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INCLUD-ED

Strategies for inclusion and social cohesion in Europe from education

WORKING PAPER:

SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL EXCLUSION AND INCLUSION PROCESSES AMONG VULNERABLE GROUPS

Project 4 Work package 16

(Qualitative research - Romania)

UVT

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INDEX

INTRODUCTION

The survey of the NGO's is a part of Project 4, with the objective: To investigate how educational exclusion affects diverse sectors of society, particularly the most vulnerable groups (i.e. women, youth, migrants, cultural groups and people with disabilities), and what kind of educational provision contributes to overcome their respective discrimination (Annex I, p.5).

Specifically, the objective of the work package 16 is: to study trajectories moving towards social exclusion within five vulnerable groups (migrants, women, cultural groups, youth and people with disabilities) in order to identify the processes and strategies that reproduce these trajectories and those that overcome them. (Annex I, p.38).

In this study the focus is on the perspective of vulnerable groups. Particularly, the aim was to identify key moments in people's daily lives which have influenced the development of trajectories involving exclusion from the current knowledge society. Evidence of the processes and strategies which make it possible to overcome this exclusion was gathered, by placing a special emphasis on successful actions which contribute to it.

The empirical analysis is based on the critical communicative methodology that enables an egalitarian dialogue between the researchers and the research participants whose voices have often been excluded. The empirical data analyzed in this report was gathered through communicative daily life stories and communicative focus groups with persons belonging to the five established vulnerable groups (migrants, cultural minorities, women, youth, and people with disabilities).

Apart from Romania, research with the same methodology was carried out in Cyprus, Italy, Spain, and Hungary. The data from each country is analyzed in individual reports.

National context in Romania

*Migrants.*Romania's slow and difficult transition of from a communist to a capitalist economy, corroborated with the notorious corruption of the 1990s Romanian (neo-socialist) authorities, paved the way for Romania to become a primary country of origin of labor migration in the 1990s, mainly in a legal form. This flow of labor migration naturally soared after the fall of the Iron Curtain, as passport administration and international travel were liberalized. Consequently an alarming number of Romanian migrant workers migrated to Western Europe legally. 170,000 persons emigrated legally, only in the first 3 years after the fall of Communism in Romania. Most of them did not return to Romania, deciding to choose their host country as their country of future residence. This phenomenon naturally triggered a considerable crisis on the economic markets of these West European countries during the 1990s, due to the unexpectedly massive number of immigrants ready to accept any (un)skilled job openings, for fewer wage than the local residents of the host countries. This consequently led on the one hand to an increase of unemployment among the nationals of the host countries, while on the other hand, to an upsurge of negative feelings towards to influx of CEE immigrants. Consequently, during the 1990s the host country authorities were forced to impose certain sanctions in order to curb and maintain Romanian westwards migration within a restricted framework.

The very same phenomenon led to serious economic issues in the source country, Romania, as well. In the first half of the decade, the unprecedented labor force emigration caused a serious deficit of skilled and unskilled work force in the Romanian society: from 1990 to 2002 employment declined alarmingly by 44%, causing 3.5 million jobs to vanish. Most of the heavy industry and infrastructure/construction industry work force vanished, these industries being vended to foreign investors, as late as the end of the decade. It is important to mention that it is not only labor migration per se which caused this serious deficit. Naturally, the vast majority of the work migrants left to other countries for better earning possibilities, such as Israel, Turkey and Hungary (1990-1995),

Germany, Italy, Spain and Western Europe in general (1996-2002) and at present, since 2002, UK, Portugal, Switzerland, Ireland, Spain, Italy, and others wealthy countries being assaulted. Nevertheless it is paramount to mention that Romania suffered since the beginning, especially middle of the 1990s an alarming emigration of highly qualified specialists. The most usual trajectory has been full/partial study scholarships offered to the top ranking Romanian students by universities in the USA, UK, Ireland, France and Germany, followed by secure and well paid employment possibilities on these host countries' markets. Large salaries and a by far more prestigious social status constantly encourage Romanian intelligence emigration. The most notable areas of emigration study and employment in this sector are Sciences and Human Rights: Computer Sciences, Political Studies, and International Law-Human Rights. In 2006 alone, the United States provided through private job placement companies 14,742 jobs, involving summer work for Romanian students. Moreover it is not only top-ranking student who are emigrating to West Europe and the USA, but the top-ranking skilled professionals, especially academia and research specialists from all domains. This outflow commenced immediately after the fall of the Iron Curtain in the very early 1990s (this a few years earlier than the top students' emigration flow) and mostly stopped at the end of the same decade, while the students outpour is still a paramount issue. Thus the Romanian academia and society lost its very best and skilled specialists in all fields at the very start of its troublesome transition. As far as the acceptance, integration of vulnerable immigrants, Romania still faces very serious issues. There is not even reliable documentation on these psychosocial and legal aspects, let alone any official effective programs of integration of any of the immigrants. The Romanian authorities and the Romanian society are not yet prepared to effectively integrate, accept and live in harmony with their own ethnic minorities such as the Roma community or sexual minorities, let alone the mainstream mentalities regarding alien immigrants: work force, political asylum seekers (most often African) or students. A too high level xenophobia, anti-Semitism and generally, discomfort with 'the Other/the Different' is still sensed in the Romanian society and mass-media, having in view the fact that we have become a Schengen and EU community years ago. Nevertheless the legal procedure difficulties in the process of naturalization in

Romania, meant to discourage applications, have contributed to the decrease in the number of asylum applications. Romania is likely to become an attractive destination for migrants from outside the European Union, having become an EU and Schengen country since January 1, 2007. Several researches indicate that migration from Romania will breed further migration, both regular and irregular. Romanian authorities may expect and prepare for a considerable increase in immigration. [1]

Ethnic minorities

Romania has the largest population of Roma in Europe, with an official count at 535,000, or 2.5 percent of the population, and an unofficial estimate ranging from 1,800,000 to 2,500,000 – or between 8.3 percent and 11.5 percent of the population. The poverty rate among Roma is three times higher than the average poverty rate in Romania. This high level of poverty is due to many factors, including poor health and education, limited opportunities in the labor market, and discrimination, all of which contribute to a vicious cycle of poverty and exclusion.

Romania has ratified most international human rights and minority rights protection documents adopted by the United Nations and the Council of Europe. Romania has also developed elements of legislation against discrimination within the framework of different larger national laws. However, Romania has received warnings from the EU regarding the protection of minorities, especially concerning the Roma. The warnings state that the country has done little in establishing policies ensuring "a zero level of tolerance against racist manifestations." There is still much to do to establish a favorable legal framework and related enforcement mechanisms for the protection of minorities, including Roma.

Roma minorities are under-represented in the different state structures. Since 1989, the only Roma political party present in the parliament has been the Roma Social Democratic Party.

Although a quite large number of Roma NGOs are registered, only few of them are active. While at the national level there is 20-30 active Roma NGOs

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[1] Data about migrants in Romania are mainly from:
- Romanian National Refugee Office: http://www.cnrr.ro
- Neumann, V. N.: Popor sau Natiune? Despre identitatile politice europene, (Romanians from all the world, People or Nation? About European Political Identities, Bucharest: Ed. Curtea Veche, 2005.

representing Roma interest, at the local level the small Roma NGOs are not empowered. Since 1989 Romanian authorities have showed interest for Roma issues and created different structures and institution within the government and at the local level. These institutions do not always have the means and capacity to influence important policies and programs. (Source: *World Bank Romania Country Brief 2006.*)

Romania's education system has been in transition for more than a decade. Currently, the system is characterized by major instability, principally due to the lack of a sound legal framework. New legislation is needed. In 2005, Romania started the decentralization of its education system with pilot projects in three counties. The process is expected to be completed by 2010.

