of unemployment among the interviewed. It could be added that a great number of Roma interviewed in the capital prefer to be in good health and to have a job while Roma interviewed in villages prefer the safe and predictable life, as well as prosperity.

Another conclusion is that education (professional qualification) and the region (capital - province) are *the basic factors* for the presence or lack of difficulties while the interviewed Roma were looking for employment. Respondents to the 2001 survey however seem not to share completely that hypothesis. Asked "What are the three main reasons for your difficulties in finding a job?" they most often choose the option "Overall economic depression in the country" (86%). The second option for frequency of choice is "my ethnic affiliation" (73%). "Insufficient qualification" appears only in the third place (71%) - despite the fact that it was on the first place in the questionnaire table. The logic behind this ranking is the following: "if the economy grows and if no ethnic discrimination takes place, the two major difficulties in finding job will not exist". This, however, is not the case - even in a growing economy (like Bulgaria in the last three years or Poland) economic growth goes in parallel with growing poverty and marginalization. The reason is that only a part of the people are involved (participating) in the economic growth - those with a high education and qualification. So, focusing on these two reasons may be delivering those people a promise unable to be fulfilled.

The general economic depression has been pointed out by most of the respondents with primary education and above, as well as the richer, which is an objective and non-partisan answer. Ethnic affiliation is stated by respondents without primary education and by people living in the capital, while women and the youngest, aged between 15-25, have stated the lack of professional skills as a reason. The three reasons are pointed to by most respondents from the capital and the small city, from the inner city and remote regions, middle-bracket people and the poorest. The conclusion is that respondents evaluate quite realistically the situation in terms of the high unemployment rates in the country, but are not respectively adequate concerning their low professional skills (42% of all interviewed have no primary education, 41% are with an elementary and only 12% have a secondary education), as well as the additional obstacle connected with their ethnic affiliation.

Additional (and interesting) aspects of the issue of life strategies and employment are revealed by the responses to the question "What are the major three conditions in order to succeed in life?" It may be striking that the option receiving highest support (61%) is "good luck". Options like "good education" (35%) or hard work (37%) come only after being in good health (45.9%) and "support from the state" (45%). On the one hand this reveals the magnitude of the dependency culture among the Roma community (in some aspects all the three first options have something in common - the passive attitude of





month										
24,1%	35,2%	23,1%	26,7%	26,4%	21,4%	27,2%	27,9%	26,3%	27,0%	
We are constantly starving										
62,0%	32,1%	13,8%	36,7%	39,0%	30,4%	33,4%	39,7%	40,4%	37,7%	
N/r										
2,4%	1,0%	,3%	1,3%	1,4%		,3%		2,9%	1,3%	

It is worth analyzing the Roma's approach to hunger, or rather their attempts to find a way out of the situation. Most Roma claim that they borrow money from their neighbors during periods of starvation - 48%, however, 44% say that they simply starve and they are not in a position to do anything, 28% borrow food from their neighbors, 13% look for food in fields and gardens thus incurring the animosity of their neighbors-producers from the other ethnic groups. Seven percent *jöfj the Roma are searching in the garbage containers, begging - 4%, and 1,4% send their children to earn money in the streets.*

The "survival strategies" of those starving are revealed in the responses to the question "What do you do if it happens that your family has not enough to eat?" Generally these strategies are marked by a low level of sustainability. They are either based on borrowing (with unclear perspectives to return back the loan) or on continued starving. The interesting detail is that neighborly relations are an important factor for survival during economic crises. According to respondents these relations are better preserved in the small city or village being kept mainly by the more elderly and the women. Although receiving low percentages, "take some food from abandoned fields/plots" deserves special attention. For obvious reasons it is over-represented in villages and may partially reveal the issue of "Roma petty crimes" committed because of poverty and starvation. Starving and looking for food in the fields are basically the old people, people without primary education, large households and the poorest. Searching the garbage containers are mainly Roma dwelling in the capital - 16%, at the average value for the country - 7%.

The existence of unemployment in Bulgaria was officially acknowledged for the first time in 1991. Ten years later, there is still not an officially adopted and acknowledged "poverty line" to determine *who* and *how many* poor people are in this country.

Some serious attempts for an overall theoretical definition of poverty were made by sociologists in 1997. They stressed on the fact that poverty means more than low incomes, insufficient to cover the basic needs of a person or a family. Poverty is assumed as a factor having influence on all aspects of everyday life and it makes impossible either the choice or the opportunities, which are the basic components for the development of the human being, i.e. access to good quality of education and health protection, leading a worthy life - the personal experience of some degrees of freedom, preserved dignity, good living standard, unhurt self-confidence, etc. (Zhelyazkova 1997:34).

Economists focus their attention mainly on the objective aspects of poverty and the impossibility to measure it, while sociologists pay great attention to the way people manage to live under the new social conditions (Ilona Tomova, 2000:4).

The Bulgarian segment of the Roma regional survey has shown the following parameters on Roma's self-evaluation: To the question, "How do you consider your family?" 0,6% answered "rich", "we are doing relatively well" - 20,3%, "poor" - 48,6% and "we live in misery" - 30,5% (Table 7). As far as distribution by groups is concerned, self-assessment is strongly correlated with the material status (which is not surprising and is another proof of the soundness of the results). On the other hand the strong domination of "living in misery" options among the older age (above 55) is an indirect evidence of the deterioration of Roma material status in the last decade - this age group still has the vivid memory of the "socialist period" with its guaranteed (although at a low level) well-being. These people have a reference point against which they tend more often to assess the current situation as "misery" - unlike the younger for whom it is closer to "normality".

Distribution by:	Age				Type of settlement				Total
	15-25	26-40	41-55	Above 55	Capital	District center	Small town	Village	
<b>Rich</b>									
1,0%	,3%	,8%	,5%	1,8%	0,3%	0,3%	1,2%	,6%	
<b>Doing relatively well</b>									
24,9%	22,8%	20,5%	10,6%	27,3%	24,4%	27,5%	13,8%	20,3%	
<b>Poor</b>									
44,2%	49,7%	50,4%	48,9%	54,5%	45,3%	45,6%	51,1%	48,6%	
<b>Living in misery</b>									
29,9%	27,2%	28,4%	39,9%	16,4%	30,3%	27,0%	33,8%	30,5%	

Data from the survey makes it possible to trace the Roma's absolute insecurity with regard to employment. Fifty-nine percent of the respondents did not earn anything during the last month, 10,5% worked on a labor contract, 6,4% got salaries without a contract, 4,2% have a vague contract, etc. Data from the answers to the question "Who is unemployed in your household?" provide additional insights on the issue of both poverty and employment. It reveals that estimated unemployment rate roughly 50-53%. Most respondents of one and the same category claim that they are unemployed, among those who are unemployed for a long period of time are people without primary education, from villages, from a small city or municipal town, from households with more than four members, the poorest and people who possess an average number of household items.

In Bulgaria families with three or more children acquire the status of a "large family". They represent 3,9% of the families with children. This insignificant share of the large families is distributed among Roma and Bulgarian Muslims and, to a lesser degree, among the Turks. As a result of the general poverty in the country these families represent most economically and socially disadvantaged groups. According to the *Club "Economica 2000"* surveys, there exists a clearly expressed co-relation between the number of

children in a family and the poverty status. Table 8 shows the relative share of households under the poverty line according to different estimations of poverty line values and the number of children under 18 for 1997 (in%).

<b>Table 8: Relation between family size and poverty</b>					
	Total	One child	Two children	Three or more children	Without children
Poverty line 29,500					
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
Poor	3,9	6,1	7,1	35,6	1,8
Not poor	96,1	93,9	92,9	64,4	98,2
Poverty line 95,500					
	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
Poor	65,5	65,6	73,1	97,8	62,7
Not poor	34,5	34,4	26,9	2,2	37,3
Source: National Statistical Institute					

As a rule, parents have lower education and qualifications and they are facing difficulties in their career development. Family income does not suffice to cover the basic needs. At the same time, more money is needed to cover the specific children's needs such as medicines, heat, textbooks, clothing, shoes, etc. The average income of families with three and more children hardly reaches 54% of the average income for the country. This fact threatens the large families with social isolation and they are faced with the risk of being excluded from the security system. Table 9 shows the relative share of households under the poverty line according to different estimations of poverty line values and level of education of the parents for 1997 (in%)

<b>Table 9: Relation between education level and poverty</b>					
	Total	Without education	With primary education	With secondary education	With higher education
Poverty line 29 500					
	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
Poor	3,9	8,6	3,8	3,8	1,6

Not poor	96,1	91,4	96,2	96,2	98,4
Poverty line 95 500					
	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
Poor	65,5	76,6	68,1	65,4	53,0
Not poor	34,5	23,4	31,9	34,6	47,0
Source: National Statistical Institute					

According to the *Club "Economica 2000"* survey conducted in 1998 with regard to the monitoring of the EU Emergency Social Aid Program (ESAP) for Bulgaria, the relative percentage of Bulgarians who receive social security aid is lower than the population as a whole. Roma, on their part, represented relatively the largest share (table 10).

Ethnic group	Population	Beneficiaries
Bulgarians	84,7	71,3
Turks	11,2	10,8
Roma	3	16,2
Bulgarian Muslims	0,2	0,5
Others	0,5	0,5
Source: Club "Economica 2000"		

The complicated social and economic situation of Roma depends also to a great extent on their "ideological attitudes". Roma lack any experience in self-organizing, as well as in assuming a responsibility for the fate of the local community. As Roma have usually lived in an alien and hostile social environment they have survived not as a community, but as a related group or a family. At the same time, according to IMIR's anthropological and sociological surveys it becomes clear that Roma possess clearly expressed *tatique* attitudes (Table 11). The expectations of most of the individuals belonging to this group are that the state will take care of them. What is more, more than half of them tend to share the extreme form of this conviction. If we make a comparison with the other ethnic groups, it is the Bulgarian Muslims who have the lowest confidence in the state, they rely always on their own efforts, on the support of the family, the kin and the community. One can observe some explicit liberal dispositions among the Bulgarians where, as a matter of principle, individualism is traditional.

