

Bachelor thesis

A multicultural EU policy?

“Roma Inclusion” in conflict with traditional values



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1 Introduction

With no territory and a mysterious history, the Romanies, or better known as “Gypsies”, have had to endure centuries of discriminatory practices and persecutions in Europe: In 15th century Germany, the first anti-Romani law was passed, followed by many more. According to this, the Romanies were to be killed and simply punished for their pure existence (Hancock, 2002). In Spain, France, England and many other European countries, different discriminating laws were issued such as the hanging for male Romanies, mutilation and taking away of Romani children for Christian education. In the 20th century, the Romanies were less subject to ethnic elimination, but rather to assimilationist laws across Europe, focusing on the end of nomadism and school attendance. In Bulgaria, for instance, the use of their mother tongue and Romani names were legally forbidden, forcing them to assimilate into the majority society (Fonseca, 1988, p.159, p.310). There are a lot more examples of maltreatment across Europe. It seems that the Romanies have always attracted political interest, albeit in the negative sense causing many deaths and the restriction of their particular ways of life.

Today the Romani issue is again on the political agenda in many European states, but this time in the light of social inclusion and the recognition of Romanies as the largest national minority in the European Union (EU). With the Eastern enlargement in 2004 and 2007, many Romanies living in Central and Eastern Europe became EU citizens and their problematic living-conditions became a concern for the community. Already prior to the accession, the candidates with high Romani populations were required to take measures in the context of the Phare programme (funds for candidate states to conform to EU standards) to integrate the Romanies into the majority society and improve their economic and social wellbeing (Guglielmo & Waters, 2005). The situation of many Romanies in contemporary Europe was well described by the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) in its biannual report 2001- 2002:

The Roma (Gypsies) remain to date the most deprived ethnic group of Europe. Almost everywhere, their fundamental rights are threatened. Disturbing cases of racist violence targeting Roma have occurred in recent years. Discrimination against Roma in employment, education, health care, and administrative and other services is common in many societies (p.5).

In recent years the disadvantaged situation of the largest minority in Europe has achieved significant attention on the political agenda. As the EU is committed to universal human rights and the social and economic inclusion of its citizens, the marginalisation and multiple disadvantages of the Romanies constitute a challenge for today’s EU politics. With the words by New and Merry (2010), “the “Gypsy problem” becomes increasingly important, bearing symbolically, and in real social and economic terms, on EU promises of democratic governance and equal opportunity” (p.393). Therefore the EU is following the approach “*Mainstreaming Roma Inclusion in All Policies of the European Union*“, i.e. projects and legislative acts do not focus on Romanies alone but constitute a general framework that targets at ethnic minorities in Europe in general (European Commission, 2010a, p.13). This “explicit, but not exclusive” approach is well displayed by the various

funding mechanisms such as the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) which support improvement in general areas (employment opportunities, health) that affect Romanies as well (ibid.). In order to coordinate programmes and exchange information on the Romanies throughout Europe, three influential networks have emerged: First, there is the *Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015* consisting of twelve European governments with high Romani populations – among them six EU Member States – and several international organisations such as the World Bank, UNDP and UNICEF who focus on measures in the areas of education, employment, housing and health. Each of the participating countries defines political instruments to achieve specific goals which are being monitored (Decade of Roma Inclusion, n.d.a). The next is the *European Summits* organised by the European Commission and the respective Presidency of the Council, which about 400 political and non-political representatives take part in (European Commission, n.d.). Similarly, the *Platform for Roma inclusion* aims at “stimulating cooperation and exchanges of experience on successful Roma inclusion policies and practices” (ibid., para. 3). The Platform meetings take place in regular intervals and deal with specific topics for which experts and representatives from Romani communities are invited as well. Besides networking on European-wide level, the EU has adopted a number of directives, resolutions and framework decisions that either support ethnic minorities generally or are directly targeted at Romanies. Probably the most important Directive in this context is the Racial Equality Directive from 2000 that prohibits any discrimination based on ethnic or racial origin and was implemented in all Member States by 2009. Although there are rarely any legislative acts especially aiming at the improvement of living standards of Romanies, a dynamic on the European level becomes visible due to the efforts put forward by the European Parliament and the Commission. The Commission has issued several reports, communications and working papers about the social and economic integration of Romanies, whilst the European Parliament has adopted resolutions on the social situation of the Romanies and access to the labour market, the situation of Romanies in Europe, a European strategy on the Romanies and the education of the children of migrants in general (Eur-Lex, 2011).