In addressing Roma education, the Ministry of Education and Research has been trying to create a support structure by building on the inspectors and school mediators at the local level. However, in most cases, these promising and well-intended measures brought about insufficient results, principally due to lack of sustainability. At present, Roma children still have low rates of attendance and enrolment in the Romanian education system.

More specifically, the education system in Romania is characterized by the following problems for Roma:

- Roma children have low enrolment rates in pre-school/kindergarten, and they face severe enrolment barriers in primary education.
- There is a lack of adequate desegregation policies and enforcement measures.
- There is an extensive number of Roma children placed in special education.
- The unsupportive education, financing, and management system discriminates against children from poor families.

Extensive disparities exist in the quality of education, due to different curriculum standards. Also, Roma culture is not well recognized in schools and school curricula, and multicultural education rarely forms part of teachers' education or in-service training.

In addition to these problems, some of the upcoming systemic changes related to the decentralization process might even worsen the situation of Roma children

when it comes to their access to education and the quality of that schooling. Some potential consequences of the changes are as follows:

- Discrimination and segregation could become more severe because of the discretion left to local authority in many aspects of education.

- The benefits of per capita financing of education could be undermined by negotiated contracts that limit incentives to enroll Roma children.

- Parental choice could play against marginalized groups like the Roma.

- New school accreditation mechanisms will likely affect schools with low performance without providing any safeguards.

These systemic barriers in Romania are reinforced by a negative attitude of the majority of society against those living in poverty, especially in socially segregated communities. Roma children generally face low expectations from their parents, due to the low levels of parental education. Roma children lack the necessary role models of successful Roma when leaving in segregated environment and are required to take part in different household and income generating activities, which leave limited time for studying. Early marriages in isolated communities and seasonal migration of Roma families, including children from rural areas, represent further barriers for school enrolment.[2]

Women

Women account for 51.3 % of the population in Romania, but in terms of access to rights, resources and decision-making in the society, opportunities available to women are rather limited. Full social participation of women and promotion of gender equality remain key objectives for Romania in the context of serious commitments taken in this respect even before, in comparison with other countries.

According to the census conducted in 2002, 53.8 % of persons pursuing education in higher education institutions were women. Poorer access of women cannot be ascertained at any level of education, and women are over-represented in post-secondary and higher education. Although access to education is not discriminatory, social participation of women after graduation is

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[2] Data about Roma population are from: *Country Assessment and the Roma Education Fund's Strategic Directions, © Roma Education Fund, 2007*

rather low; this suggests the risk of unequal opportunities in terms of pursuing a career after graduation.

The major objective of the current policies is to promote the participation of women on the labor market. Data on occupational participation do not reveal any significant difference to the disadvantage of women, 44,5% of employees are women. In 2003, the level of average salary incomes of women was with 17, 6% lower than that of men.

Differences in salaries are medium, and the reason why they occur is mainly the fact that earnings in economic branches in which women make the majority (such as education, trade, health and social assistance) range below the medium income per economy.

Differences between gross salaries of women, compared to those of men, are noticeable between different fields and in terms of their evolution during 1994 - 2001. As for involvement of women in business, women are partners or administrators in 49.7% of the companies registered during December 1990 – December 2000. It is remarkable that women's access to managerial and management positions has increased as well.

The data from the surveys indicate unequal roles in households – women are mainly in charge for 'homey' works, but tasks in the household are redistributed and assigned by agreement. Overloading of women with tasks in the household becomes even a bigger problem if we take into account a majority of households under-equipped with home appliances and an under-developed provision of household services[3].

Youth

 Young people (15 to 24 years of age), statistically represent 17% of the entire population of Romania: therefore we can see that youth and children represent more than one third of the entire population. At this time the youth represents about 3.350.000 people. By origin, approximately 57% are from the urban environment and 43% from the rural environment.

Due to migration of young people from the rural to the urban environment, the material resources needed to buy a house are diminished. This determines a decrease in birth rate and the postponement of marriage. As there are few high

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[3] www.isotita.uoa.gr/EKDILOSEIS/EKDILOSEIS/2004-05/9 perilipsi Fairclough Norman.doc

schools in the rural environment, the young people that attend one are forced to move out of their parents' home.

With respect to students, about 10% of them come from the rural areas and 28 % of them are living in student dormitories which means that over 130 000 students are studying elsewhere than where they live. This migration of the population added to the will of young people not to return to the rural environment leads to one of the main problems that the young people are facing: the lack of housing.

This phenomenon is also seen in universities. Therefore young people coming from the rural environment will face the problem of acquiring a residence especially when they decide to start a family. It is true that in the future the stress of getting a house may not be so great because the next generations will be smaller in size, but this is not a solution because the tendency to migrate from the rural to the urban environment is in continuous rise.

Theoretically there is the possibility that they will turn to banking credits, even to the ones meant especially for youth, but gaining access to these credits and paying them back is difficult because in most of the cases low income does not allow it. This has had and will have a consequence on late marriages and birth of the first child.[4]

Disabled people

According to the official data there were 613,924 persons with disabilities at December 31, 2008 (much below the share of 7-12% in the total population calculated for EU Member States). Of these, 59,164 were children and 554,760 were adults (National Authority for Disabled Persons; ANPH Statistics; National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption). Organizations representing disabled people contest the figures, mainly because they refer to the number of disability certificates issued by each territorial commission.

In 2006 disabled adults and children were 2.25% of the population (488,054 persons, of whom 261,449 are women), slightly increasing during 2007 to 2.63% (567,542 persons, of whom 308,812 women).

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[4] www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/wpaysubmissions/romania.pdf

The number of disabled adults in residential institutions has decreased, while the number of disabled adults in the care of the family or living on their own has increased.

The number of disabled persons employed was recorded as 21,906 on 31 December 2007, compared to 16,225 on 31 December 2006.

Of these, 2,431 were people with severe disabilities and 16,707 people with significant disabilities. (National Strategic National Report Regarding Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008-2010)

Almost one third of all children and young people with SEN in Romania attend mainstream schools, mainly children and youths with a low or medium extent of SEN.

Where children with severe and multiple SEN attend special or mainstream schools this has often been made possible with the support given by NGOs.

Teachers in mainstream schools are trained in teaching individualized lessons. Special and mainstream school teachers do not co-operate together.

A considerable number of children with severe and multiple impairments do not attend school at all.

The identification of SEN is done from a medical deficit point of view as opposed to an SEN point of view. The shift towards a positive view of SEN, including the necessary support, which has been made in the European countries over the last decades, has not been taken into account yet in Romania.

Most special education units are in urban areas (84.9% compared to 15.1% in rural areas).

19,315 pupils attend special classes, of which 61.8% are boys and most have learning difficulties. The number of children in these schools decreased by 9.8% as compared to the 2004-2005 academic year.

Of 401 objectives evaluated 2006 by the National Organization of Persons with Handicap in Romania and other six local NGOs, only 88 buildings were declared partially accessible and 75 as accessible to disabled people. None were completely accessible. (National Organization of Persons with Handicap in Romania)

In 2006, total monthly incomes were LEI 1,386.3 per household and LEI 473.3 per person, up by 14.4%, and 14.7% from 2005. Salaries were 49.3% of these amounts, up 2% compared to 2005 (National Institute of Statistics).