**Table 11: *Etatique* attitudes among different ethnic groups**

Ethnic group	Tendency to rely on the state	Tendency to rely on the individual	No opinion
Bulgarians	37,5	52,1	7,3
Turks	49,6	44,2	5,7
Roma	71,8	20,2	5,8
Bulgarian Muslims	33,2	44,2	15,3

*Source: Ethnocultural situation in Bulgaria, 1992, 1995, IMIR*

These attitudes have not changed substantially (although different sets of data are not directly comparable). The results from the regional Roma survey reveal that significant level of state dependency among Roma. Asked "What is the best way for people to solve their problems?" 51% of the interviewed reply "It is up to the state to solve problems, we cannot do much", 24% think that people should solve their problems jointly irrespective of their ethnic affiliation. Explicit individualistic attitudes express only 17% of the respondents stating that every one should take care of himself alone. These results reveal the depth of the dependency culture already existing among the Roma population. The real issue however, is what is the current policies' impact on these attitudes? Do they increase the 17% of those who would rely on their own, the 24.4% tending to rely on some form of joint (community) action or increase the 51% who expect the state to solve them?

### ***Social assistance labor market programs***

Reliance on the state in the Roma case usually is related to reliance on social assistance. That is why this is a crucial issue related to all other dimensions of poverty (employability, active/passive life strategies, aspirations).

The economic crisis badly hit the state's social assistance funds capacity in Bulgaria. The funds allocated for social assistance are not sufficient to cover the most pressing needs of social benefits. According to data stated in the survey "Formation of an underclass among the Bulgarian Roma" with research Directors Prof. P.E.Mitev and Dr. Ilona Tomova it is only 23% of the Roma that receive monthly social benefits, i.e. hardly one third of the unemployed (Tomova 2000:81, IMIR's archive). Most of Roma families who are entitled to receive social benefits can rely only on their children's allowances which are quite miserable, or, if they have this chance - on the pension of some of their old parents.

Income sources for Roma are indicative of the degree to which Roma are dependent on social assistance and generally - of the lacking vision of what to do in this respect. As mentioned, 49% of the respondents had social benefits as a source of income during the last 6 months, 39% mention pensions of the old people, 34% - children's allowances, and 32% subsist through some temporary non-contracted job. Only 22% of the respondents mention work on a regular labor contract as a source of income during the last 6 months and 6% - a regular wage without a labor contract.

Against the background of this discouraging data, 91% of the Roma have not participated in any employment or retraining programs. Only 6% took part in such employment programs with the prevailing

part of them claiming that these programs did not help them at all or they "helped them a little". Only 6.8% state that participation in such programs "helped a lot" in finding a job. These figures are worth further research: is the reason the inadequate design of the programs, lack of basic knowledge among the participants or something else?

Distribution of social benefits is linked with a permanent tension between the Roma and the social workers. Hardly ever, Roma are employed in the employment or social services although they know well the mentality and the feelings of the people from their community thus winning their confidence. One should add here the fact that social workers are not specially trained how to work with the Roma, to get acquainted with their specifics though most often they are the prevailing part of their clients. Involvement of people from Roma communities to work in this field is an obvious (but still not adopted) solution.

Another difficulty in the access to social benefits is related to early marriages. There are many cases when Roma women become mothers before they reach the age of 16. In order to receive the child allowance, the parent (the mother) should legitimize herself but personal identity cards are issued after reaching the age of 16. Technically it is possible for the parents of the teenage mother to receive the allowance on her behalf but the procedure is long and complicated. As a result, maternity benefits and children's allowances are postponed until they get their personal identity card.

In January 1999 a special Order No 3 was adopted for keeping a register of the agricultural producers. This Order extremely aggravated the state of the village Roma because, according to it, all persons who grew herbs (100 square meters), tobacco (0,1 hectare) or bred a cow had to register as agricultural producers and thus they dropped out of the registers as unemployed and entitled to social benefits. Very often Roma drop out of the registers as unemployed because the social officers who check the authenticity of the data given in their applications for social assistance did not find the unemployed people at their homes after three consequent checks, or they were informed that the person had a temporary job, or they had seen him/her selling goods in the street or on the market. The existing rules for receiving unemployment benefits have led to the formation of a passive and irresponsible behavior of the recipient because the social services punish every attempt of the person to show responsibility and to look for job in order to earn some money for the children's subsistence. With such an approach and after continuous unemployment, the re-adaptation of these people to labor activity is an extremely difficult task.

The social assistance system in Bulgaria is not able to either stop or to delay the processes of the underclass formation. The deep crisis has covered all parameters in the Roma individual and group existence. Its final result is the tendency towards a growing disintegration of this ethnocultural group, its marginalization and its permanent placement at the social bottom. The group of the anomic Gypsies has sharply increased. They have lost their traditional culture before they could change it with another one. Both alcoholism and drug addiction are widespread among them. Parents stop taking care of their children or they force them to steal, to beg or to become prostitutes in order to provide money for buying alcohol and family upkeep. The number of handicapped, chronically diseased and neglected children has sharply increased. The reform in the sphere of social services annoys with its incompleteness and inefficiency. The Government should give up the temptation to make decisions for everything and for everybody and should delegate more rights to the local authorities. In the first place, they should extend their rights for collecting their own rates and taxes. Second, municipalities should be independent when deciding which of the social establishments should be preserved and which are to be closed. Third, large

freedom is needed when solving some topical problems related to social service, education and health protection consistent with the cultural and social specifics of each separate region.

#### ***IV. Health and residential conditions***

##### ***Health and access to medical services***

According to statistical data, the short life expectancy among Roma, the high incidence rate of chronic diseases and disability in their families turn the community into a health-endangered group.

The survey of the National Statistical Institute conducted further to the recommendations of the World State Organization in March 2001 showed that 23,1 % of Roma assessed their health as very good, 45% as good, and 20% as tolerable. Only 11% evaluated their health as bad and very bad. There are some differences with the UNDP's survey from 2002 where hardly 10,3% of Roma assess their health as perfect, 48,8% - good, and about 40% of the respondents declared their health as tolerable and bad. But generally the differences are not big and are probably due to the huge differences in the very contents of the terms "perfect" and "good" health. NSI data reveals total "good and very good" for 68,1%, in the Bulgarian segment of the regional Roma survey the option "perfect and good" has been chosen totally by 59.1%.

In regard to the parents' evaluation on their children's health status only 11,2% of the Roma think that their children are in perfect health, 60,3% claim that their children are in good health. Tolerable and bad, according to the parents' evaluation, is the health of over 19% of the children.

Most of the chronic diseases declared by Roma are cardiovascular and respiratory passage conditions, tuberculosis, renal, gastric and enteric, liver diseases, etc. Neurological and psychiatric diseases, gynecological disorders, and carcinomas are more frequently encountered among the Roma than with the rest of the population but the persons affected often do not declare them.

The NSI's survey from 2001 proved that Roma, as compared with the other ethnic groups, refer most often to specialists in internal diseases /41,6%/, otholaryngologists /17,0%/, gynecologists, /11,6%/, neurologists /8,2%/. The percentage of Roma is higher who see the dermatologist /4,6%/. From this survey one can draw the disturbing conclusion that Roma do not visit oncologists, or rather they do not identify the cancerous cases and that is why they do not look for specialized advice in this respect /0,0%/.

In two thirds of the families living in the city and village ghettos there is a member with a chronic disease and in many families - more than one. Comparative data from the surveys conducted in 1995 and 2000 shows that for five years only the share of people with chronic diseases among the poorest has increased by almost 50%. Over one fifth of the families declared in 2000 that they had a disabled person at their home. The data from 1995 IMIR's survey showed much higher figures for disability than stated by the official statistical data. According to the National Statistical Institute disability rate among Roma per 1000 population is 32,3, while according to the independent survey the disability rate among Roma above the age of 16 is 81 per 1000 people, which is twice more than the average rate for the country. The 81,0 coefficient does not include the disabled children under 16 who comprise 38 % of the disabled persons in this group. In terms of the above-said the legislation is not adequate to reality because in Bulgaria one can obtain the status of "a disabled person" after the age of 16.



The independent data (Tomova: 1997) has found support in the estimates of physicians working in Roma neighborhoods who assess the Roma disability as a much more frequent occurrence than is the average for the country.

In regard to smoking, Roma rank ahead of the other ethnic groups including the intensity of smoking. According to data from the last (March 2001) census in Bulgaria, to the question referring to alcohol drinking "during the last month" Roma give way to Bulgarians and Turks which, undoubtedly, is due to lack of money.

About 9/10 of the people living in these ghettos are not in a position to purchase medicines and 4/5 of the Roma declare that they cannot pay for the prescribed medicines.

The 2001 survey of the National Statistical Institute showed that hardly 17,4% of the Roma take medicines prescribed by physicians. Over 2/3 of the ghettos' inhabitants resort to self-treatment and others do not take treatments at all. 26 % of the Roma admit that when someone of the family becomes ill they take him/her to a "healer" or to a monastery to listen to a grace said to his/her health. There exist some customary practices among the Roma community, the inhabitants of rural areas and small towns in particular, which Roma use for the prevention and treatments of their small children - they are of the "magic rituals" type. Roma in Bulgaria believe strongly in the effectiveness of these rituals and maybe this is one of the reasons for the high infant mortality rate in their families.

According to UNDP's survey in 2002 77,9% of the interviewed Roma have declared that they have a family doctor while 19,6% responded negatively. On the one hand, this could be estimated as a successfully accomplished health reform, but the comparative data of the National Statistical Institute calls in question such a conclusion. According to their statistical data not more than 22,0% of the Roma consult their personal doctor and 78,0% have not seen him/her. Things get even worse when talking about visits to medical doctors-specialists. According to NSI data (March 2001 census), 92,2% of Roma have never visited such a specialist. However none of the questions reveals the extent to which Roma are included/excluded from the new health-care system (it is not clear whether the people not consulting the family doctor do so because they don't need to or because they don't have one whom to consult). Even the responses to the question on the family doctor in the regional survey may be misleading: to "have a family doctor" for a significant number of respondents probably means "to have someone in mind if necessity occurs", which is not what the concept of the new health insurance system means. That is why the 77,9% of those presumably "with a family doctor" is definitely overestimation. A more realistic idea of the scale of exclusion of Roma from the new health-care system is provided by the question "Do you have health insurance?" 35,1% of the Roma answered "No", and almost 11% did not answer at all, probably, because, they did not understand the question. In this case it is correct to assume that the non-responding cases also don't have health insurance, which brings the share of the Roma not included in the health insurance system up to at least 46,2%. Definitely this is a huge problem with grave potential consequence in the future if not tackled on time.