Although there are endless books, journal articles, reports and essays on the Romanies, there are only a moderate number of scholars who have written about the new EU politics. Kovats (2001), Klimová (2004) and Guglielmo and Waters (2005) described the development of the emergence of Romani politics in the EU and tried to give a careful evaluation of the process so far. Scheffel (2004) criticised the Slovak government for ineffectively using financial resources in the name of Roma inclusion before its accession to the EU. More recent publications concern the national implementation of intended programmes; for instance, Poole (2010) examined the deficient realisation of the National Action Plan in Scotland with regard to the treatment of Romani migrants. Inclusion in the context of political participation was the focus of the empirical research by Baclija, Brezovsek and Hacek (2008), who explored the Romani participation in Slovenian local politics according to the guidelines of the EU framework. It seems that most authors dealing with the political dimension of Romani issues are concerned with the effectiveness

of the programmes of the EU, but in doing so neglecting an important aspect of the project “Roma Inclusion”, namely that of the cultural repercussions.

Today it is acknowledged among scholars that the Romani culture is not only internally diverse, but that the Romanies have always adopted elements from other cultures (particularly their host society) and been subject to social, geographical and occupational influences. Thus the decrease of certain customs and the change of life-styles are not necessarily to be regarded as the loss of culture, but rather as the ability to adapt to their environment (Fraser, 1992; Guy, 2001). This certainly applies to issues such as occupation, housing and clothing, but, more importantly, there are core elements of the Romani culture which are affected by today’s modernisation and industrialisation, too. Among these, the importance of the extended family, community, language and, especially, their value system have to be mentioned. For instance, Marushiakova and Popov (2001) described the Romani group Rudara who have forgotten their mother tongue and do not cultivate Romani customs anymore. Equally, Muslim Romanies seem to have taken the identity of the majority society and deny their cultural heritage (p.37). As these are important characteristics of the Romani culture, their disregard can in fact lead to the fading away of the cultural heritage. One reason for this trend is that external influences (policies, media, host society) on their traditional ways of life are too strong to be resisted. Now the abovementioned political development with regard to “Roma Inclusion” adds to the cultural challenges the Romanies have to face.

The Western influences on the Romani culture and their consequences have often been discussed in literature, but what is missing is the link between the many EU policies and the preservation of the distinct culture of the Romanies. The question of cultural side-effects caused by the new EU policy is particularly interesting considering that Article 22 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU explicitly states that “The Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity” (European Parliament, 2001). Specifically, the European Parliament has expressed its intention to help preserve and make aware of the distinct culture of the Romanies. In a resolution it called “on the Member States to use EU funds to preserve and protect traditional Roma activities” and further stressed “the importance of conserving and affirming the specific cultural characteristics of the Roma in order to protect their identity” (European Parliament, 2010, p.63, p.66). This leads to the conclusion that the EU follows a multicultural approach when engaging in the politics of “Roma Inclusion”.

The questions that have to be asked are thus: What are the measures that the EU plans to implement in order to improve the economic and social situation of the Romanies? What are the effects of the multicultural projects? Which are the cultural conflicts arising from the differences between Western and Romani values? Does the EU follow a genuine multicultural strategy? Above all, the most prevailing question this paper focuses on is: Despite their good intentions, do the EU-funded programmes and projects harm the distinct Romani culture?

The Romanies with their strong attachment to their traditions and their extraordinary ways of life need to be supported in the preservation of their culture, which

contributes to a rich ethnic diversity in Europe. Living out their culture is expressed as a goal in Article 1 of the International Romani Union Charter: “To develop all favourable qualities of the Romani, their cultural traditions, customs and language” (Acton & Klimová, 2001, p.201). Thus it is important that scholars are concerned with the relationship between politics and culture, considering that the Romanies have already been subjected to political measures in the last centuries, forcing them to deny their cultural identity and restricting the exercise of their customs. Unfortunately, the author of this paper is not aware of any literature dealing with the recent political development on EU level and its effects on the Romani culture so that she is restricted in her analysis to the available data from official sources and conducted field studies.

This paper will explore the impact of the political measures in the fields of education, housing and gender equality on the Romani ways of life and aims at showing the weaknesses of the multicultural EU policy and the tensions between Western and Romani values. These fields of action are chosen for the analysis because they are perceived as necessary in order to improve the living conditions of the Romanies and to reduce their marginalisation. The problems in the first two areas belong to the most often mentioned disadvantages of the Romanies that the EU wants to tackle, whereas the demands for the empowerment of Romani women derive from the engagement of Romani women’s organisations and the political commitment to gender equality in general.

It must be stressed that since there are hardly any studies on the effectiveness of the implementation of inclusionary EU projects, more researches are needed in order to accurately assess the impact of political measures on the culture of the Romanies in contemporary Europe.