Incomes from social benefits are, 19.9% of household total incomes (the same as in 2005) with social benefit income is of 24.7%. Pensions have the highest weight (78.7%), the unemployment fund represents 2.6%, family benefits 5.7%, and social aids 4.5% (Law no. 416/2001).

The difficulties of integration for disabled persons are extremely varied and, mainly relate to community and employment, accessibility and attitudes. Employers often prefer to pay the penalties set forth by the law rather than to employ disabled persons.

In 2006, Romanians were comparatively less in favor of measures being adopted to provide equal opportunities employment of disabled people (79%, which is 8 points below the European average (Euro barometer, 2007). The implementation of the National Strategy required the allotment of important financial national and external resources. In 2006, the amount of RON 3,463,000 was allotted from the state budget for special protection and socio-professional integration of disabled adults[5].

1. METHODOLOGY

This research is based on the Critical Communicative Methodology (CCM) which according to Annex I is the methodological perspective to be followed throughout the research process due to is social utility and scientific rigor. CCM is based on the egalitarian dialogue to be established through the communication between the scientific knowledge –brought in by the research team- and the knowledge from the reality and the particular situation analyzed – brought in by the researched persons, taking part as end-users in the research. CCM emphasizes equality in the research process, dialogic research; and it is based on the inter-subjective dialogue and the emergence of an egalitarian relationship between the researcher and the researched[6]. Through a cooperative process between the people, a consensual interpretation of reality is aimed for. Reflections are made on the interpretations of the person in relation to his or her

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[5] http://www.disability-europe.net/en/countries/ro/RO-2-factsEN.jsp
[6] Flecha, Ramón, Jesús Gómez (2004) "Participatory Paradigms: Researching 'with' rather than 'on'.", pp. 129-140 in Michael Osborne, Jim Gallacher, Beth Crossan, eds., *Researching Widening Access to Lifelong Learning: Issues and approaches in an international context.* London: Routledge.

life, as well as the processes and factors which help to overcome educational exclusion. The interactive process of dialogue allows obtaining information on the successful actions which have promoted the social inclusion of the person being interviewed.

2.1 Data collection

The empirical data were gathered with two data collection techniques: communicative daily life stories (CDLS) and communicative focus groups (CFG). Altogether 25 CDLS and 10 CFG's were to be carried out - 5 interviews and 2 focus groups with people from each of the five established vulnerable groups (see the table below)

Groups Techniques	Migrants	Women	Cultural Groups	Youth	People with disabilities	Total
CDLS	5	5	5	5	5	**25**
CFG	2	2	2	2	2	**10**
Total	**7**	**7**	**7**	**7**	**7**	**35**

The interviewees and focus group participants were selected according to the two main criteria:

a) Representing the given vulnerable group (migrants, women, cultural groups, youth, and people with disabilities), in terms of being among those who within the vulnerable group are considered to be at most risk of social exclusion (the most socially vulnerable within the vulnerable group).

b) Having a trajectory or being in the process of overcoming the inequalities that affect the group he or she represents; People who have experienced educational exclusion, defined as consistently low-achievement or failure to obtain the minimum standard of performance, or who have never attended or left school before finishing primary or secondary level;

People who currently continue or have continued their education after having experienced educational exclusion.

The interviewees for the CDLS and the participants of the CFG's were contacted through other institutions, like, for example The Refugees Centre, Timisoara "Pentru Voi" Association or The Association for Promoting Women from Romania.

The guidelines for CDLS and CFG's had three main parts covering the life course, their educational experiences, and the impact of these on other areas of life (like employment, health, housing, and social and political participation). Throughout the communicative daily life stories and focus group discussions, connections were established between the situations of the participants in relation to the other people in his or her vulnerable group. The goal was to promote a reflection about the strategies, conditions and factors that have helped them to be able to create a pathway to overcoming social exclusion.

All interviewees were informed thoroughly about the research project and the objectives of the interview or the focus group discussion. They were asked to sign a consent form confirming that they agree to participate in the project voluntarily, anonymously and confidentially. The participants also filled in a short form providing some basic information about them. All CDLS and CFG's were recorded with the permission of the participants.

2.2 Data analysis

All the recordings of the CDLS and the CFG's were transcribed verbatim and assigned a code in order to maintain the anonymity of the participants. The transcript codes provide information on the data gathering technique, the vulnerable group, and gender. Also, it includes a number according to the chronological order (see the table below).

Technique	Vulnerable group	Gender	Number
Life Story – S Focus group - G	Immigrants – I Cultural minorities – M Young people – Y Women – W People with disabilities - D	Female – F Male - M	1, 2, 3…

The data obtained were codified and analyzed along the exclusionary and transformative axis according to the methodological principles of the critical communicative methodology. The experiences in the areas of education, health, employment, housing, and social and political participation were analyzed separately. Gender perspective was analyzed as a transversal category throughout the study. (See the analytical grid below.)

	ACTIONS WHICH CONTRIBUTE to OVERCOME or REPRODUCE EXCLUSION/DISCRIMINATION								
	Health		Work		Housing		Political and Social Participation		Education
	Non-ed.	Educ.	Non-ed.	Educ.	Non-ed.	Educ.	Non-ed.	Educ.	
	Gender (a)								
Exclusion Dimensions	1	3	5	7	9	11	13	15	17
Transformative Dimensions	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18

In the rows the exclusionary dimension refers to the barriers that certain people or groups face encounter and which, should they not exist when trying to take advantage of a particular practice or social benefit. If these barriers did not exist, the person or group which wanted to have access to this benefit may be able to achieve this. In Project 4, the main objective is to investigate how educational exclusion affects diverse sectors of society, particularly the most vulnerable groups. Transformative dimension is defined basing on the exclusionary one, and it aims to transform the barriers that make access to social benefits or practices difficult. In this case in Project 4, this dimension includes the educational provisions which contribute to overcoming educational and social exclusion.

The columns make reference to elements which are related to the reproduction or overcoming of social exclusion in vulnerable groups, paying special attention to these actions which are being developed within the educational context. The information provided in each column will be information which connects those elements to educational and social success, either in an inclusionary or in an exclusionary way.

In accordance with the objectives of the project 4, these elements are clustered into a main category: Actions which contribute to overcome exclusion and discrimination. The five areas of society studied in the INCLUD-ED project are included into this category. The focus will be on the actions carried out in the four areas which are overcoming the social exclusion of vulnerable groups as well as the actions which are reproducing this exclusion. In the categories of housing, health, work and political and social participation a division is made between those actions which are connected to education and those which are not connected to it but which help vulnerable groups to overcome their exclusion.

During the process of codification the relevant parts of the transcripts were assigned a code where the first number identifies the number of the transcript, the second number – the corresponding number from the analytical grid, and the third number – the number of the paragraph in the transcript. For the quotes referring to gender issues the letter (a) was added to the code marking the transversal category of gender.