A lot of Roma children lack proteins, they have rachitis and they are not vaccinated. About 14 % of the Roma families have lost a child, usually before the offspring has reached the age of 1. Very often parents are not in a position to evaluate precisely the health status of their children and there are many families where 2 - 4 children died. Parents accept this calmly saying, "God has given, God has taken away. They

were little". For the last 5-8 years one can observe emotional and behavioral changes in this respect which also testifies to elements of anomie and falling into the underclass position.

Doctors explain this critical health status in terms of the unhygienic and unhealthy way of life, the heavy physical work which they carried out at their early age, the early births and numerous abortions, the poor personal and labor discipline leading to frequent employment, transport and everyday accidents. Roma have a very low health culture, their living conditions are poor, they suffer from shortage of running water and absence of sewerage systems. The prevailing part of them does not eat the proper food and/or they are undernourished, more often they drink alcohol or take drugs. The health situation worsens by the fact that women who are in their fertile age, not only drink alcohol, practice glue sniffing and maintain low hygiene but they also suffered permanent beating even during their pregnancy. This naturally leads to miscarriages and complications, as well as to giving premature birth to disabled children. One should have in mind the many years research of Dr. Ivailo Tarnev and his team of physicians-geneticists on the progressive muscular dystrophy and other typical genetic diseases among some of the Roma sub-groups and the Roma community as a whole. According to physicians-geneticists, Roma in Bulgaria marry only inside the group, the affiliation to an isolated sub-group being of particular importance. The frequency of the in-group marriages is higher than 90 % (Dr. Tarnev). These endogamy marriages have led to over 12 types of genetic diseases and the only way to break this vicious circle is to invest in prophylactics and health culture.

Roma families need the specialized care of nurses because of the high disability rate among them, and they need sanitary inspectors and other secondary medical attendants who know the community and can assist it. The health reform is far from being implemented in the Roma ghettos, in the remote mountainous and boundary regions and actually, it cannot encompass the most needy group, i.e. the Roma community.

Roma are inclined to interpret all changes in the healthcare system and the introduction of paid medical services, as discriminatory measures targeted against them. Whenever they have to pay for the consumables, medicines or services, Roma interpret this necessity as an act of racism, corrupt practices and heartlessness on the part of the Bulgarians even though these requirements refer to all patients. This often leads to very sharp emotional reactions, which additionally aggravate the relations between Roma and the medical attendants.

At the same time it becomes quite clear that Roma have no prejudices regarding the doctors' ethnic origin. They do not prefer to see a doctor of the same or a preferred ethnic origin, nor do they have any preferences for the physician's gender. To this question asked in 2002 about 71% of the Roma answered that they have no special preferences. The only (although insignificant) preference shown is by female respondents to women minority doctor (12.1% against the 6.7% of men's preference for a man minority doctor). The choice here however seems to be predetermined more by "woman" than "minority - that is why female respondents show even higher preference (16%) for a "woman majority doctor" (Table 12).

<b>Table 12: Who would you share intimate medical information with?</b>			
	Gender of the respondent	Age	Total

ÿ	Male	Female	15-25	26-40	41-55	Above 55
Woman minority Doctor						
1,7%	12,1%	5,6%	7,4%	7,1%	7,9%	7,0%
Men minority Doctor						
6,7%	1,2%	6,1%	3,0%	4,8%	1,6%	3,8%
Woman majority Doctor						
3,6%	16,0%	7,1%	9,5%	12,6%	10,1%	9,9%
Men majority Doctor						
8,0%	2,9%	6,6%	6,5%	2,6%	6,3%	5,4%
Don't have any special requirements						
77,5%	64,5%	72,2%	71,0%	71,0%	68,8%	70,9%
N/r						
2,5%	3,3%	2,5%	2,7%	1,9%	5,3%	2,9%

### ***Housing conditions and infrastructures***

Roma districts are marked by high dynamics, specific of the cultural model of habitation for the Roma community. Usually, Gypsy town colonies are very clearly traced out and plotted according to their internal logics and rules. There are some districts whereÿ the isolated parts are inhabited by the old occupants and often they are the third or fourth generation living in the ghetto under question. This part of the Roma population characterizes usually with a certain stability and specific mentality of "townspeople".

The other part of Roma living in the ghettos is comprised of new settlers, whose number increased after 1989 when the residence permit was abolished. This is a very dynamic part, which, first, grows quickly, and second, it changes quickly its strength. In other words, Roma colonies, especially those in the big cities, are something like migration stations, which concentrate the newly arrived Roma and they "disseminate" them in other colonies, regions or neighboring towns.

Usually about 90 % of the houses in the Gypsy colonies are illegal. Moreover, there can be observed high dynamics in the housing "reclamation" of the district - they are building all the time. Nice three- and four-storied houses are being constructed along with the typical bidonvilles. The outside and inside architecture of houses creates an impression for a big variety of styles, tastes and architectural decisions. Quite visible is the economic status of the inhabitants, i.e. from an extreme poverty (most frequently met) to a serious economic prosperity - cardboard hovels and palatial houses.ÿ

The habitual inner structuring of the isolated Roma colonies is comprised of three concentric circles: outermost where prospering Roma families live in their nice looking two- and three-storied houses; middle, inhabited by middle-class families who receive some incomes and possess small family houses;

and, an inner circle (experts call it the "circle of hell") inhabited by Roma who have fallen at the bottom living in bidonvilles and dug-outs in full anomie.

According to the evaluations of Roma themselves, 10-12 years ago this type of anomic and quite degraded Roma did not comprise more than 3-5 % of the entire community. At that time each Roma neighborhood was responsible to take some care of the people who were at the social bottom, so that they could not influence the public dispositions against the Roma community as a whole. Nowadays (again according to the self-evaluation of Roma) this quite marginalized part of the Roma has reached 12-15 % and people living in the same neighborhood (even their relatives) are neither in a position to take care of them nor to restrict them in their illegal acts, nor to assist their children. Thus, people from the ghetto, whom we call underclass, have fallen into a double social isolation or rather rejection: first, by the Bulgarian society and the social assistance networks as a whole, and second - by their own group.

The prevailing Roma neighborhoods in the towns and in some villages look like typical ghettos. Overpopulation is a standard there. In about 17 % of the bidonvilles there is no furniture at all, there are not even beds. Four generations of one family can be seen quite often living in one room. The rubbish piles among the hovels are the breeding ground of insects, rats and diseases. 52 % of the Roma living in separate neighborhoods and villages do not have running cold water, 74 % do not have a toilet, and 89 % do not have hot water supply in their houses.

The 2002 data has been supplemented in the following way: 86% of the respondents have legal electricity supply, 80% have a toilet in the yard, 52% have running water in the house unlike 48% who do not have. Forty nine percent have sewerage but 51% do not have.

Roma interviewed during the regional Roma survey have 2,52 rooms on the average in their dwellings. Data also proves the (generally obvious) correlation between the number of the rooms and the average well-being of a household reflected in possession of different household items (Table 13). As seen from the table, the richest and those living in a Roma settlement have more than three rooms on the average in their house/flat (the latter probably because dwelling in a Roma settlement is cheaper and more easy to be constructed). And vice versa, the poorest - (1,80) and people living in a remote region - (2,09) are in the worst situation in regard to the houseroms.

Table 13: How many rooms do you have in your house/apartment?

	Location of the area where the respondent lives				How many people live in your household?		Number of household items			Total
	Inner city	Periphery	Remote area	Roma settlement	1-4	Above 4	1-6	7-9	Above 9	
Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
2,48	2,48	2,09	3,09	2,29	2,73	1,80	2,46	3,33	2,52	

One should not be misled by the respondents' answers with reference to the ownership of the dwellings. Although 75% of the Roma have claimed that the dwelling they live in is their own property, 18% said that it belongs to their relatives, 3,6% have rented a house and 2,3% live in communal dwellings, actually it does not become clear for what kind of dwelling we are speaking of - this could be a bidonville or a shed built by them in an unregulated area.

A number of surveys on Roma's attitudes and their notions regarding the living environment and the home were conducted by the non-governmental sector in Bulgaria during the past 2-5 years. In 1998 the Institute of Modernity carried out some research supported by IMIR and came to the following summarized conclusions on the model of the family house desired by the Roma:

- a two-storied house built on 120-200 square meters area;
- there should be 2-4 rooms on each floor, one of them being a bathroom or a toilet;
- the house should offer the possibility to be reconstructed and extended with new premises in conformity with the Roma tradition (related to the increase in number of the household members, sons' marriages, etc.);
- the house must have a large cellar or a garage that could be equipped as a workshop, a store or a shop, i.e. providing opportunities for labor activity;
- the yard should allow animal breeding, growing vegetables, as well as the construction of separate agricultural constructions.

The summarized conclusion is that Roma have oriented to the family house not only as a living place for the extended family but also as a center of their agricultural behavior while such notions as having fun or children's games have remained in the periphery of their expectations as something trivial, self-understood and unworthy of attention.

## ***V. Education***

### ***Schools***

According to the present legislative instruments there are no Roma or Gypsy schools in Bulgaria. There are no schools for a specialized language training either, which would make possible the existence of "Jewish", "Armenian" or "Russian" schools for children with the corresponding origin (Romani schools - Bulgaria 2001:9).

Some of the Romani schools remained as heritage further to the decisions and decrees of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party or the Council of Ministers of the People's Republic of Bulgaria (in 1958, 1968, 1971, 1978) for settling, education and raising the well-being of Roma and the Bulgarian self-consciousness of people with mixed marriages (Bulgarians -Roma, Bulgarians - Turks).

Roma, as well as the rest of the population were attached to certain regions where they settled, they had an obligatory address registration and residence permit according to their birthplace or work place. That is how a number of Roma schools emerged - about 80, called ephemerally during the period of socialism

"schools for children with low living standard and culture". Even then Roma prevailed in schools for mentally retarded children and in the orphanages (much more in number than today). One should stress on the fact that part of the schools for mentally retarded children, as well as part of the normal Roma schools are much older because Bulgarian Roma are settled down by rule and their schools are located in neighborhoods, villages and town's districts inhabited by them for ages. A third big group of Roma schools appeared during the past ten years. Certainly it will grow as a result of the tendency for increasing the number of Roma children in the pre-school and early school age mainly in the villages and the smaller municipalities of Central Bulgaria.