2 Theoretical framework: Multicultural governance

The term „multiculturalism” has repeatedly fallen in public debates, media and even everyday speech. While some praise its benefits and positive implications for life in a globalised world in which many different cultures coexist, others criticise its logical side-effects and explicit consequences. With a view to the mass of literature on multiculturalism, it becomes clear that the various political scientists and philosophers writing on this subject have not succeeded in creating a singular framework yet. As Mill (2007) observed, multiculturalism can be about policies, demands by ethnic groups, political theory and school curriculum, while different attributes such as strong, weak, liberal and critical add to the variety of the forms that multiculturalism can take. It can also be viewed as empirical fact, ideology, policy and programme, and practice (Fleras, 2009). In the scientific community, the wide range of different interpretations and context-dependent usage is acknowledged and also referred to (Fleras, 2009; Prato, 2009).

After the historical developments of decolonisation, end of slavery, civil rights movements of African-Americans and indigenous peoples, and mass labor migrations from the “South” to the “North” (Mills, 2007, p.90), it seemed that a global paradigm shift took place that emphasised a new point of view regarding different cultures and the renunciation

of old assimilationist policies. Canada and Australia were the first countries where multiculturalism was embedded in their government policies towards minority groups and which are still described as having the strongest multicultural orientations in policies and programmes today (ibid., pp.89). But not only are they strongly concerned with the inclusion of ethnic minorities, but also New Zealand, the USA and Western Europe, particularly Great Britain and the Netherlands which explicitly state their commitment to multicultural policies, but do not have a constitutional basis in contrast to Canada. Although these countries share their commitment to a multicultural approach, there is no model that applies cross-nationally. Each country has its own way to deal with ethnic groups (Fleras, 2009). The reason for the popularity of multiculturalism in governance is because most countries are culturally diverse today: “Multiculturalism in this context implies the recognition that the world is constituted of many peoples and cultures, of differing ethnicities and races, all of whom are deserving respect” (Mills, 2007, p.90). Even before the logistic progress, many nation-states always had ethnic minorities (indigenous people, migrants or former slaves) so the governments have had to cope with issues such as language rights, political representation, education and curriculum, and regional autonomy (Fleras, 2009; Kyrimcka, 1995). It is therefore of no surprise that the EU increasingly focuses on its ethnic diversity as it comprises of so many different peoples on its territory. Instead of demanding ethnic groups to fully assimilate into the majority society and take over its language, educational system and way of life, the stress on inclusive governance in accordance with the international human rights agenda prevails, which says that multiculturalism is more appropriate to secure positive identities leading to a cooperative coexistence of different cultures. Additionally, through tolerance towards other customs and ways of life, social equality and equal opportunity are more likely to be achieved. This can take the form of the grant of collective rights and the support of antiracist initiatives aiming at demonstrating the social acceptance of otherness. As Fleras (2009) stated, the challenge of today’s policy towards diversity is “to create a multicultural governance that is protective of national interests and majority entitlements yet supportive of the public good and protection of minority rights” (p.52).

In theory, there are different models describing the approaches the countries choose to take. Fleras (2009), for instance, explained that there were basically three kinds of multicultural governance models among many: conservative, liberal and plural. The first is a culture-blind governance that stresses the equal treatment before law regardless of any differences. This implies that nobody is excluded from full participation but that nobody has the right to special treatment either. Cultural values are expected to be in compliance with the ones of the majority society and the exercise of cultural customs should remain in the private domain (pp.13). The conservative model is insofar multicultural as it respects people from other cultural backgrounds by granting full democratic rights and equal citizenship. The liberal model, in contrast, accepts the fact that the society is heterogeneous and suggests that the dominant culture makes space for other cultures. This way, ethnic minorities can identify with their cultural roots in the public. The particularity is that different minorities are generally treated equally but in certain situations some are subject

to special treatment, e.g. when they are exempted from certain regulations and laws violating their beliefs (pp.14). Finally, the plural model constitutes the strongest commitment to cultural diversity as it stresses its important meaning to life and encourages the society to take differences seriously. In this context, group rights may have priority over individual rights (pp.15). Compared to this, Rex (2010) distinguished four models based on the separation of the public and private domain: The first is a society that is basically unitary in the public but encourages diversity in the private and particularly in the communities. The second is a society that is also unitary in the public but additionally demands homogenous cultural practices in private which resembles the French ideal of assimilation. The third allows diversity and differential group rights in the public and also encourages diversity in the private. An example of this is the South African apartheid system. The last model allows diversity and differential group rights in the public although the cultural practices of different groups are relatively homogenous. With this description of the multicultural society, Rex refers to the people living in the Deep South of the United States before the beginning of the civil rights programme (pp.219). Out of these four models, the author regards the first as the ideal of multiculturalism, which implies that there is sufficient commonality in the public sphere between the communities despite the cultural differences. Whereas Fleras bases his model system on the state's attitude towards difference (difference-blind, difference-conscious), Rex looks at what is allowed in the public and private spheres. Here it is clear how diverse multicultural approaches can be.