2.3 The profile of the interviewees

Code	Description
SW1	Currently unemployed, housekeeper, age 35, education level – 10 grades
SW2	Housekeeper, single mother, age 37, education level – has just completed the 9th grade and goes on

SW3	Employed, age 43, education level – just returned to school in the 10th grade
SW4	Employed, age 42, retraining on manicurist-pedicurist due to the crisis, education level – high school
SW5	Currently unemployed, housekeeper, age 41, education level-high school
SYM6	Employed, age 27, education level – high school
SYF7	Employed, age 25, education level – 8th grades
SYF8	Student, age 23, education level – university (ongoing)
SYF9	Employed, age 22, education level – high school
SYM10	Employed, age 24, education level – university degree
SIM11	Student, origin: India, age 23, education level – university (ongoing)
SIF12	Student, origin: Czech Republic, age 20, education level – university (ongoing)
SIF13	Student, origin: India, age 22, education level – university (ongoing)
SIM14	Employed, origin: Sudan, age 24, education level – university
SIM15	Student, origin: India, age 22, education level – university (ongoing)
SDF16	Student, disability: low sighted, age 25, education level – university (ongoing)

SDM17	Flute singer, disability: no legs and one arm, age 37, education level – high school and folk school
SDM18	Employed, disability: one arm, age 27, education level – master degree
SDF19	Unemployed, disability: partial deafness, age 30, education level – 10 grades
SDM20	Employed, disability: one arm, age 45, education level – 10 grades
SMM21	Unemployed, ethnicity: Roma, age 38, education level – primary school
SMF22	Unemployed, ethnicity: Roma, age 27, education level – primary education
SMM23	Employed, ethnicity: Roma, age 31, education level – 10 grades – school of arts and crafts
SMM24	Own business, ethnicity: Roma, age 40, education level – high school
SMM25	Employed, ethnicity: Roma, age 25, education level -10 grades – school of arts and crafts

3. MAIN FINDINGS

3.1. MIGRANTS

3.1.1 Health

Non-educational actions

<u>Exclusionary dimensions</u>

The few migrants from Romania report some discriminative treatments from some people from the medical world. *I encountered some difficulties in the*

public hospital, because I have a different color and also because I don't know the language. The doctors treated me badly and they told me to go in my country to the hospital. (GIF5)

Due to the extreme under financing of the medical system from the Romanian Government this is probably an understandable attitude from the doctors that cannot deliver properly medical services to a large number of people.

3.1.2 Employment

But this discriminatory episode seems rather singular among other testimonies of goodwill and kindness from the community: *I have a small business and I can say that the authorities and the community helped me very much. Now is my turn to help them and I am offering them new job opportunities. (GIM5).* Even the educational actions are transformative oriented: *With the support of my teachers and because I had very good marks I found a really good job, I am now a part time teacher in kindergarten. (SIF12).*

3.1.4 Political and social participation

Under this topic we found a lonely voice reporting discrimination but many more who reported good inclusion practices. A young girl from Sudan told *I felt discriminated especially after I returned from Sudan. In school, because I was black and I didn't know the language. In the neighborhood I felt this due to our religion and habits, due to my mother and my father clothes. (SIM14)*

But the people from the small Arab community from Timisoara reported a very different situation:

Transformative dimensions

I am very active in my Arab community and also in the Romanian one. We have a very nice program here, we are learning from each other, the Romanian and Arab languages, traditions, Arab-Romanian cuisine, etc. (GIF4)

I started a business in Romania and I must say that the neighbors, the community was very supportive. They are all coming to my shop and buy from me. They trust me and my family. They involve us in all the neighborhood activities. (GIM5)

Is better now and I have been accepted by the community, my family is now accepted in the community even that my father is Moslem and we have different color. The people from our neighbor are now more open and friendly. Also, at faculty my colleagues were very friendly unlike my colleagues from high school that ridiculed me and made jokes about my skin color and on the fact that I wasn't able to speak good enough Romanian language. (SIM14)

I am involved in the Arab Cultural Centre which helped me a lot in finding friends; communicate with people from Arab countries and also in finding my job. (SIM14)

I started to enjoy my living in Romania. It's like my home. I will always talk about the help given to me by the people in the VOX church, Timisoara. I used to feel homesick and there were families from VOX who made me feel good, we had lunch, dinner and various activities together. I am involved with the international Christian ministry of VOX, these families have always offered to provide me any help needed and they have helped me often too. (SIM15)

3.1.5. Education

One of the main reasons for migration to Romania used to be and still is our education system. Many young people from developing Arab or African countries came under the socialist regime to graduate our higher education institutions because of the privileged conditions they enjoyed. Some of them stayed and made a living situation here and their children are involved also in our educational system. Even if now a day the process is diminished the tradition still runs. That's why we have an important number of immigrants in our schools and universities and these youngsters have their problems:

Excluding dimensions

I felt discriminated by the system or maybe the school, because only the Romanian students have 50% reduction to transport and I must buy a full price ticket. (SIF13)

When I started to study in Romania I felt discriminated by the secretaries, teachers, and official authorities. In the university everyone is looking to me

suspiciously because I came from India. They are giving the scholarship only to the Romanian students. (SIM11)

When I was in primary school I felt some barriers between me and my colleagues and teachers. Especially that I didn't speak so well Romanian and they were always laughing of my accent. (SIF12)

During my entire school years I felt quite marginalized, the teachers involved me only in the activities related to the end of the school year, we had celebrations and there I represented my origin country. (GIM4)

I can say that I started quite late school in Romania, because I came from Sudan at the age of 15 and I didn't know Romanian and also the Sudanese school system wasn't compatible to the one from Romania. So instead of being in the 9th grade according to my age I had to start from the 7th grade and beside this I was studying a lot at home Romanian language and other disciplines. I encountered many difficulties due to my skin colour and language, but I met also people, teacher that helped me and were very supportive, but were very few. I was very happy when I managed to graduate high school and to enter at the university. I realised then that all my efforts worth. (SIM14)

Well, in high school the teachers weren't all supportive; they were talking with me like I was deaf or illiterate. (GIF4)

The Romanian educational system is quite rigid and would be helpful to be more flexible, oriented on the student and not so focused on the content. The Romanian teachers are always preoccupied to teach and not to see if you really understand what they say. (SIM15)
The way teacher taught in English, I didn't understand anything and I was very disappointed and wanted to go back. But then I decided to stay and after a while I became used to the way of English. (SIM15)
But they don't have only bad ideas about our educational system some of them have also or only nice recalls about Romanian teachers and colleagues:

<u>Transformative dimensions</u>

Among some of my colleagues from the university I am welcomed and we are involved in different charity campaigns. (SIM11)

Now I feel very good in the school, the teachers appreciate my efforts to learn Romanian and they all encourage me, they say that I am a very good student. (SIF12)

When I started school in Romania I didn't know the language, I knew just Arab but I had very supportive teachers and one of them knew Arab and she always helped me. Now I am glad to see that in the schools the teachers know more languages not just English and French. In this way they can support the immigrants' pupils. (GIM5)

Now I feel more comfortable at school, the teachers are interested in me and support me. They are patient and they involve me in all the activities. (SIF13)
Step by step some of my teachers started to try to understand me and they always asked me if I understood the lesson, they gave me concrete example. The math teacher helped me with my homework; he was very patient and kind. (SIM14)

3.2. CULTURAL GROUPS

3.2.1 Health

The subject of health in the case of Roma communities generates paradoxical approaches in Romania. Official health statistics are not disaggregated by ethnicity; it is considered that health does not have an ethnic connotation. At the same time, it is stressed that Roma represent a priority group with regard to health care provision. Often, authorities bring to evidence the efforts made for the growth of the access of Roma to the public health services.

From the vantage points of specialists, the sanitary system in Romania continues to be in crisis. This influences the Roma community. Compounding problems of

poverty, lack of education, and sometimes discriminatory attitudes in the health care system present major concerns with regard to health in Roma communities. Data show that infant mortality in the case of Roma children is four times higher than for the total population of the country. Life expectancy is 10 years below that of the majority population. This has to do with relations with healthcare providers: almost three-fourths of Roma adults visit a doctor after experiencing symptoms of an ailment; few consult doctors for routine check-ups or prevention.