Unlike the Central- and East-European countries, Roma in Bulgaria have never lived in a mass scale outside the settlement borders though their isolation in separate neighborhoods was preserved even after the Liberation. (Given the fact that Roma were forced, more often than Bulgarians, to leave their houses and neighborhoods for different reasons - most often because of urban planning).

That is why it is a common practice, which started even during the period of Liberation from Turkish rule (in 1878), for those Roma's children who settled long ago and who live dispersed among the neighboring population, to study in the same schools and classes along with the children of their neighbors from the other ethnic communities, their parents work together and they have good neighborly relations in their everyday life. For this reason the present concentration of Roma in the big town's ghettos, villages or separate Roma settlements found even the representatives of the different ethnic communities unprepared to cope with the degrading processes, which occurred as a result of the separation and alienation.

In 2001 there were schools in Bulgaria with 50 % - 100 % Roma children living in villages and neighborhoods with entirely Roma population and in the town ghettos. According to data of the Ministry of Education such schools in Bulgaria are as follows: 60 elementary, about 350 primary and 9 secondary schools with a strong concentration in the municipalities of Shumen, Stara Zagora, Sliven, Pazardzhik and in the ghettos Stolipinovo in Plovdiv, Fakulteta, Tatarli, Filipovtsi in Sofia, Tokaito in Pazardzhik, Lozenets in Stara Zagora, Charodeika in Russe, etc. The main reason for their existence however is rather the objective demographic and geographical reasons and not purposeful segregation as some of the Romani leaders and human rights organizations often claim. According to the regional survey, the children of 29,1% of the respondents attend schools where most of the children are Roma. This share is probably higher given that 11% of the respondents did not know and 15.8% did not respond.

The issue of "Roma schools and their appearance" however is much broader and relates to the "exchange" of cultural codes and values. The "segregated schools" are a result not of explicit segregationist policies but of the natural and rational attempts of parents (those who can afford that) to escape poverty pockets and marginalized communities (where the probability of their children becoming marginalized is extremely high). Once a school becomes overwhelmed by children from a marginalized community (regardless of their ethnic affiliation), an automatic mechanism of negative selection is being triggered. Its mechanism is similar to the process of "inner cities" formation in the US.

What is more, physically and mentally healthy children are forced to study in programs for and among mentally retarded and disabled children because of the state support and shelter provided for these schools. The number of such schools is 85 in this country and as a rule, over 50 % of the pupils are Roma.

According to the 2002 data 96% of the respondents answered that they do not have not a child who attends a "special" school, i.e. a school for mentally retarded or disabled children and 2,5% declared that they have such a child. Children who study at such schools belong to Roma aged between 26-40 (4,3%), people without primary education, living in the city's outskirts, large households and the poorest. One hundred percent of the respondents in the capital answered that they do not haveÿ such a child.

Out of 100 Roma children who enter school only five (three boys and two girls) have some chance to receive secondary education and 10 % of these five children have the chance to get a higher education, especially if they come from Sofia, Plovdiv, Shumen, Stara Zagora, Sliven, Varna, Lom and Provadija.

There are no computers, laboratories, training facilities and equipment in these over 400 schools, sometimes they even lack a blackboard and chalk. Repairs have not been made for years, there are leakages, there is no heating in more than 50 % of these schools and the broken windows have been changed with plywood. The teachers and headmasters that work in these schools are dedicated and missionary-ascetic persons who refuse to receive any extras to their miserable salaries for the sake of the children's nutrition but, at the same time, there are teachers who consider their work in these schools as a punishment thus punishing their pupils (Roma schools - Bulgaria 2001:10-12).

The 2002 survey of A.S.A. studied Roma's dispositions with regard to the experiments for the school desegregation, as well as the approach preferred by them to their children's education. Asked "What would be the best way to provide your children with equal access to educationÿ that the children from the majority have?", most of the respondents demonstrate an extremely reasonable approach. They are aware that the only sustainable way to provide their children with equal access to education is not segregating them from the majority but encouraging integration. Is is seen both from "yes" and from "no" options. The statement receiving highest support - "attending school with majority children without special support on equal basis with the other children" - is supported by 62.6% of the respondents. The next two most widely supported are related to "additional language proficiency (59.6%) and an option close to it - attending the school with majority children but with special support (56%). It proves that the parents are aware that poor knowledge of the majority (official) language is the major obstacle to their children's education (along with poor living standards outlined in pre previous question).

This specialized support through additional classes in Bulgarian language is preferred mostly by parents from remote regions -74%, from the capital - 80% and middle-bracket Roma - 62%. Roma disagree with the desegregation projects according to which their children could go to central schools along with Bulgarian and Turkish children detached in special classes - 66%. Quite curious is the fact that Roma reject the variant of their children's teachers to be Roma and to teach in Roma - 60%.

Another serious problem Roma children are facing is drop-outs. The issue was addressed in the regional survey through the question "What could be the main three justifiable reasons for a boy/girl from your household not to attend school?" The results prove that one of the main reasons for non-attending school emerging is income-related: lack of decent clothes. Roma families are traditionally sensitive about their perception by the community and the inability to provide the child with decent clothes is really frustrating for many. It is worth analyzing why this concern is more valid for boys than for girls (respectively 28.9% and 25.4%). Expectedly "help in raising the younger children" is almost twice often perceived as a legitimate motive for girls than for boys (as the birth of a child). On the other hand it is rather disturbing that the school is not perceived as a relevant source of practical (and marketable) skills - the option "Even

if the child attends, he/she will be unemployed anyway" is chosen by 19.1% of the respondents regarding boys and by 14.9% regarding girls. It means also that school education is perceived to be more relevant for girl's possible future employment than for boys. What surprises is the relatively high share of respondents willing to accept children's unwillingness to attend school - 16.3% regarding boys and 11% regarding girls. It may be another evidence of the fact that for part of the parents education is still a vague value. On the other hand there is a significant part of the respondents who are determined to have their children at school (stating that they would not stop their child from school under no conditions).

According to the sociological survey the problems related to Roma children's education are of prior attention not only for the majority of the population, but they are of exceptional importance for the Roma themselves. The interviewed Roma were asked to grade by significance the 11 toughest problems their households are faced with according to a value scale 1-3. *Roma graded fourth by importance "the lack of educational opportunities"* after "unemployment, economic hardships and job discrimination". Of course, these attitudes should be evaluated against the background of the picture "what education is envisaged by the parents?".

This issue was addressed in the questions "What level of education is sufficient for a boy/girl in order to be able to succeed in life?" The data on the expected level of education reveals the existing stratification among Roma communities by gender. It is not just the fact that girls are perceived to need a lower educational level than boys (only 1.9% of respondents think that basic is enough for a boy and 4.9 think it is enough for a girl; 17.7% think primary is enough for boys against 23.9% for girls). Even more interesting is that men and women perceive this as "normal" alike. Women respondents do not have higher educational aspirations concerning the girls than male respondents do. There is also a general tendency to "replicate" their own educational status in the envisaged education of the children - people with lower levels of education tend to "be happy" with lower education for their children as well. This is important constrain to broader education-focused policies for Roma: lacking understanding of the real value of education for their children, parents (non-educated themselves) may resist special educational programs for their children.

This survey also discloses the after-effects from the complete feebleness of the educational institutions for already 12 years with regard to Roma: According to all respondents the Roma without education have become 18,1%, people with incomplete primary education are 24,2%, with primary - 41,4%, incomplete secondary - 2,7%, secondary - 12,2%, university - 0,7%. (Table 14). As also seen from the table, significant disparities in education levels emerge by gender and by type of settlements (with women and inhabitants of rural areas being less educated than men and people from the capital and urban areas).

	Gender of the respondent		Type of settlement				Total
	Male	Female	Capital	District center	Small town	Village	
None							
15,0%	20,7%	7,1%	16,6%	7,5%	25,5%	18,1%	



Incomplete primary						
20,5%	28,0%	16,1%	21,8%	23,4%	28,6%	24,2%
Primary						
43,3%	39,5%	51,8%	44,3%	47,8%	36,2%	41,4%
Incomplete - apprenticeship						
0,8%	0,2%			1,0%	,5%	,5%
Incomplete secondary						
4,0%	1,6%	1,8%	3,5%	2,5%	1,9%	2,7%
Secondary						
15,4%	9,0%	17,9%	12,1%	17,9%	7,3%	12,2%
College						
0,2%						0,1%
University						
0,6%	,8%	5,4%	1,4%			0,7%
N/r						
	0,2%		0,3%			0,1%

The conclusion that can be drawn is that generally Roma, as well as the representatives of the majority are aware of the threat for the future, related to the unequal education for Roma children. The issue however is not always unanimous - in many cases education is not viewed as a real asset (mainly as a result of the overall decline of life opportunities, which is not affected by level of education). Generally Roma are ready to make serious sacrifice to educate their children, but only when the parents themselves are convinced that education matters. Unfortunately this is not always the case. Respondents are also ready for bilateral compromises and are willing to support desegregation measures if they are implemented in the right way but not amateurishly, by incompetent and mercantile people. And one of the most important findings is that Roma are ready to sacrifice some of the newly gained rights such as studying Romani language in the name of the integration processes and the more successful future of their children.

### ***Mother tongue***

The problems of Roma children's education are related to the issue of mother tongue and their bi- or three- lingualism. A lot of Roma in Bulgaria are bilingual and some are trilingual that is why respondents usually use more than one language at home See Table 15. The answers to the question, "What is the language you speak usually at home?", the Roma answered in the following way:

**Table 15: What is the language you speak usually at home (Roma respondents)**

Languages	Yes	No
Bulgarian	51,0	46,0
Turkish	34,0	63,0
Romani	67,0	33,0
Another	0,4	98,0

*Source: The Ethnocultural situation in Bulgaria, 1992, 1994, IMIR*

It is an obvious fact that those 46 % of the Roma who do not speak Bulgarian will have difficulties in educating their children, to adapt them to school, to receive higher education and professional qualifications and to integrate in society.

The data from the Bulgarian segment of the regional Roma survey referring to Romani language shows a certain increase in the population using the Roma language: about 72% of the respondents acknowledge that they speak Romani at home. Roma who do not speak Romani have fallen to 28%, 1/3 of them are young, better educated, living in a municipal center or in a Roma settlement, as well as the richest. This change over the years may be attributed to the complex (and somewhat contradictory) processes of Roma awareness in Bulgaria.