Among the many argumentations from different authors defending the fragmented concept of multiculturalism, there seem to be two core propositions why it is important to accept and protect different cultures. One line of reasoning is advocated by liberal theorists such as Kylimcka (1995) and Spinner-Halev (2000) who claimed that cultures are an important good because they provide its members with meaningful ways of life and certain kinds of options through which worthwhile and valuable objects can be understood. This is best presented by a quotation of Kylimcka (1995): "Cultures are valuable, not in and of themselves, but because it is only through having access to a societal culture that people have access to a range of meaningful options" (p.83). As Kylimcka argues, this is because the decision of how to lead one's life is influenced by cultural narratives that help to form the idea of a good life. Through the culture and the context the people grow up with, they are aware of the options available to them and can then choose from the different ways of life (Kylimcka, 1989). Therefore he believes that liberalism should engage more strongly with the meaning of culture as "the range of options is determined by our cultural heritage" (p.165). Another core proposition is that culture itself has a high value because of its important meanings for the members of a cultural community. As Parekh (2010) explained, human beings are culturally embedded and constantly influenced by their environment contributing to the development of their character and perspective (p.239). Similarly, Kylimcka (1989) believed that people are bound to their own cultural community, considering that the upbringing takes place in a certain cultural environment which strongly influences their identity. These influences will remain part of the identity although people change places of residence or get to know different cultures. Kylimcka (1995)

further strengthened this argument by referring to Rawls who stated that ties to cultures were too strong to give up and that in spite of modernisation and liberalisation throughout Europe and the gradual homogenisation between minority and majority cultures, people still adhered to their cultural roots (pp.87). He also gave an explanation for this behaviour by referring to Margalit and Raz who believe that the membership in a societal culture is crucial for the wellbeing of its members as it not only provides meaningful options, but also contributes to self-identity and self-identification (p.88). Kylimcka (1989) acknowledges that the membership in a societal culture is a source of emotional security and personal strength (p.175). Therefore it is important that ethnic groups with their different ways of life are valued. According to Rex (2010), the group not only serves as place for primary socialisation and representative of collective interests, but also helps individuals to overcome isolation, to deal with moral problems and gives identity through interactions and affirmations of the common values and beliefs. Thus the role that the community plays in one's life justifies the claims to preserve its existence (Johnston, 1995).

Because of these positive implications of culture, three conclusions can be summarised which are implicit in the concept of multiculturalism. First, the important meaning of culture for the individual (identity-building, emotional strength) requires a politics of recognition as proposed by Taylor (1993), when he introduced the notion of originality, meaning that people should be themselves and not pretend to be somebody else. In order to be authentic, they need to articulate their authenticity through which they define themselves. But if their identity is not recognised and downplayed by others instead, then psychological damages can result. The same applies to groups whose non-recognition by others may lead to the uprooting of their members. Values such as solidarity and self-respect cannot develop, which may even cause the extinction of the culture at worst. Thus, it is important to recognise different customs and encourage their maintenance (Wolf, 1993, p.80). The second implication is that the many different cultures need to be treated equal. According to Parekh (2010), different cultures represent different values and visions of a good life so that there can be no worthless culture, but also no perfect ones. Each of them deserves equal respect as it has some meaning to its adherers. Similarly, Modood (2005) described equality:

as not having to hide or apologize for one's origins, family, or community, but requiring others to show respect for them and adapt public attitudes and arrangements so that the heritage they represent is encouraged rather than ignored or expected to wither away (p.134).

The third conclusion is rather contested among liberals: Because of the importance of culture for the individual, Kylimcka (1995) endorsed the introduction of group-differentiated or minority rights in multicultural governance. These are often rejected by liberals who favour "colour-blind" politics ensuring the equal treatment of different cultural groups, but Kylimcka believes they are necessary to ensure the freedom of living out the different ways of life. He compares individual rights such as the freedom of speech, association and religion with group rights which he subsumes under the headings self-government rights, poly-ethnic rights and special representation. As all these rights aim at

the accommodation of cultural differences, e.g. the freedom of religion allows citizens to exercise their religious practices regardless of difference, it seems logical that some groups may need special laws to accommodate certain forms of their cultural differences, too.

In sum, to these authors, multiculturalism constitutes a concept that respects the importance attached to cultures and actively encourages their preservation.

Questions on the legitimacy of minority rights such as the exemption from certain laws and, generally, doubts about the benefits of multiculturalism have always been expressed among political philosophers and liberal theorists. However, in recent years multiculturalism has been more strongly criticised than ever before. The reason for this trend can be found in the London bombings by British Muslim citizens in 2000, who had been living in England for many years. From then on there have been many debates about whether the multicultural approach is a viable option for a socially cohesive society and whether a one-sided multiculturalism even encourages segregated communities (Guibernau & Rex, 2010; Modood, 2010). Authors such as Parekh (2010) affirmed that a multicultural society could not last long without having a common sense of belonging and a shared commitment to a political community. The consequence of these tensions is that multicultural public policy seems to be in retreat: most European countries have tightened their policies towards minorities (Fleras, 2009; May & Sleeter, 2010) by requiring language skills, sufficient knowledge of the national history and political system and, as in France, prohibiting wearing certain traditional costumes in public.