The average period of the hospitalization of the Roma people is almost double compared to the average national level, aspect which is due to the fact that Roma go to the doctor at an advanced stage of a disease, which requires longer treatment.

From 2001, when Romania adjusted to EU legislative requirements that do not permit the classification of the patients on ethnic criteria, there are no official data which present a clear inventory of the health problems in the case of Roma. Beyond the problems presented above, which offer a whole image of the health state of Roma, the real situation is more complex and seems to be in vicious circle. This is because of poverty, lack of identity cards (which are crucial in order to get on a list of a family doctor), lack of paid jobs (which assure health insurance), and so on. All these factors complicate access to health services. Additionally, there is a precarious situation within the sanitary system in Romania, visible especially in the rural environment, where there are many communities who have no access to medical services or even pharmacies. The distance between of a medical cabinet and the homes of the Roma is very long, and many times the ambulance does not go to the Roma communities.

It's not a surprise that Roma community members are feeling discriminated by the medical system from Romania:

Excluding dimensions

I am not subscribed at any family doctor and I usually go to the public hospital but there I am badly treated because I am Roma and I don't understand the diagnostic that they tell me. (GMM9)

I have never been to the doctor; my grandmother is curing me with traditional medicine. I want to go to hospital when I am ill but I am afraid of what the doctors will tell me. (GMF9)

My husband is again very ill and the doctors have such a discriminatory attitude when it comes to us, they told my husband that he is ill because our whole race is infected. (SMF22)

3.2.1. Employment

The differences between the Roma and majority population also exists in the labor market and are a key factor in explaining the higher degree of poverty among this ethnic group. The low level of education is one of the most important factors which reduce the opportunities of Roma people for decent jobs. Thus, the estimates regarding the unemployment rate of the Roma population vary from 24 per cent to 56 per cent, although there are communities where the unemployment rate is 90-100 per cent among the active Roma population. The EUMAP report also reveals that, in 2002, the Roma ethnic population is five times more vulnerable to poverty than the non Roma population and that over 50 per cent of Roma were in poverty.

In the employment field the positions of our respondent are more balanced:

Exclusionary dimensions

I worked occasionally, I worked in cleaning services, but they fired me now due to the economic crises and also because I have only primary education and no qualification. (SMF22)

Transformative dimensions

When I first started my business with flowers the colleagues from the market didn't accept me due to the fact that I had other ethnicity and they had many preconceptions, but now I think due to the awareness campaigns that have run in our country they have other approach, they are more compassionate, empathetic. (SMM24)

3.2.2 Housing

Data from 1998 shows that there are almost 1.5 million Roma for approximately 25,000 homes and these are being reduced to an improved shelter (kind of bodega or improvised wooden shelter. Another category of people, approximately 700,000 persons, are living in conditions which do not assure them existential conditions and minimal developments. The effects of these processes are serious: approximately 16.5 percent of the Roma families live in

rented houses, while 21 percent live in houses built illegally on lands, which have no property papers, according to the data from the same research.

The situation has not changed in almost 10 years. According to data from the Roma Inclusion Barometer (2007), the share of Roma people in rural locations is higher than in the case of other ethnicities: 60 percent versus 40 percent. In addition, Roma live in peripheral locations: 68 percent of the Roma, compared to only 46 percent of other ethnic groups who say they live in similar zones. It is interesting to observe that in the rural environment Roma live in a smaller number in the central areas, than in the urban environment. This can be explained by the fact that a big part of the places where Roma live in the centre of the cities are old houses lent by the state. The fact that Roma have a higher share in the rural environment and that they tend to live in far communities, accentuates the idea that they have limited access to services.

Overcrowding is another problem with which Roma must confront on a higher level than others: the average number of persons for a room, in their case is double compared to the average number of the non-Roma households. But the most critical problem is the lack of the safety of homes: only 66 percent of the Roma said that they have a contract for the houses they live in, compared to the 82 percent in the case of other ethnicities (ICCV 2001). Moreover, out those Roma who have contracts, nine percent are renting the houses (majority from the state), and only one percent of the non-Roma with contracts are in this situation. Both of these elements make only 58 percent of the Roma to live in safety with a property contract for their houses (the house being legally theirs/or their partners, or the parents'), compared to 81 percent in the case of other ethnicities.

 Exclusionary dimensions

In the past and even now many people look at us different when they meet us in the neighborhood. They are sometimes afraid of us because they think that we are all the same, but that is not true…there are criminal people, thieves, etc. and not all of them are Roma people. (SMM23)

I am feeling discriminated when I go out in the society (street, bus, neighborhoods), because I am dressed traditionally and people have a lot of prejudices. They are looking strange at me and avoid me. They are afraid not to steal from them. (SMM21)

<u>Transformative dimensions</u>

Years ago we received from the municipalities' food packages and sometimes we paid less for the electricity, water. (SMM23)

In our community we are very well received, the neighbors are friendly and supportive. Years ago when my husband was ill the neighbors borrowed us money, gave us food. (SMF22)

3.2.4 Education

As for the affirmative action for Roma people implemented in Romania, their reason and role are connected to the history of this ethnic group. Thus, the first order of the Ministry of Education (Order 3577/1998) did not mention explicitly the existence of past discrimination of the ethnic group, but recounts its history and mentions as an objective "supporting the Roma ethnics' efforts to build their qualified civic and cultural presence".[7]

In Romania, the data show a lower access to education for Roma. Starting with the first years of formal education, there are differences between the access of Roma and non Roma children: 61 per cent of all children have been enrolled for pre-school education in 2000-2001, whereas only 20 per cent of Roma children went to kindergarten.[8] Such differences have further impact upon the children in

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[7] "Roma people are a group with a complex history, often dramatic, which the adepts of democracy cannot consider otherwise but with understanding, respect and availability of civil support. Our Roma co-citizens need educational support these days to build up a natural cultural and civic image, which may allow their integration in a democratic manner within the institutions of the democratic Romania. Under the shield of the European Council and other international bodies, a beneficial action is being deployed for the civil support of Roma people to help them consolidate the democratic civic and cultural representation they need, inclusively by way of positive discrimination. Considering these reasons, to support the efforts of Roma people to build up a qualified civic and cultural representation ..." (Order 3577/1998).

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the Roma communities and are risk factors regarding the school drop-out rate. The EUMAP report presents the number of school years of the population aged over 10 years old, and indicates a median number of school years for Roma children of 6.8, whereas the entire population aged over 10 is characterized by a median period of 11.2 years.[9]

Exclusionary dimensions

I remember that in my first years of schooling the teacher were very strict and harsh as it was a large number of Roma children in that class. (GMM9)

The math teacher had a very discriminatory attitude, he was always told me that I am a thief and dirty gypsy. My parents came and talked with him, but he humiliated them. (SMM24)

When I was in the primary school I was not allowed to play with the other children due to their parents' rules. I was marginalized and they often told me that I smell bad and I am poorly dressed. (SMF22)

I have only primary school education because I got married and I had to stay home and have children. So I barely know how to write and I cannot help my children with their homework. (GMF10)

Transformative dimensions

The Romanian language teacher was very supportive, she learned me how to write and talk, she was always staying after school hours and explaining me and my 2 other colleagues the basic rules of writing, because he did not want to embarrass us in front of the others colleagues who were more experienced. (SMM24)

I think it is a good thing that the schools are putting together all the children no matter what religion, ethnicity they have. In this way they learn to accept each other, to live together and to build friendships. (GMM10)

The authorities send me and other people of my kind to a special school where all the taxes where paid and where I learned how to build and how to repair broken furniture...that was definitely the best thing the authorities have done for me. (SMM23).