However, its not the figure itself that matters. It is more important to view it against the background of the educational opportunities. The Bulgarian educational system does not provide for the use of different teaching aids and programs drawn in conformity with the needs of various social and cultural groups. There is a preliminary implied notion that the general education schools should prepare children and youngsters for an academic career only. From that point of view the increase of population using Roma language (and hence - the increase of the number of children having more limited access to Bulgarian at home) needs to be taken into consideration as one of the parameters of the "educational environment". Language duality can be both an asset and a segregating factor. So far the curriculum is not drawn in conformity with the fact that the Bulgarian language is not the mother tongue for a great part of the Roma and Turkish children and language duality is contributing to the increasing drop-out rates. But it is not Roma language usage that is the problem, it is the lack of sufficient additional access to Bulgarian language education opportunities. Additionally because of the impoverishment of the population as a whole, it is a very small part of children aged between 2-7 that go to nursery schools and pre-school classes, whereas 12 years ago children learned Bulgarian to some extent and were prepared for school. In 1995 only 12% of the children 3-5 years old attended nursery schools. The regional survey showed that this percentage has been preserved for the Roma children against 54 % for the Bulgarian and 38 % for the Turkish schoolchildren.

### ***Psychology and status of the Roma child in the educational system***

Roma children face all kinds of hardships when they first go to school. Most often it is difficult for them to understand what is being taught to them, due to their poor command of Bulgarian. That is why they get

tired faster than the other children. Very often they go to school hungry which additionally reduces their attention. Their family culture does not prompt them to sit quietly at one place for any length of time and when they get bored, they simply leave the classroom and the school. None in the family can assist them to make up for the missed lessons. Most of the Roma children live in miserable conditions and they are not able to prepare their homework, and nobody in the family makes them do it. All this creates additional difficulties for the Roma children to learn the standard lessons.

When Roma children start attending ethnically mixed schools, they suffer because they cannot manage with the school subjects, moreover, they are faced with the neglectful attitude of the other children and the teachers. Very rarely teachers encourage and praise them. This leads to increased aggressiveness and they get punished for that. The desire to go to school disappears very quickly. The Roma children's parents are also de-motivated to send their children to mixed schools because of the above-said reasons and because letting children out of their neighborhood creates a sense of insecurity.

The regional Roma survey supplemented the picture of de-motivation by asking about the knowledge and skills which children get from the community and from school. As data summarized in Table 16 shows, respondents receive their basic knowledge, skills and moral orientation in their community rather than at school, with one exception only - drawing (40% mastered this subject at school and 15% in their community). The school role is significant regarding four items only: moral values, love for the native country, harvesting from nature and knowledge of various languages.

<b>Table 16: What individual knowledge or skill you have learned rather in school and which rather from your community?</b>			
ÿ	In the community	In school	N/r
Romani language			
86,4%	,2%	13,4%	
Romani history			
52,4%	2,6%	44,9%	
Moral values			
66,0%	18,3%	15,7%	
Traditional crafts			
62,3%	4,8%	33,0%	
Cooking Skills			
70,1%	4,1%	25,8%	
Respect of the elderly			
80,9%	14,7%	4,4%	
To love the country I live in			

50,3%	41,2%	8,5%
Amateur painting		
14,6%	40,0%	45,4%
Romani traditions		
78,7%	1,8%	19,5%
Harvesting from the nature		
53,7%	20,5%	25,8%
Knowledge of mushrooms and herbs		
42,0%	10,8%	47,2%
Sewing or embroidery skills		
30,1%	11,5%	58,4%
Knowledge of various languages		
24,0%	19,4%	56,6%

The information can be viewed from another perspective as well. It is understandable that Romani language or Romani history, and traditional crafts is learned only in the community. The school is playing a negligible role in this respect and may be an additional reason for Roma being less interested in education. Hence increasing the "presence" of elements of Roma culture at school could be an additional leverage to get Roma children back to schools. On the other hand the high share of N/R responses on some options is indicative. It may be interpreted that people simply don't learn such things at all, which may outline potentially significant deficits in educational terms.

The share of respondents from the capital who acquired their knowledge and skills at school is higher by all indices in comparison with the respondents from other settlements with one exception only regarding the moral values - 19,6% from the capital and 20,4% from a municipal town.

The share of Roma who acquired knowledge and skills at school by all indices among those living in an isolated Roma neighborhood is the highest excluding Romani language, traditional crafts, cooking skills, Roma traditions, sewing and embroidery skills. This share is particularly high regarding the moral values (46%) at an average of 18%, respect for the elderly - 30% at an average of 15%, love for the native country - 78% at an average of 41%.

Roma who reached the level of secondary education in mixed schools claim that they had to exert much more effort than their Bulgarian (or Turkish) classmates in order to show them and their teachers that they were better or that for equal knowledge they got lower marks. (98 % of the respondents according to A.Zhelyazkova's anthropological interviews - September 2001). Roma respondents who are currently university students or who have obtained a higher education claimed that in spite of the offenses and complexes they had suffered in their school years while studying in the ,lite secondary and technical



<b>affiliation (1992 census)</b>			
Education	Bulgarians	Turks	Roma
Higher/college	20,2	2,0	0,9
Secondary	54,0	24,6	7,8
Primary	22,6	55,0	46,2
Elementary	3,0	16,0	36,7
Illiterate	0,2	2,3	8,5

*Source: National Statistical Institute, 1992 census results.*

Data of the Institute of Sociology of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences on the structure of education with the different ethnoconfessional communities in 2000 is somewhat different (table 18).

<b>Table 18: Institute of Sociology of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences estimation of the educational levels of the different ethnoconfessional communities, 2000</b>					
Education	Bulgarians	Bulgarian Muslims	Turks	Roma	Others
Higher	21,9	4,8	1,7	-	15,4
College	10,4	4,8	2,3	-	23,1
Secondary	43,9	52,3	43,9	7,4	30,7
Primary	18,3	23,8	37,6	50,0	7,2
Elementary	5,0	14,3	11,0	37,0	-
Without education	0,5	-	3,5	5,6	7,7

*Source: Fotev 2000*

The issue of access to education for Roma is strategic for Bulgaria, especially in the context of EU accession. The educational profile of the children today predetermines the qualification level of the labor force in 10-15 years. Assuming that no change in the tendency in education is observed, the labor force by that time (when all of the countries of the region expect to be members of EU) will have significant (and growing) unskilled and uneducated components predetermining the future existence of vast structural unemployment in all these countries (this issue is discussed in details further). As seen from table 19, Roma (and other minorities) prevail in the young age groups (the share of Roma in the age groups 0-15 being more than twice higher than the average share of Roma in the overall population). The

situation is not substantially different in other countries of the region. Given the "problems with the counting" of the exact number of Roma this share is even higher, which means that if the current state of marginalization and education deterioration persists, in 10-15 years between 15 and 20% of the labor-force (today's population aged 5-15) may be unemployable. Hence the future structural unemployment should be addressed today

**Table 19: Bulgaria: population by age, 2001**

Age groups	All population	Roma		All minorities	
		Number	% of total population in the age-group	Number	% of total population in the age-group
Total	7,781,369	365,160	4.69	1,122,234	14.4
0-4	305,069	35,987	11.80	78,900	25.9
5-9	375,390	40,042	10.67	92,226	24.6
10-14	487,192	44,388	9.11	107,475	22.1
15-19	522,624	38,990	7.46	104,407	20.0
20-24	563,224	35,663	6.33	99,484	17.7
25-29	554,587	32,622	5.88	90,197	16.3

Source: *Bulgaria Population census, 1.03.2001 (2% sample)*

## ***VI. Degrees of integration***

Everything mentioned in the above-written paragraphs is directly related to the degree of Roma integration in the Bulgarian society. There exist, however, some fields of life, which for one reason or another, are of extreme importance for the Roma value system and they show a special interest to be integrated in them by all means, namely: in the political life (through their parties and organizations), in the state institutions and the local authorities (through the participation of their representatives), in the army and the police (serving as soldiers on an equal basis), in the non-governmental organizations (as a niche for a special public manifestation and proof of qualities for independent activities, as well as abilities for raising large funds), in the media and in the country's cultural life as a whole, where they have the justifiable self-confidence to have a significant contribution to the all-national wealth.

### ***Participation and representation***

Since integration is directly related to representation, a separate bloc was devoted to these issues in the regional survey. Asked the question "Do you think your interests are represented well enough?" only 7.8% chose "yes" for national level representation. It is worth noting that the lower the administrative level (i.e.

the closer the administrative body to the constituency), level, the higher the perception of inclusion and representativity (as shown in table 20). These discrepancies are most evident in small towns. It is interesting that respondents from the capital feel equally underrepresented (or insufficiently represented) at all levels.

	Gender of the respondent		Type of settlement				Total
	Male	Female	Capital	District center	Small town	Village	
At national level							
6,2%	8,8%	5,4%	6,3%	9,4%	6,3%	7,8%	
At municipal level							
12,5%	12,3%	7,1%	8,7%	17,2%	11,7%	12,7%	
At the level of the community							
14,9%	13,5%	5,4%	11,8%	19,7%	12,2%	14,3%	
Other level (what)							
5,5%	7,8%		2,9%	11,1%	7,6%	6,6%	

The discrepancy between national and local level of representation is due to a certain extent to the fact that Roma in Bulgaria are traditionally disunited. They create micro-societies from one or several Roma sub-groups (subgroups are over 25 in Bulgaria), which are united by common traditions, crafts, language, religion and other signs that represent a sort of a residual type of pre-modern tribal-clan relations. Very often the lack of understanding and hostility among the Roma sub-groups are more irreconcilable and deeper than among the Roma as a whole and the other ethnic and religious communities in this country.

The lack of inter-community consensus and unity predetermines the exceptionally difficult communication among the Roma leaders in their attempts to create a real Roma unification within one or two party formations. In the meantime, during the 12-year transition, Roma participated in several successive presidential, parliamentary and local elections. They understood quite well that they were important as an electoral strength only, that they were offered quite unrealistic promises and that attempts were made to buy their votes cheap right before elections. Some of them consecutively set their hopes on the big all-national parties, i.e. the Bulgarian Socialist Party, the Union of Democratic Forces and the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, though, as a rule, the Roma community manifests low electoral activity. After they experienced much disappointment and none of the political parties kept their ample promises, the Roma started the complex process of building up their own Roma parties. A representative of such a party called "Euroroma" became a Member of Parliament during the previous elections as his party entered into coalition with the modern Euroleft party.