Criticisms on multiculturalism are numerous. Most circle around the tensions between traditional non-liberal practices in a minority group and liberal values in a democratic society and the risk that collective rights may trump individual rights. Prato (2009) argued that the freedom of members of certain minority groups was limited when the state tolerated traditional practices restricting individual freedom. Similarly, Kylimcka (1995) acknowledged the possibility that some minority groups may use their legal power granted by the state to impose non-liberal practices on their members and thus violate the liberal notion of individual rights. He admits that this is a dilemma that splits liberals and non-liberals alike. Weinstock (2007) considered minorities within minority groups at risk because:

By granting groups powers to organize their internal affairs as they see fit, power would in effect be vested in the most powerful elites within these groups to lord it over their members without the kinds of constitutional constraints [...] of liberal states (p.246).

Feminists and other theorists thus criticise multiculturalism for tolerating strong patriarchal structures within traditional minority groups that result in the subordination of women and the neglect of women's rights acknowledged in international politics (Fleras, 2009; Shachar, 2007; Wolf, 1993). The oppression of women can thereby take the form of genital cutting, forced marriage and the murder of girls allegedly having offended the family honour (Phillips & Saharso, 2008). Likewise problems arise when the interests of certain groups clash with state interests. An example often mentioned in literature is that of the Amish in the USA, who are allowed to prohibit their children to attend school as they oppose the worldly influences on their children's development, which do not comply with

their own belief system (Spinner-Halev, 2000). But as Barry (2001) argued, the state has an interest in the child's education as it will be a grown-up citizen contributing to the country's wellbeing and thus needs certain skills and capacities to be able to take over responsibilities. Without the education offered at school those children may be unprepared for life later when they decide to leave the community and live a different life as proposed by their parents (pp.220). Thus Barry regards it as justified that the state at least requires all children to master the dominant language. In contrast, Kukathas and Spinner-Halev believe that liberal tolerance implies that members of a minority group can decide on their own and should be left alone by the state despite non-liberal customs (Barry, 2001; Kylimcka, 1995; Spinner-Halev, 2000). In similar line, most liberals defend the principle of non-intervention because exit rights enable group members to leave if they want to (Fleras, 2009). Kylimcka (1995) offered another solution by making a distinction between internal and external restrictions whereby the latter aims at protecting the group from external decisions (laws, regulations). Internal restrictions, in contrast, may lead to individual oppression as they aim at preserving homogeneity within the community by restricting the dissidents' freedom. This kind of restriction is, according to Kylimcka, to be prohibited by the state (pp.35).

Other criticisms concern the risk that the national identity and unity may erode when ethnic diversity is so strongly emphasised in everyday life. This can in turn result in the creation of ghettos (Fleras, 2009; Prato, 2009). Furthermore, by granting group-differentiated rights, inequality between different minorities or resentment from members of the majority society arise (Prato, 2009, p.7). Liberals often refer to the situation during the Apartheid in South Africa when the Whites invoked their alleged minority rights and discriminated against the natives (Kylimcka, 1989, p. 144). This led to the unequal treatment of individuals.

In sum, multiculturalism implies that different cultures and ways of life are to be recognised and valued as they have important meanings for the members of the societal culture. The multicultural governance thus has to involve the issue of ethnic diversity in its policies and actively encourage a peaceful coexistence of cultures and the preservation of cultural customs. It is apparent from the outline of different governance models, the positive elements and the many criticisms of multiculturalism that its concept is difficult to grasp and contains tensions that still need to be solved.

3 Methodology

This paper is the result of a desk-research based on primary and secondary sources. The overview on the political developments with regard to "Roma Inclusion" is generated with the help of the official websites of the European Commission, the "Decade of Roma Inclusion" and the legal documents available on Eur-Lex, whether legislative or preparatory. As there are only very few legislative acts directly concerning the Romanies, most intended and actual projects and programmes are derived from the various non-binding resolutions of the European Parliament and the reports and working documents of

the European Commission. These summarise the different instruments for “Roma Inclusion” on national and European level in the last few years, which are valuable sources for this paper because the vast amount of programmes and EU-funded projects in the areas of education, housing and gender equality in 27 Member States is hardly possible to be assessed in the short period of time for this research.