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the civil support of Roma people to help them consolidate the democratic civic and cultural representation they need, inclusively by way of positive discrimination. Considering these reasons, to support the efforts of Roma people to build up a qualified civic and cultural representation ..." (Order 3577/1998).

[9] EUMAP, Equal access to high quality education for Roma people, Romania, 2007

School wasn't such a bad time because I learnt a lot of things, not only a job but also how to behave in different situations. It was definitely a good opportunity because I have a qualification and now I win my own money. (SMM25)

I liked a lot primary school due to my lovely teacher, she was very supportive and she gave me so much attention. She was always focused on our needs and she explained us all the time the content carefully, she asked question, gave us clear task. (SMM21)

3.3 WOMEN

Our women subjects identified some discriminating processes but some of them didn't consider this abnormal view the traditional culture they are belonging.

3.3.1 Health

Approximately 10% of families in Romania are single parent families, which is comparable to rates in other European countries. The majority of these families (approximately 90%) are made of women and children. Single parent families stand higher risks than other families, and poverty rates among such families are approximately 28.9%. Introduction of the allowance for single parent families is expected to bear positive consequences on these families' standards of living. Liberalization of pregnancy termination, organization of a national family planning network and delivery of contraception services through family doctors have led to obvious improvement in the field of reproductive health services. However, the high percent of pregnant women not covered by the medical insurance system remains a major issue. More than 92% of the births presently take place in units with beds and under medical supervision. At the same time, the Ministry of Health has developed a national prenatal care program with a view to improving the quality of birth assistance for mothers and babies.

In spite of these facts we encountered only a transformative statement on women health:

Transformative dimensions

Since I had a baby I became very concern about my health and my baby's health. I attended many seminars about health; I read a lot of books and watched TV shows on this issue. (SW2)

3.3.2 Employment

In 2003, the level of average salary incomes of women was with 17, 6% lower than that of men. Differences in salaries are medium, and the reason why they occur is mainly the fact that earnings in economic branches in which women make the majority (such as education, trade, health and social assistance) range below the medium income per economy.

The data from our survey indicate unequal roles in households – women are mainly in charge for 'homey' works, but tasks in the household are redistributed and assigned by agreement. Overloading of women with tasks in the household becomes even a bigger problem if we take into account a majority of households under-equipped with home appliances and a under-developed provision of household services.

Non-educational actions

Exclusionary dimensions

I used to work as a supervisor at a small company and when the manager was changed, the new one changed me and he named a man in my position. I was replaced without any explanation. (SW3)

I often feel that I am discriminated at work, because I was the only one who did not receive a salary raise. In the traffic because the men drivers treat me bad as I am driving to slowly. (SW5)

I think I am discriminated because I had to work more than a man to have the same salary, even though we have the same qualification. (SW1)

3.3.4 Education

Education system has been harshly criticized by our women subjects:

Exclusionary dimensions

I think the school is too theoretic and we don't have practical activities. Now for me is very difficult to find a job as I know only what to do but not how to do it. (GWF1)

Due to the fact that I am living in the rural area and I have a big family I often wanted to quit the school. My husband always told me that I am supposed to stay home to take care of the children and to prepare meals. (GWF2)

I am a mother now and I think the educational system is not helping me at all. I have classes only in the morning when my husband is at work and I can't afford to let my child in a kindergarten. (SW4)

<u>Transformative dimensions</u>

I enjoyed very much the school period, I was a very good student. I had good relations with my teachers because they observed that I try to be a good student and then they were supportive and patient. (GW1)

3.4 YOUTH

Due to the stage of their life, the youngsters in our panel referred mostly to educational linked issues.

3.4.2 Employment

The greatest problem is not the number of unemployed people, but on one hand the fact that basic education does not prepare young people for the labor market and on the other the curricular area does not entirely match the requirements of the labor market. The quota distribution of unemployed people in terms of education varies on all age categories. Thus it is obvious that people with a higher education level are less exposed to unemployment.

<u>Exclusionary dimensions</u>

In Romania the school is not linked to the labor market and I graduated the faculty and I am currently unemployed. (GYM4)

I graduated the high school and I would have liked to go to the university but due to my family low income I had to work since I was in high school as seller/cashier and I couldn't afford to go to the university in other city due to my salary and I am working full time. (SYF9)

3.4.3 Housing

Housing is a very important indicator of the standard of living. Due to migration of young people from the rural to the urban environment, the material resources needed to buy a house are diminished. This determines a decrease in birth rate and the postponement of marriage. As there are few high schools in the rural environment, the young people that attend one are forced to move out of their parents' home.

This migration of the population added to the will of young people not to return to the rural environment leads to one of the main problems that the young people are facing: the lack of housing.

<u>Exclusionary dimensions</u>
I drop out the school when I was in the 8th grade because my parents got divorced and my mother has lost our house and we had to move to my grandparents in the rural area. (SYF7)

Even though I graduated the faculty and I had good marks, the Romanian system is so bad that I will never afford a house of my own. (GYM4)

3.4.4. Education

Our respondents did a real SWOT analysis of the Romanian educational system:

The most important positive aspects (the "**strong points**" of the Romanian educational system) of this period are:

- Correlating the school curriculum with the European standards, as a result of the adoption of the Statement of Bologna;
- Admitting the existence of some special educational needs of the groups with problems;
- Stimulating the mobility of young people by developing a network of Romanian and foreign educational institutions having a close cooperation and by means of a better organization of the scholarship system, as well as by initiating some actions in order to achieve the acknowledgement of the Romanian diplomas abroad;
- Initiating projects in order to ensure specific and specialized assistance to young people;
- Implementing projects (scholarships and training) supporting the professional building of the young people.

Unfortunately, there are also failures of the measures undertaken to improve the educational system. One can notice, too, that not all the actions undertaken had the expected result. Several "**weak points**" can be mentioned:

- The funds allocated for endowing the educational institutions were, in the most of the cases, insufficient ore misused;
- The alternative textbooks system does not function perfectly and disparities of the curriculum can interfere;

- The scholarships and the trainings available as part of the governmental or non-governmental programs is insufficient;
- The dissemination of the information regarding the educational programmers is inefficient;
- The specialized assistance at the services of the youth is poor and less promoted;
- The effective involvement of the youth in the educational process (their influence in designing its evolution) is poor;
- There is a lack of public-private partnership between the educational institutions and the business environment;
- There is a lack of concordance between the curricular area and the labor market;
- Non-formal educational programmers are still immature and low in number;
- There is a lack of graduate profile (the level of theoretical and practical competences that each study field should guarantee);
- The presence of the study objects with new title and description but with the same contents 'in the respect of' the teacher's old-fashioned methods;
- The phenomenon of school abandon because of financial reasons.

Threats

- The increase in number of the school abandons situations for the children coming from poor families;
- The lack of professional qualifications as a result of the school abandon;
- The habit of giving the young graduates job responsibilities under their qualifications;
- The limited access to education as a consequence of the low income.

Opportunities

- The tendency of developing effective involvement of the young and of the youth organizations in the Reform process;
- The development of partnerships with the business environment;
- The involvement of the economic agents in the educational process;
- The adaptation of the curriculum to the needs of the labor market;
- The development of a large number of non-formal educational programs for the youth;

- The increase in number of the practical studies in the curriculum.