Another Roma party called "Free Bulgaria" presented itself quite promising during the local elections in 1999 winning about 87 seats for municipal councilors and several mayor's positions. This encouraged the Roma subgroups and their leaders to register three more parties for the 2001 parliamentary elections, which some months before the elections made a coalition including some ten Roma non-governmental organizations. For the first time they took some hope to have overcome the differences and the inter-community rivalry in the name of their representation in Parliament. Roma leaders and the activists themselves were surprised to see *Kaldarashi, Zuzumani*, Turkish Gypsies, etc. sitting and working together.

Until April 2001 (i.e. the inclusion of Simeon Saxe-Coburg Gotha and his National Movement Simeon II in the pre-election campaign) political analysts and specialists on Roma issues marked a considerable growth in hopes among the Roma community in Bulgaria that at last they would be represented adequately in the legislative power and in the political sphere of the Bulgarian public life as a whole. Analysts were quite realistic in their prognoses claiming that Roma would hardly rank with their own representation in Parliament but they expected results close to the 4% threshold, which would inevitably guarantee the national Roma coalition an important place among the non-parliamentary forces and authority in the political life of this country. The disappointment of the Roma leaders was strong because they won only 0,68% votes since the prevailing part of the Roma voted for Simeon II.

This doomed the Romani coalition to failure and it disintegrated almost immediately after the elections, the emotional collapse and demotivation weakened the separate Roma parties as well, which hardly have any chance to restore again soon. During the presidential elections in November 2001 the nominee of the Bulgarian Communist Party was supported by 74% of the Roma votes, thus Roma demonstrated that they had returned to their lasting nostalgia for the social policy and the social security during the period of the communist rule and their traditional left political orientation.

These results would hardly surprise the Roma leaders if they disposed of data from our survey which shows that only 6% of Roma have mentioned a Roma party they could trust and these are mainly men with primary education and above, from a small city or village, as well as from a separate Roma settlement. It is mainly Roma from the rest of the categories who did not take part in the elections. As a whole, 66% of the Roma have declared that they voted during the last parliamentary elections and 34% acknowledged that they did not go to the polls. At that, hardly 29% named their partiality to a political party and 80% did not indicate any party.

### ***Interactions with the majority***

The latest sociologists' data confirms this phenomenon: 83% maintain some relations with the majority and 17% claim that they do not keep any relations. As a whole, the bigger part of Roma keep some relations with the majority and these are mainly Roma who do not speak Romani at their homes, who have a higher education, Roma who live in separate Roma neighborhoods, as well as the richest among them. And vice versa, those who have poor command of Bulgarian, people with incomplete primary education and the poorest do not keep any relations with the majority.

Meanwhile, it becomes clear that only 49% keep relations with representatives of other Roma groups and 47% do not keep any relations, which exceeds three times the number of respondents who declared to keep relations with the majority (17%). Relations with other Roma groups have been kept by those living

in a small city, remote regions and the poorest while 80% of the respondents from the capital, from separate Roma settlements and the richest Roma do not keep such relations. The stated preferences for cohabitation confirm the alienation among the Roma sub-groups: only 2% of the interviewed would not like to have Bulgarians as their neighbors and 5,4% would not like representatives of other ethnic groups to be their neighbors, while 6,6% would not like to have representatives of another Roma group near their house.

The relations issue is interesting not just because of the existing Roma relations with the majority but also because of the differences by type of settlement. The ordinary contacts from living in the same neighborhood prevail totally in the capital probably because of scarcity of other interactions. The high share of mixed marriages in the District center and Small towns is worth considering as well as "helping each other in dealing with the police". But probably most promising is the high share in all settlements of contacts between children. On the other hand it is extremely interesting to follow the difference in types of relations with the majority and with other Roma groups (table 21).

Type of relations maintained with:	BG and other and ethnicities	Other Roma group
Mixed marriages	20,1%	74,7%
Joint business	16,3%	48,3%
Ordinary contacts from living in the same neighborhood	91,6%	94,4%
Help each other in dealing with the police	30,3%	57,8%
Practice sport or engage in joint entertainment	45,9%	78,6%
Our children play together	62,1%	83,2%
Have a beer together	60,8%	83,9%
Invite each other for marriages or other family holidays	46,9%	85,3%
Other (what?)	8,9%	39,0%
No relations	5,7%	16,0%

Data on the preferences of a business partner (presumably - a trusted person) provide additional interesting aspect of interactions between Roma and the majority. As seen from table 22, on the average the respondents manifest high level of integrationist attitudes - for 54.7% of the total respondents ethnic affiliation of the business partner does not matter. But, again, the discrepancies between different groups are most interesting: the lowest level of the "it does not matter" options is for the capital - only 30.4%.

For the rest it not just matters, but the preference of Roma as as business partners is twice lower than the preference of representatives from the majority (14.3% vs. 30.4%). The share of responses here is twice as high as well as the share of preference of foreigners (almost negligible 1.8%).

<b>Table 22: If you had the possibility to choose a business partner, whom would you prefer?</b>					
	Type of settlement				Total
	Capital	District center	Small town	Village	
Representative from the majority	10,0%	9,9%	11,7%	11,9%	30,4%
Representative from Roma community	11,0%	11,4%	9,7%	10,9%	14,3%
Representative from another minority	,3%	,5%	,2%		
Foreign	11,0%	14,9%	8,5%	10,7%	1,8%
It does not matter	56,9%	59,9%	54,5%	54,7%	30,4%
N/r	10,7%	3,5%	15,6%	11,7%	23,2%

Finally, extremely interesting information on the issue of interaction and exclusion provide the answers to the question "Which of the following groups you would not like to have as your neighbors?" (Table 23). Most strongly rejected are people with AIDS (70% don't want them as neighbors) followed by homosexuals and ex-prisoners. The least rejected are representatives of the majority (the level of rejection of them is even lower than that of having as their neighbors representatives of another Roma group). It may both illustrate the high potential of interethnic tolerance as well as the depth of the existing differences among Roma themselves. The problem here is with the "reverse perception: when Bulgarians are asked the same question Roma are appearing as one of the most rejected groups.

<b>Table 23: Which of the following groups you would not like to have as your neighbors?</b>			
	Don't mind	Don't want	N/r
Representatives of the majority			

96,2%	1,9%	1,8%
Representatives of another Roma group		
90,0%	6,6%	3,4%
Representatives of another ethnic minority from your country		
90,7%	5,4%	3,9%
Immigrants from other countries		
79,4%	13,8%	6,8%
Persons with other religious affiliation than yours		
85,6%	9,5%	4,9%
Ex - prisoners		
35,7%	58,4%	5,9%
People with AIDS		
21,9%	69,8%	8,4%
Divorced		
83,8%	13,4%	2,8%
Homosexuals		
26,0%	64,9%	9,1%

### *The role of the local leaders*

The issue of Roma leaders is closely related to political representation and participation. One of the stereotypes about Roma is the traditionally high respect of the informal leaders around which informal inter-community networks of trust and authority are being built. The regional survey however does not prove that. Asked, "On who could Roma in your country rely on for support?" (Table 24) 48.2% of the respondents state that they can rely on Roma neighbors and friends - an option revealing the existing family and neighborhood networks of support. The next "pillar" is the government (or in broader terms - the state with its support networks), 43.6% followed by expected support from neighbors and friends from the majority (36.7%). This high level of trust in neighbors and friends from the majority is really optimistic from a societal point of view. Only 14.1% would tend to rely on the support of the informal Roma leaders for support. The same low level of trust is revealed by the answers to the question "Who best defends your interests in your community?" (Table 25). Again the state security networks emerge as "security pillars" and again Roma leaders receive unexpectedly low levels of trust.

**Table 24: On who could Roma in your country rely on for support?**

Rather yes	Type of settlement				Total
	Capital	District center	Small town	Village	
25,9%	13,4%	28,5%	21,5%	20,6%	
20,8%	17,3%	32,1%	17,4%	21,2%	
5,7%	11,7%	24,5%	12,5%	14,1%	
3,7%	13,4%	27,3%	20,8%	19,2%	
25,9%	35,2%	34,2%	41,0%	36,7%	
38,9%	48,1%	46,4%	51,0%	48,2%	
7,5%	8,2%	15,3%	13,5%	12,1%	
58,2%	32,0%	40,2%	48,9%	43,6%	
24,5%	23,5%	36,5%	35,1%	30,9%	

On the one hand these results prove that in the Bulgarian society a strong potential for inter-ethnic cooperation still exists and should be encouraged. It is also important to have in mind that it is stronger at the local level, where the intensity of interactions is higher ("interactions with" and not just "knowledge about" the "other ethnicity" is the real pro-integration tool). On the other hand the poor performance of the informal leaders may be a symptom of some class-type solidarity and identification replacing the clan or ethnic solidarity and identification. It is possible that informal Roma leaders are perceived as parts of the "others", of the rich (and alien) elite. The same to a certain extent applies to NGOs with a human rights profile. If support is envisaged from "outside" it is rather foreign donors (identifiable also through

social assistance programs). It is interesting however that NGOs with human rights profile are clearly distinguished from the foreign donors.

<b>Table 25: Who best defends your interests in your community?</b>					
	Type of settlement				Total
	Capital	District center	Small town	Village	
Rather yes					
Roma parties local branches					
23,6%	6,2%	6,7%	8,5%	8,2%	
Non-Roma parties local branches					
3,6%	4,4%	2,1%	5,8%	4,5%	
Roma NGOs					
11,1%	9,8%	16,0%	4,0%	10,0%	
Informal Roma leaders					
9,3%	8,0%	20,6%	6,3%	9,9%	
Non-Roma NGOs with human rights profile					
7,4%	4,7%	8,3%	4,3%	5,3%	
The local government administration					
16,4%	8,7%	31,4%	32,9%	25,8%	
Social assistance administration					
23,6%	22,3%	35,8%	41,3%	33,1%	
Local employment services					
17,0%	9,5%	17,3%	17,6%	15,1%	

### ***The role of the non-governmental sector***

One of the niches of the social life in Bulgaria is filled and used most beneficially by the Roma is the non-governmental sector. Maybe due to their urgent needs, as well as their flexible and dynamic stereotype, Roma were the first to seek the support of the non-governmental organization. Within the period of 1-2 years the community understood quite well the nature of the non-profit organization, the opportunities for all kinds of activities, and it showed some jealousy as *only gadzho* could establish foundations and associations to support them in the field of culture, education, health protection, etc. The establishment and registration of the first Roma non-governmental organizations was incited and supported by IMIR in

1994-1995, being followed very quickly by the setting up of Roma foundations, youth associations and women's organizations all over Bulgaria. In 2001 these organizations went beyond 800, a great part of them only simulating activities in their efforts to raise some donors' funds. In any case, more than ten very active and constructive organizations are working in the country now supporting their community basically in their efforts to maintain and develop the traditional culture, the educational level, as well as to economically support the Roma community.