Since the beginning of their emergence in Europe, the Romanies have not only attracted political actors but also many scholars and “Gypsy experts” making research on their ways of life, but often resulting in findings that do not correspond with the reality. In order to give an unbiased account of the Romani culture, a great part of information was taken from the works by Isabel Fonseca and Jan Yoors who had the opportunity to travel with Romani groups in the 60’s and 90’s and get to know their particular way of life. Their insights are also considered authentic and valuable among other scholars writing about Romanies. Further information is derived from Romani academics such as the well-known Ian Hancock and the often cited Angus Fraser, and many East and Central European and well-established scholars among the Romani experts. A number of recent field studies in the spheres of education, housing and gender relations are also taken into account in order to supplement the discussion with empirical findings from the perspective of the Romanies.

With regard to the analysis, the author of this paper decided to make two limitations: First, this research does not focus on nomadism that is associated with the Romani culture as it is contested among Romani experts. Although there are still publications describing Romanies as being originally nomads, there are a number of authors claiming the contrary: For instance, Will Guy (2004) considered it important to distinguish between “nomadism as means of subsistence – an established pattern characteristic of the relatively smaller, more scattered Roma communities of Western Europe – and migration from the larger, often more concentrated and predominantly settled Roma populations of Central and Eastern Europe” (p.173). As travelling can also be explained beyond the cultural dimension, this paper will only slightly refer to it. The second limitation concerns the application of the debates about multiculturalism on the analysis. Where appropriate, theories on the importance of culture and minority rights will be applied in the discussion about the political measures and their impact on the Romani culture, but since the central question of this research deals with cultural conflicts caused by the seemingly multicultural EU policy, the heated academic debate about the legitimacy of imposing Western values on a (less liberal) minority group will only be carefully included to stress the difficult ethical questions the EU has to deal with. Instead, an objective discussion will be given answering the central questions of this research.

4 The Romanies and their traditional values

The Romanies, originated from India nearly thousand years ago, constitute the largest minority in Europe today (Hancock, 2008). Accurate statistics concerning the number of Romanies still do not exist, partly because their real identity is preferred to be masked and partly because a lot of states do not survey the ethnic background, but it is estimated that

about 10-12 million Romanies live in Europe (European Commission, 2010a; Marushiakova & Popov, 2001).

The Romanies are often referred to as one single ethnicity, but in fact they are comprised of many separate groups and subgroups with each having different cultural characteristics. Some groups are even feuding with each other (Marushiakova & Popov, 2001, p.34). Romani groups differ, *inter alia*, in the level of integration into the mainstream society, the distinction settlement or nomadism, the strictness of endogamy, the religion they embrace, the ability to speak the language Romani and particularly the crafts they carry out. These are an important feature of their culture as the groups are often named after the craft the members carry out (Ivanova & Krustev, 2008, p.101).

Despite the long period of their existence in Europe the Romanies have most often been neglected and treated differently (and in many cases even hostile) by the host society. In early modern Europe, their appearance (dark skin, colourful clothing), their language and their foreign ways of life caused the host population to regard them “as a different human group” (Shahar, 2007, p.9) that needed to be formed in order to be ordinary people. Over the years, the perception of the “Gypsies” (still used in literature today) has not changed much so that even today the view remains that the Romanies are nomads who do not work honestly and instead steal and beg for their living. The many (negative) characteristics that the Romanies are ascribed to have enforced the perception that they are different and not part of the majority society. This misleading and often romantic image of the Romanies is even enforced by the media and unserious researchers (Hancock, 2002).

However, the ignorance of the distinct culture and the marginalisation of the Romanies are not only the result of deeply rooted prejudices lingering in the host society, but also of the practice of many Romani communities to stay away from non-Romanies whom they call *gadje* (Margalit & Matras, 2007). Regardless of whether the non-identification with the *gadje* is the consequence of the long-lasting discrimination ultimately leading to mistrust or of the cultural style that distinguishes between Romanies and *gadje* (Klimová, 2004), the fact is that the majority of the Romanies prefer to stay within their community in which a strong sense of solidarity exists. Romani children grow up in the extended family in which each adult member is responsible for them as if they were their own and all children are seen as brothers and sisters. This *familia* includes the married sons and their wives, children and grandchildren, who often live close to each other or even in the same house (Fraser, 1992). Togetherness is so important that exclusion from the community is seen as the cruellest punishment imaginable (Wasileski & Miller, 2010). Contacts with the non-Romanies are maintained for business reasons and convenience (Yoors, 1982) and intermarriages are rare. Whereas the host society maintains certain negative opinions of the “Gypsies”, the Romanies themselves consider “non-Gypsies and non-Gypsy cultures [...] as threatening [...] and to be avoided” (Hancock, 1991, p.137). The reason for this antipathy is not only that the Romanies have learned from the many discriminations and anti-Romani policies they and their ancestors suffered from, but it also stems from the cultural belief in the purity law: Cleanliness is an important value that has to be maintained in everyday life, but which can be endangered by women, certain

immoral topics and the *gadje*. Therefore the comprehensive set of rules regarding “pollution” is strictly watched, requiring the contact with the *gadje* to be limited (Silverman, 1988). By means of the distinction between these two worlds and the strong adherence to their cultural values, the distinct culture of the Romanies has not been erased even after the many political attempts to change their ways of life. Kaldova (1991) even claimed that “governmental efforts at total cultural assimilation of the Gypsies are not likely to succeed, and most Gypsies will manage to maintain their traditional life-styles and identity” (p.111).