Exclusionary dimensions

In the school we were focused a lot on the compulsory subjects and the extracurricular ones were considered unimportant so I couldn't develop in the direction that I liked. (GYF3)

In the school I had only old teachers and they didn't take into consideration my opinion. They were very rigid and used old methods to teach. I was not allowed to express myself, I had to be obedient. (GYM4)

When I was in secondary school, because I was from rural area the teachers treated me different compared with my colleagues. They always told me that for me the 8 mark was enough as I don't need good performance in the village I live. (SYF8)

Transformative dimensions

Due to my good results in school and my collaboration with teachers and students I managed to be involved in the student council and after that in a party from our county. (GYF3)

In our school parents were involved in many activities, they came to school each month and talked with our teachers and they took the decisions together. (GYM4)

I really liked geography and sport subjects, I was involved in school activities, especially the one about sport. I was motivated to go to school due to my sport activities, competitions and the medals, trophies that I won. (SYM10)

I started to learn better from the 6th grade when I began to have French classes with a teacher who always used different methods to teach us, like: music, movies, walks, paintings, and computers. (GYF4)

Our primary teacher was very involved in the class, she came to our home quite often, and she talked very often with my parents. Sometimes, she took us to the park, to the cinema, to the museums. We took also some trips and camps. I and my colleagues had a special relation with her, she had a positive effect and she inspired us to learn better. (SYM6)

At biology we had a very nice teacher, she was also a doctor and she always gave us advices and we were welcomed to her surgery. She explained us about common diseases, symptoms, how to contact a doctor. (SYM6)

3.5 PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The widespread concept about this subject seems to be that people with disabilities are limited people, lacking the abilities to learn and participate at important events; consequently they are regarded as being dependent. Often people with disabilities are appreciated through the perspective of their social productivity only.

Although many positive experiences are known, the real partnership between the state organizations and the disabled organizations is still insufficiently developed: at decision making level at the service providing level and in providing orientation towards the necessary support forms and structures. The media often presents disability as being a 'charity and philanthropic' matter, and not as topic of observing fundamental human rights. In spite of the fact that the promotion of a correct image and in general of the adequate policies regarding people with disabilities both at local and national level has started, our subjects appreciate that ensuring their personal identity, of their autonomy of their participation at the social productive life, at the cultural, leisure activities, etc do not reach an international standard – including the policy level, attitudes and social practices

3.5.1 Health

Exclusionary dimensions
I felt discriminated by the doctors when I went to the regular medical check as I am a person with disabilities (I don't have both legs and one hand). The doctors humiliated me by grabbing my jacket from the part where I don't have a hand and they always were harrying me to dress without caring for my disability. (SDM17)

3.5.3 Housing

Exclusionary dimensions
Because I am in a wheelchair I asked for a house at the first floor to the municipalities on the basis of an existing law in our country and they did not do anything, they were arrogant and didn't paid attention to my needs. (GDF7)

3.5.4 Political and social participation

Exclusionary dimensions
Due to my disability, I don't have one hand I felt rejected by the society, by the local authorities because they did not want to give me the driver license even

though I knew how to drive and I had an automatic car. I went to Bucharest and there I obtained it. (SDM18)

Transformative dimensions

I am very involved in the community; I often organize meetings at church, in the park where I encourage disabled people to trust in themselves. I share with them my life experiences and exchange good practice examples. (GDM8)

3.5.5 Education

Integration and inclusion of children and youths with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in mainstream schools has been the concern of politics as well as of many teachers, schools and parents. Almost one third of all children and youths with SEN in Romania attend mainstream schools.

Teachers of mainstream schools are not sufficiently prepared for integrative teaching; they are not trained in teaching in the frame of differentiated and individualized lessons. A co-operation in lessons between itinerant teachers and teachers of mainstream schools does not take place. A considerable number of children with severe and multiple handicaps do not attend school at all. For lack of transport facilities, lack of equipment and social services the integration in mainstream schools is considered to not be possible.

The identification of SEN is being regarded from a rather medical deficit theory point of view as opposed to an SEN point of view. The paradigm shift towards a positive view of SEN including the necessary support that has been made in the European countries over the last decades has not been taken into account yet in Romania.

Exclusionary dimensions
At school I was very discriminated because I am orphan and I don't have one hand. The teachers and the colleagues thought that I don't have potential and I am useless. They didn't pay attention to what I said or did. They always gave a low grade just to pass the class, even if I knew the exercises. (SDM20)

I was very afraid of my teachers in the primary school; they were so cold and harsh with me. Due to my disability I couldn't hear very well and the teachers often said: someone to speak louder because I am not going to repeat it. (SDF19)

The school does not adapt to the needs of a disabled person, I had to adapt to the school. I graduated a district school where was very difficult to move with a wheelchair because of the space but also the people mentality. (GDM7)

In my opinion in the Romanian school there is a lack of materials for the different type of disabilities. Teachers should have at their disposal different teaching materials in order to adapt their teaching methods to the educational needs of the persons. But in reality we cannot attend a normal school because we cannot succeed and the system segregates us. (GDF8)

When my colleagues visited different museums or they had presentation at the city hall, in the theatre my teacher always told me that I should stay at home because these events are not for me as I am in a wheelchair. (GDM8)

Transformative dimensions

Even though in the secondary school I felt rather discriminated, I still went to the Folk high school and I specialized myself in flute playing. At this school everyone appreciated my talent of music and did not take into account the disabilities issues. (SDM17)

School was pretty difficult, but I liked it because my teachers were careful with my educational needs and I was always able to accomplish the same task as my colleagues but, by different methods. In my high school I was very motivated, everyone were told me that I was able to succeed and I succeeded, I am now at the Law Faculty, even though I am low sighted person. (SDF16)

I moved at school for deaf dumbness. Here the teachers were very supportive, they used plenty of materials when they taught, and very colorful, interactive, concrete examples from our lives. This school was a great experience for me. (SDF19)

I liked being in school, the teachers were friendly even though I was a disabled child, they involved me in all the activities, they gave normal tasks like the others students. I was responsible to bring the map and chalk. In the school I felt like a normal child. (SDM18)

I was encouraged by all the teachers to join them and my colleagues to all the activities they had made in the city. We had an exhibition down town and they supported me to attend it, it was teamwork. (SDF16)

3.6 GENDER DIMENSION

The activity of women's organizations is primarily focused on the promotion of equal rights for women and men at work. The Romanian legislation in the field of safety and health at work contains provisions having as object the implementation of measures to promote the improving security and health at work of pregnant, confined and nursing women employees, group considered vulnerable to certain risks. The general norms of labor protection stipulate that since employment to set up for pregnant and nursing women, following medical examination, a work place compatible with their physiological state, avoiding their exposure to harmful or toxic environments.

The insured women are entitled for 126 calendar days to pregnancy or childbed leave, during this period benefiting from a maternity benefit. Also mothers or fathers are entitled to a leave or benefit with a view to grow up the child up to the age of 2 years and, in case of a child with disabilities, up to the age of 3 years. One of the parents benefits, by request, from a benefit for the child growth or for a sick childcare, if the applicant meets the conditions regarding the insurance period established by the law; from the same rights benefits the insured persons who, according to the law, has adopted, was appointed as legal guardian or whom was entrusted children for growth and education.

Women must have non-discriminated access to choose and exercise freely their profession, equal incomes for an equal work, access to training programs and other benefits. The employers are obliged to ensure the equality of chances and treatment between employees, including by introducing provisions to interdict discriminations in the unit's regulation for the organization and functioning and internal order. Specific norms must be periodically revised in accordance with legislative and technical modifications at national and international level.