The non-governmental sphere was the first where prejudices and negative stereotypes were very quickly overcome by both sides and a good atmosphere of confidence and mutual assistance was created. NGOs implemented a lot of pilot projects for the integration of Roma in the Bulgarian society, a big part of them were evaluated as quite successful and could be used in the managerial practice.

It is obvious, however, that the activities of Roma and the all-national non-governmental organizations encompass a very small part of the Roma community, i.e. it is difficult to speak of some serious effectiveness of these organizations. According to sociologists' surveys hardly 12% of the interviewed Roma claimed that they knew about some supporting programs while the majority of 85% claimed that they had not heard of such programs. Most of these 12% of respondents who are aware of these specialized programs define them as human rights programs - 75%, educational - 74% and economic - 69%. According to these 12% of Roma, the burden of these programs is assumed basically by local Roma NGOs - 50%, by governmental agency - 40%, directly by foreign donors - 39%, by informal Roma groups - 24%, by local non-Roma NGOs - 21% and by other - 20%.

The survey shows also that the role of the local informal leaders has been strongly exaggerated. In 2001 hardly 8% of the interviewed addressed their local leaders, while 90% claimed that they did not do that. Those 8% who addressed the local leaders asked for some help with reference to employment problems - 65%, for lack of funds - 63%, and quite small was the number of those with housing problems, conflicts with the police, conflicts with other Roma or in their families.

### ***Perception of the central and local state institutions***

In April 1999 under the pressure of Roma leaders and under the influence of public opinion Ivan Kostov's Government signed a "Framework Program for Equal Integration of Roma in the Bulgarian Society". Under the strength of this contract the municipal administrations were obliged to announce competitions and to appoint municipal councilors on Roma issues and Roma integration. This initiative, however, abated because Roma were appointed in half of the municipal councils only and today there are even dismissals among them. The approach used for the appointment of these Roma representatives, as well as for the several Roma appointed as officers in the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy was corrupted. They did not carry out eligible competitions, and young and educated Roma did not manage to rank for these positions because they preferred Roma who were loyal to the ruling party.

Training and integration of Roma in the police structures started in pursuance of the Framework Program. Now there are about 50 Roma appointed as policemen and they work in the quarters inhabited prevalently by Roma. Data from the survey definitely proves the potential of such projects showing Roma's readiness to participate in the integration processes through their participation in the police structures. However results also show quite clearly their fears: 61% of the interviewed men aged between

15-25 having primary education and above are ready to join the police. This figure rises to 72% with Roma living in a small city and reaches 86% with Roma living in a separate Roma settlement!

Table 26 trace the fears of 31% of the interviewed who declared that they would not accept a job in the police. The arrangement of these restraining factors is the following: 1. Lack of necessary training - 84%; 2. The other people will not have respect for them - 54%; 3. The other policemen will not accept them - 51%; 4. Roma and policemen are on different sides of the barricade - 45%; 5. They will lose the respect of their community - 33%. What is interesting, there are no drastic differences in the assessments of male and female respondents on the issue of possible reasons for not-joining the police.

<b>Table 26: Would you join the police if you were offered to (would you accept your husband to join the police if he is offered to)? If no, why?</b>		
	Male respondents ("If you were offered")	Female respondents ("If your husband was offered")
Lack of the necessary qualification		
84,1%	77,4%	
Won't be accepted by the rest of the officers		
50,8%	61,5%	
The family won't like that		
28,3%	40,9%	
Will lose respect in the community		
33,3%	40,7%	
We are on different sides of the barricade		
44,8%	49,5%	
People (citizens) would not respect me		
54,0%	52,7%	

It is obvious that Roma objectively assess their possibilities to cope with this job but at the same time there exist some inexcusable complexes caused by the ethnic prejudices of the majority. Quite fair-spoken is the statement that Roma and policemen stand on different sides of the barricade - this is definitely a token of some social, not ethnic tension, as well as a sign of the confrontational subculture of the ghetto.

It is only in the local authorities that Roma achieved some representation basically through the participation in the local elections with their party formations.



According to sociologists' data Roma trust most the local administration and 74% think that their interests within the community are best defended by the employment and social services and the local authorities as a whole. 64% of the interviewed gave a correct answer about the name of their mayor and 36% did not. Most of the people living in a separate Roma settlement and in villages know the name of their mayor while 80% from the capital and half of those living in the inner city do not know the mayor's name.

### ***VII. The special case: Roma and the military forces***

The presence of Roma in the military structures goes well beyond the military aspects. Traditionally the Bulgarian army played very important socializing role. On the one hand (as any military structure) it was "formatting" young conscripts mentalities. On the other it was often the army where young people from minorities had a chance to "catch up" in educational terms by acquiring some basic training and professional skills. That is why the issue deserves special attention - the specific case of the army reflects in a "condensed" way many general problems Roma are facing in Bulgarian society.

#### ***Military forces and education***

One interesting perspective worth approaching in the issue of the Roma in the military is directly linked to the crisis in education. The general decline in the quality of Bulgarian education should be added to the increase of the share of the illiterate and functionally illiterate children and youths. The basic reason for this is the extremely low funding of education and related to it teachers' demotivation for a responsible activity.

According to data of the Social Democratic Institute survey on "The school and the social inequalities" conducted in 2000, the chemistry laboratories where real chemical demonstrations are carried out do not function in 43 % of the Bulgarian primary and secondary schools, in 40 % of the schools there are no physics laboratories, in 23 % there are no history maps, 19 % are lacking geography maps, 10 % of the schoolchildren were not able to purchase them and the school was not in a position to provide the necessary textbooks (Kolev, Raichev, Bundzhulov, 2000). The overall decrease in the quality of education is unproportionally distributed - the decline in the quality level was worst in minority-dominated schools. It has a long-term influence on the training process in the army.

Another negative tendency, which reflects on the fighting capacity of the Bulgarian Army, is the deterioration of children's and youths' health status. In 1999 disability in the poorest Roma districts reached 173 per 1000 and in 2/5 of the cases disability set in at an early age.

By introducing the health insurance system a great part of the Roma will remain without a family doctor. This will inevitably affect the health of children and young people living in these families. The most immediate threat comes from children's dropping off of the immunization lists because vaccines are disseminated and applied by the family doctors only. The overall society is threatened by the unvaccinated children because this could lead to very serious after-effects in the army. The unvaccinated boys that join the army will increase the risks in the army and will decrease its fighting capacity in the near future, actually as early as the next 5-6 years.

Against this background, the reform in the Bulgarian Army has been an ongoing process and it made it possible for the minority youths to serve with all other conscripts enjoying the same rights. The

Transport and Construction corps (where Roma were predominantly conscripted) were disbanded and demilitarized and now Roma youths are conscripted into the regular army along with the rest of the boys. From this point of view the desegregation in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria has already been completed.

Talking of the real parameters and results of Roma's desegregation and integration in the Bulgarian Army we shall refer to the data of IMIR's sociological research and the survey of the Institute for Advanced Defence Research on the "Dispositions towards Ethnic Tolerance and Cooperation in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria", which was completed in March 2001 with research Directors Dr. Ilona Tomova (IMIR) and Commander Dr. Yantsislav Yanakiev (IADR).

The group of the commissioned officers comes close to the Bulgarian male population with higher and secondary education, in their young and middle age, which is most tolerant and liberal in its general totality. The survey's objectives impose a comparison of the ethnic attitudes and relations in the Bulgarian Army and the macrosociety in order to answer the question whether the army conditions further the Roma integration or, on the contrary - lead to increasing of social distances and ethnic prejudices. It is again the survey's objectives that imposed a separate consideration of the commissioned officers and ranks within the context of the ethnic relations.

### ***Levels of trust and tolerance***

The widespread and tolerated negative public opinion and attitudes towards Roma can be observed in the Army, too. In the meantime, however, the commissioned officers are often bearers and spokesmen of the tendencies for democratization and humanization of the interethnic relations, i.e. of the positive changes and development in the Bulgarian social life. For example, the opinion of the prevailing part of the civilian Bulgarians is that "one cannot rely on Gypsies" (85 % of the interviewed), this disposition decreases to 72% among the commissioned officers. Similar is the difference in favor of the military when stating the stereotype "Gypsies are irresponsible and lazy" - 84 % of the civilians and 74 % of the military.

One can clearly observe the processes of gradually overcoming mistrust, suspiciousness and negative attitudes towards the Turks and to a lesser extent, to the Roma in this country. Most tolerant towards minorities are the commissioned officers with higher education. Quite interesting are the observations that the military with longest service in the Army, as well as the senior officers have a more tolerant attitude towards minorities. In other words, army service does not lead to increasing the negative dispositions and prejudices but on the contrary, it builds a lasting approach to impartiality.

The military shows greater respect to the minorities' civil rights and equality than the "average statistical Bulgarian". They are more inclined to accept a minority representative to perform important social roles as: chief of a police office, officer in the army, teacher or minister. To the question "Would you accept the chief of your police office to be a Roma?" 13% of the civilians and 17% of the military gave a positive answer. To the similar question, "Would you accept your child's teacher to be a Roma?" 16% of the civilians and 21,5% of the military answered positively. As regards "the minister" positive answers were given by 13% of civilians and 17,5% of military men.

The same is the tendency with regard to the respect towards the basic cultural, linguistic and political rights, the percentage of both, civilians and military men being much higher.

Quite different are the results of the interviews with the conscripts whose answers to the same questions vary in the negative spectrum on the evaluation scale. Still more dramatic is the fact that negative answers were given by not only the majority of Bulgarians but the other ethnic communities, too. They all have a negative attitude towards Roma. For example, "Would you accept a Roma to be chief of the police?" the answers of the Bulgarian conscripts is (-0,6), and of the Turkish soldiers Turks (-0,1). As regards the "minister - Roma" -Bulgarian conscripts (-0,7), and Turks (-0,3). Unlike Bulgarians and Turks, soldiers who self-identify as Roma are most open towards the other ethnic communities. They have no doubts in Bulgarians being teachers of their children, chiefs of the Police, officers and ministers.