Nevertheless, a change of their culture can be observed among many Romani families that have adapted to modern Europe: most Romanies are sedentary today, have forgotten or never learned the traditional crafts such as tinsmiths, blacksmiths, tanners and knife-cutlers, some deny their origin and some do not speak their mother tongue, Romani, which is at the core of the Romani culture (Fonseca, 1998; Ivanova & Krustev, 2008). Furthermore, it seems that more and more Romanies accept the culture of their surrounding and assimilate into the majority society (Marushiakova & Popov, 2001). It is therefore inappropriate to say that the Romanies have successfully resisted the influences of Western values and still live according to traditional customs and beliefs.

Despite the difficulties posed by the diversity of Romani communities and their different ways of life, and the cultural change today, the next three sections will deal with the cultural values and practices most likely to be affected by the EU measures. These characteristics are to some degree identical among the different Romani groups and significant elements of their culture.

4.1 Education

It has often been thought among non-Romanies that education is not valued by the Romanies and that they prefer being illiterate instead. In fact, education does play an important role in the Romanies’ lives, albeit not the same as for the non-Romanies. They have a different understanding of the way how to educate their children and prepare them for the future. In times without the obligation to attend school, education took place within the community in mixed age groups where the children learnt everything through the observation of norms and morality in their everyday encounters with adults and children. By copying the elder and being constantly corrected they developed the skills necessary for life (Ivanova & Krustev, 2008; O’ Hanlon & Holmes, 2004). This kind of non-formal education thus took and still takes place in everyday life and is not restricted to any plans or schedules. The oral tradition of stories and legends served as an instrument to preserve cultural values and prepare their life in the *gadje* world (Yoors, 1982). Also this way Romani has long been taught, as it used to be a purely oral language before the increasing literacy encouraged many Romanies to write in their own language and enable non-Romanies to learn Romani as well (Heinschink, 1994, p.114). The lack of reading skills was often compensated by remembering the sequence of certain words in important writings such as official documents and letters so that the Romanies did not feel the need to become literate as they understood the content and whenever somebody in their

community was literate, he would help other members of the group (Levinson, 2007; Tauber, 2003). Furthermore, it was more important the family transferred practical skills necessary for survival such as the traditional crafts in order to earn money. Literacy was perceived as insofar important as it is necessary to handle bureaucratic procedures and understand non-Romani authorities, but the more important skills are from a practical nature.

Education in the sense of attending school where not only reading and writing are taught, but also norms and cultural values of the majority society, is an institution that the Romanies regard as belonging to the *gadje* world (Tauber, 2003, p.282). Since the beginning of the introduction of compulsory education in Bulgaria in the 1960s, for instance, the Romani parents were hostile to the idea and considered school “an unnecessary element for children’s education” (Ivanova & Krustev, 2008, p.94) and an instrument to assimilate the Romanies into the host society. Due to long years of bad experience with public institutions, the school was largely met with mistrust and scepticism regarding the promises it made (New & Merry, 2010). The same applies to the Polish Romani parents who were punished by local authorities for not sending their children to school as they feared that education was likely to affect their cultural identity. The institution “school” was seen as strange since the Romanies were not used to the systemic way of teaching and they were doubtful that it would ensure a better future for their children (Mróz, 2001, p.264). The bad experience with non-Romani institutions is not the only reason why many Romani families still feel uneasy about sending their children to school. The other is the cultural belief that everything that comes from the *gadje* world is *marhime* so that contact with the *gadje* is to be limited when the Romanies do not want to be polluted.

Although today many Romani families have accepted more or less education into their value system and try to support their child’s success at school, various trends indicate that a lot of Romanies still do not attach as much importance to education as the majority society does: regular absence from class, non-attendance of extracurricular activities and excursions and unauthorised extensions of holidays (Tauber, 2003, p.271, p.282).