In Romania, since 1990, abortion is legal, on woman's request, family planning services (governmental and non-governmental) were developed at national level for health education and decreasing the high rate of abortion registered after 1990. Among the benefits of family planning services are decreasing maternal mortality and decreasing numbers of abandoned children.

Since 2001, for children less than 1 year of age free powder milk is assured. In the last 5 years special Health centers for Women were opened in different cities from Romania. This kind of centers offer services for prevention, early detection

and treatment for infertility, genital and breast cancer and for prevention of diseases caused by menopause.

Domestic violence may be regarded from a juridical perspective but it is also important public health problem and it is not specific for the Romanian society, but a universal phenomena. Before 2000 in Romania there was no specific regulation regarding domestic violence only through the Penal Code was punished any act of violence, including domestic violence. But nowadays the special law for families either those with legal marital status or not, introduce aggravations in case of violence against the family members, interdiction for the aggressor of reinsertion in the family if convicted and sentenced to prison for domestic violence aggressions. Also, by this law was raised the penalties for sexual abuses and bad treatments on minors. The Romanian Parliament adopted in May 2003 the Law no. 217 on prevention and combating domestic violence. The law set up the National Agency for Family Protection, provides measures for prevention and preventing domestic violence and protection of victims, and defines the status and duties of family social assistants.

Romania, like other Central and Eastern European countries, is currently confronted with the challenge raised by the trafficking in human beings. Taking into account the fact that one of the causes of the trafficking in human beings is a rise in the request of prostitution services within the destination zone, either in Western Europe or in The Balkans, the local authorities must initiate more definite actions for reducing the „offer" and punish those who benefit from the presence of trafficked woman.

Comparative analysis and studies realized for the purpose of identifying the fundamental causes of trafficking in persons allowed the stand out of two causal categories:

- Internal causes (poverty, lack of workplace, social inequity, the desire for easy money)

- External causes (the existence of a big „demand" from the rich countries)

On the other hand it is known that the women chosen for trafficking in human beings are disadvantaged persons: women with a vulnerable status, poor and marginalized in societies, on which the social assistance programs did not work on. In consequence, the Romanian state should pay attention in order to decrease the phenomenon.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The qualitative data analysis conducted shows different aspects which explain situations and moments in the lives of the vulnerable groups that have influenced their exclusionary trajectories. These situations are different depending of the vulnerable group and drive them to suffer poverty or discrimination through different moments in their life. The scientific literature connects exclusion, poverty and discrimination. In that sense, the European Commission has recently planned different aims to fight against poverty through the Europe 2020 Strategy (European Commission, 2010) making Education and Employment, priority issues.

In this context, the data from the field work conducted with the vulnerable groups in the INCLUD-ED project shows the relevance of these two aspects. The voices of the persons who have been interviewed suggest very clearly that education and access to the labor market are the key elements that contribute to overcome social exclusion.

Excluding elements

It is also important to underline some key moments and situations that these groups have experienced in their trajectories which illustrate these statements. These moments explain the difficulties and the risks that these people have found in their lives. Young people who are early school leavers are at a greater risk of social exclusion due to the difficulties to finding a job. People with disabilities are being discriminated against in the school and subsequently in the access to the labor market. In Romania, Roma people have been scorned at school, but also in the access to public services like health care and in the labor market. Women are suffering from a situation of multiple discrimination: due to being women, and for many of them for not having an academic degree. The lack of education is a common treat increases the risk of social exclusion for all the vulnerable groups that have been analyzed.

In the analysis of the results we go beyond these moments and we analyzing people's trajectories in depth. This has illustrated how there are other aspects that have lead vulnerable groups to exclusion in other areas of society as well, namely political and social participation, employment, housing and health. Three of them can be highlighted: racism and xenophobic attitudes, low levels of education and exclusionary educational practices.

Migrants and cultural groups, find barriers connected to racism and xenophobia in the educational system. The consolidation of several prejudices from teachers and other educational agents are hindering the integration of migrant and Roma students in schools and other educational centers. The fact of them being scorned and discriminated causes lack of motivation to continue studying provoking high rates of school leavers. These practices drive Roma people to follow exclusionary pathways eventually finding problems to access to the labor market and find a job, feeling discriminated in health services for not have an academical background, facing difficulties to access to houses in good conditions because of their low salaries, etc. These results are in the same line of previous finding obtained in WP15 that stated that people with low levels of education have a higher risk of social exclusion.

In the field of education, exclusionary practices have also been pointed out by the participants as being at the core of school discrimination, hindering their educational development and subsequently transferring this educational exclusion to other areas. The lack of skills needed for the information society is referred to as going hand in hand with exclusion in other areas.

Successful Actions within vulnerable groups

However, the goal of these analysis was also set onto the identification of successful practices and particular actions that contribute to overcome the situation of social exclusion experience by these vulnerable groups.

In the case of cultural groups, family education and participation is identified as a key element to overcome social exclusion. In that sense, these Roma families who are involved in schools are improving their personal situation at different levels enabling important transformations in their life. Through learning the language of the host society for instance they can understand health prescriptions and go to the doctor without the help of any mediator. This improves their health condition but also their personal situation and self-esteem.

Cultural groups

Cultural groups point out how family participation in schools has increased their participation in decision-making processes, improving relationships in the community. The involvement of people from minorities in learning activities is influencing the life of education centers but it is also

transferring to the neighborhood's life. Coexistence gets better and social participation increased in some activities carried out by entities from the neighborhood. When there are people from different cultural groups working as mediators in health services, it has a beneficial effect upon the treatment that this cultural group receives. A richer and more constructive dialogue is being generated towards the understanding between different parts. Above all, this is due to the fact that the needs, interests and diverse realities are taken into account.

Furthermore, the consolidation of social movements that reinforce the claims of cultural groups has been identified as an action that has a positive effect upon their well-being contributing to overcome their social exclusion. These movements, managed by the very cultural group, work from the core of the community to elaborate proposals that improve their situation. Within the Roma community for instance, the existence of these movements is having a major impact upon the educational expectations and the results for children and adolescents. It is also positively influencing the access of Roma people to the labor market, the breaking of stereotypes and the promotion of gender equality within the Roma community and in the overall society.

Women

Women participants have highlighted how empowering training and education can be for the overcoming of their situation of exclusion in different domains. Participation in community associations is also identified as a successful element although certain nuances are also put forward. In this line, democratic adult education is pointed out as a successful action for the transformation of these women's lives. Education promotes the acquisition of particular skills and access to information but also improves their self- esteem. Among the positive consequences identified are better communication with health professionals and understanding about health treatments and habits.

Participation in education activities has also promoted their involvement in other institutions and activities in their communities, engaging them into social and even political participation.

Youth

One element that is identified by the very participants in these analysis are the youth social networks created which, based on their own interests create

opportunities for increasing their social participation. Furthermore, educational experience such as continuing education is highlighted as an essential element providing resources for overcoming exclusion caused by former inequalities. For instance by increasing their instrumental learning, having access to official degrees like secondary education, different areas in their lives are positively influenced. Importantly, participants have pointed out how education has contributed to improving health conditions, managing paper work and other administrative tasks in their households and improving their life conditions in general.

People with disabilities

The participants with a disability taking part in the analysis have highlighted how social participation and educational engagement contributes to their well-being by the meaning creation in their lives. Furthermore, they have stressed the role of associations and other institutions. In this regards, being involved in associations which are including their voices, taking into account their interests and needs are seen as a key element for overcoming social barriers. Different aspects are pointed out as being influenced by this participation's positive impact: health and housing conditions or access to employment being among them.

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