According to the opinion of the surveyed conscripts, the state of the ethnic relations compared with the rest of the social problems in Bulgaria is not a problem for the development of the country now. It is only in this item that their concepts approach the assessments of the conscripts and the society as a whole. Most of the interviewed soldiers do not find any problems in the interrelations between Bulgarians and Turks and they assess them as "very good" and "rather good".

### ***Interethnic interactions***

Quite different is the situation with the evaluation of the interrelations between Bulgarians and Roma. Over 50 % of the soldiers assess these interrelations as "rather bad" and "too bad". Roma, respectively, assess the state of the ethnic relations in Bulgaria as "a tough problem".

The main reason for the existing prejudices, social distances, etc. among the representatives of the different ethnic and religious communities and especially towards the Roma is the fear. The in-depth research of senior and high-rank officers disclosed the sense of fear from the Roma: fear of "demographic invasion", fear of imposition of the cultural values, fear of the progressive criminalization of the group.

The expert research and the representative sociological surveys conducted in 2001 among commissioned officers and conscripts showed that there was no tension in the army on ethnicity base. At the same time they managed to formulate quite precisely the main current and potential problems when integrating Roma in the Bulgarian Army.

Illiteracy among Roma soldiers and the poor command of Bulgarian are put in the first place. This leads to difficulties in communications and mastering the training material. The second tough problem, according to the expert groups, is the fact that soldiers from minorities, when comprising a majority, often communicate in their mother tongue and this makes Bulgarians feel threatened because they do not understand their language.

Bulgarians' ignorance of their traditions, customs and culture is shown as another tough problem for the integration of minorities in the Bulgarian Army. This is assessed as an essential lapse in the commanders' training to work in a multiethnic environment.

In their prognosis for probable future tensions and conflicts in the army experts unanimously state that "the basic tensions will emerge between Roma and the representatives of the other ethnoses". The most important factors in this line are the negative dispositions among all other ethnic groups towards Roma. As a whole, these dispositions repeat the wide spread negative prejudices towards Roma in this country. In this connection the comments of a high-ranking officer were that commissioned officers are faced with

some real and latent tensions among the conscripts due to gaps in the school system and the society as a whole.

All military experts are unanimous that there would not be any problems with the Roma integration in the army if the recruits did not arrive in the training camps filled with prejudices, cultivated in their families. According to them the process of Roma social integration should be considered as a unified and continuous process including family, school, army and all social structures.

It is obvious that the most serious problem on national level is the lack of a common model for integration of minorities, as well as a unified policy, which the Bulgarian Army as a state institution should pursue.

There are no doubts, however, that the Army has significant resources to implement its integration functions with regard to the ethnic minorities. It is an organized, hierarchical system based on the observance of clear and common rules for everyone. The attitude towards each person is equal, people, regardless of their ethnic and religious affiliations, are obliged to jointly work in a group and to jointly overcome difficulties. Moreover, thanks to the ruling mechanisms, the Army can manage and overcome the internal conflicts aiming to achieve the common goals. A peculiarity of the army institution is its conservatism, which in this case is positive and limits the transfer of some problems in the interethnic relations from society.

What is characteristic of the army milieu is that for the first time some soldiers are faced with representatives of other ethnic groups and they have an opportunity for everyday direct contacts with them. Thus they come to know their culture, customs, traditions and characteristic features for a comparatively long period of time and under difficult conditions at that.

### ***Socialization***

The issue of the socialization of a great number of minority youths remains open. The construction and transport corps where these young men used to serve, had important socializing functions, their professional socialization included. Roma themselves estimate ambiguously the demilitarization of these corps and their closure. On the one hand, their leaders explicitly stated that the service of the Roma youths was segregative and they had to reject it, and, on the other hand, parents and pre-conscripts themselves feel discouraged because the only possibility to acquire a profession, free training and qualification has become inaccessible as a result of the observance of the democratic rules.

The experts' opinion is that these military corps should continue functioning for the time being as a kind of an alternative service where youths with incomplete primary education could serve their time as soldiers. This would solve simultaneously the problem with the educational level of the conscripts and, to a certain extent, would promote the Roma social integration.

### ***VIII. Criminality and the Roma***

The problem with Roma criminality is part and parcel of the public problem related to the general growth of criminality rates. The topic on *ethnicity* of criminality (in the sense of *Romanization*) was readily

accepted by society. Usually some prejudices lie in the root of such conclusions, as well as some inaccuracy when working with the available statistical information.

Language, culture, religion, temperament and mentality taken alone cannot be determinants of the scales and specificity of the criminal behavior of representatives of any ethnic group.

The higher crime rate among Roma is the result of the complicated social interaction among the ethnic groups in the Bulgarian society, of their social status and not of the specific peculiarities of the corresponding ethnoses. Thus, the most important thing in the interrelations between Roma and the rest of the population is their lower social status, having serious influence on life experience and the behavior of its representatives.

According to the police statistics which study the increase of criminality rate by ethnic affiliation during the 1993-1997 period, it becomes obvious that statements on the highest criminality rate among the Roma community are actually a myth. During these five years crimes increased by 84,3% with the Bulgarians, by 34,8% with the Turks and by 29,8% with Roma. On the other hand the share of major crimes committed by representatives of different ethnic groups differ (table 27). In the case of Roma their overall "share in the committed crimes" is really higher than their "share in the overall population". That however should not be a source of oversimplified conclusions - these figures should be interpreted in the overall context of social degradation and marginal class formation among Roma (where the probability of delinquent behavior rises dramatically).

**Table 27: Share of registered of selected types of crimes per ethnic group 1993-97**

Type of crime	Bulgarians	Roma	Turkish	Other	Total
Robbery	55,2%	38,1%	6%	0,7%	100
Rape (numbers of cases)	600	202	70	4	876
Rape (share in the total)	68.5	23.1	8	0.5	100
Murders	72,2%	19%	7,1%	1,7%	100

Source: *Crime rate in Bulgaria, Analysis for the period 1993-1997. Criminological survey, IMIR's archive*

Directly related to the issue of crime and its "ethnic scent" is the asymmetrical nature of information and perception. Perpetrators of economic crimes are not included in these data as the percentage of people of non-Roma origin is always higher as are the volumes stolen. This is due to Roma's unequal access to power and economic resources when compared with the other ethnic groups. But as a result the public perceives as almost "natural" when a minister steals several millions of dollars and at the same time is jumping in cases of petty crimes committed by Roma.

At the same time, this data shows that criminal activity with Roma when committing criminal offenses such as murders and attempted murders is higher than with Bulgarians and the other ethnic groups.

It is of particular importance to trace the increase of juvenile delinquency among the Roma community. The number of criminals has increased in all age groups during the 1993 - 1997 period. For the age group between 14 and 17 the increase is 34,78% with a tendency towards further growth.

Juveniles are relatively inactive in the sphere of economic crime, when compared with other age groups. At the same time they are three times more active in the sphere of crimes against the personality (murder and attempted murder, rape and attempted rape, robbery, assault and battery) when compared with the age group 31 - 40, and 13 times more active when compared with the age group of people over 40.

In 1997 the Children's Pedagogic Office reported over 5 000 offenders - children younger than 14 years (minor) and about 18,000 adolescents aged 14 through 17. Delinquents in the Children's Pedagogic Offices had the following distribution by ethnic affiliation in 1997: \_

<b>Table 28: Teenage delinquents distribution by ethnic affiliation</b>				
	Bulgarians	Roma	Turks	Other
Number of delinquents registered	16 106	8 222	1471	150
Total number of delinquents per 100000 population for each group	222	2 624	184	146

*Source: Crime rate in Bulgaria, Analysis for the period 1993-1997. Criminological survey, IMIR's archive*

It is obvious that the crime rate among young Roma is over ten times higher per 100 000 people than that among the children belonging to other ethnic groups. In 1997, 90% of street children were estimated to be Roma. The institutions responsible for street children took temporary care of 3 389 persons out of whom 1 818 were Roma. According to NSI statistics about convicted individuals the number of convicted juveniles of Roma origin (per 100 000 persons) exceeds by 15 times the number of convicted Bulgarians.

These facts are alarming, having in mind the increasing xenophobia against Roma among all ethnic groups, the Lynch-like attitude in society against persons belonging to the Roma community, and the irreversible marginalization of Roma from society.

As far as street children are concerned, 73% of those belonging to the Roma community have two parents, whereas the absence of parents (or at least the absence of one of them) is characteristic for the street children of a different ethnicity. The essential factor for Roma children to be on the street is that their parents are unemployed. The second factor is the lack of home or the severe poverty at home. Parental violence is a factor, too. Fifteen percent of Roma children declare that any wrong done by them is the reason to be expelled from home, while the percentage among Bulgarians is 2%. Street Roma children smoke less and drink considerably less than Bulgarian street children. At the same time, usage of drugs among Roma street children is much more widespread (21%) than among Bulgarian street children (2%).

According to the inspectors of the Children's Pedagogical Office (84% out of 308 persons interviewed) street children's families are in a disastrous financial situation; parents motivate their children to commit

crimes (79% of the inspectors interviewed), the parents themselves represent a danger for their own children (96% of the inspectors interviewed).

### ***IX. General conclusions***

During the past 12 years the governments did not want and did not take any actions to solve the specific problems of minorities in Bulgaria and the problems of their integration. During these years experience was gained mainly by the non-governmental organizations (national, regional and Roma). An experience, which had both negative and positive aspects, both positive and negative results. Many of the activities carried out by the NGOs in favor of Roma were preceded by serious and competent research activity and a profound scientific analysis. Thus, a considerable part of Roma problems were determined and formulated by the expert study conducted by sociologists, historians, anthropologists, experts in regional economy, pedagogues and psychologists.

The implementation of large-scale projects targeted at improving the Roma status in Bulgaria, as well as their integration preserving at the same time their traditional culture, require special efforts by all state institutions. State policy and practice, on its part, should seek the support, co-operation and participation of the specialized NGOs, which have already accumulated experience in the study of Roma, they have won their confidence and have approved many practices of integration.