The pedagogue Ana Gomes observed that despite the regular attendance of many Romani children, the subjects they learned in class were not always integrated into their own way of life as they only took up a selection of useful features from the curriculum (Tauber, 2003). This practice both shows that the Romani children regard the subjects taught at school as mostly not useful and that they are still careful about the *gadje* values implicitly transferred through the interactions at school and the things they learn (Levinson & Sparkes, 2003). This impression is supported by the field study carried out by Levinson (2007) who asked English Romanies (Travellers) about their attitude towards education. A high number of respondents said that the written word was a characteristic of the *gadje* whose mastery would mean assimilation (“*gadjefication*”). This explains why reading books is despised by many Romani parents as it symbolises oppression by non-Romanies. Another explanation for the negative attitude towards reading is that it prevents the children from doing more useful things and it is an individual activity that is contrary to the

value of solidarity and community since education in the traditional sense means learning within the extended family (pp.22; O' Hanlon & Holmes, 2004). Thus the tension between the obligation to attend school and the values in the Romani culture is compromised by the practice to learn only the basic skills needed for everyday life and partially engage with literacy. The unpopularity of reading skills even causes motivated Romanies to hide their interest and skills from the community members (p.12, p.28, p.32). It seems that many Romani groups link their culture with illiteracy that serves as a dividing line between the Romani and non-Romani world.

In the interviews with Romani (Sinti) pupils and parents in Germany, Krause (1988) found out that traditional customs (marriage, death, birth) and family obligations always took precedence over formal education. The family is the most important feature in one's life. For instance, this is depicted by the fact that travelling during the summer break not only serves as an important source of income, but also as a means to visit friends and family and exchange news. Thus it contributes to the maintenance of the Romani culture. Further, older children are expected to accept the responsibility for their younger siblings at home and to help their parents in their business which justifies absence from class (pp.129). Some parents insist on having their children of different ages taught in the same class as they are used to mixed age groups in the community (O' Hanlon & Holmes, 2004).

Of course, this does not apply to all Romani families. Despite the conventional wisdom claiming that formal education is not valued by the Romanies, there are indeed parents who try to provide the best education possible for their children so they lead a better life than themselves (New & Merry, 2010). To some families, literacy can serve as a powerful tool that gives them more options in life, whereby particularly females regard it as a chance to become more independent and self-confident (Levinson, 2007; Levinson & Sparkes, 2003).

Despite the many years in which the Romanies have been obligated to send their children to school and the benefits they perceive to get along in the knowledge society, there is still high ambiguity among the Romani families regarding the value of formal education. Whereas some regard it as empowering to have literacy skills, others mistrust the institution school that is after all a body created by non-Romanies whose values often do not comply with their traditional values. Furthermore, both have different understandings regarding the methods and content of education. This explains why education according to the understanding of the non-Romanies is still not fully integrated into the Romani value system.

4.2 Housing

The Romanies are often imagined as nomads who travel in large colourful caravans throughout the country and sell goods or offer their services during their temporary stays. In fact, the majority of Romani families do not lead a nomadic life either because they never did as their life-style is different from that of travelling Romanies or because they were forced to settle down by the authorities. Through different policies and interventions in the 1960es such as the prohibition of halting in certain places and the money penalty for

violating regulations, the Romanies in East Europe were discouraged to continue travelling. This forced settlement put the Romanies in great disadvantages as they were mostly assigned to dwellings in marginal places or had no place to live except in their damaged carts. More importantly, they had to adjust to their new way of life. For instance, it is reported that the numerous Romani families first sat outside their homes and lit bonfires singing and dancing which they had often done in the past. They even removed the stove from the kitchen in order to use it outside (Kaldova, 1991, p.98). In this vein they tried to preserve their traditional customs although these practices often caused conflicts with their non-Romani neighbours. Another problem was posed by the style of the house that conflicted with the cultural belief in purity. According to this the lower parts of a woman are impure (“*marhime*”) and are thus to be avoided, but by living under another family they would be constantly “under” the lower parts of the female neighbours which is why these Romanies did not accept living in multi-storey dwellings and wanted to live on the top floor instead (Mróz, 2001, pp.256).

Nowadays, many Romanies live in quarters or housing areas together with family and friends with whom they share traditional customs and cultural beliefs. Their houses are built close to each other or are just added to the existing ones answering to the need of the strong sense of family. According to a study on English Romanies, over one-third of the households include relatives showing that Romani families are still expected to care for them in times of need (Greenfields & Smith, 2010, p.400). The practice that daughter-in-laws are married into the family of the male and the fact that the elderly are taken care of by their grown-up children contribute to overcrowded flats and houses. This is enforced by multiple childbirths. If a young couple has got several children, it may move out but stays close in the vicinity of the parents (Ivanova & Krustev, 2008).

The quarters where many Romanies live are called *mahalás* and “helped preserving the gypsy identity, uniqueness of the ethnic community, gypsy language and folklore” (Ivanova & Krustev, 2008, p.79). They attract high numbers of Romani families so that gradually different Romani groupings are settled in the same community which fosters interactions and exchange of knowledge of each other. Very poor Romanies often live in simple tents and cook and wash themselves outside the camp. Some families wander in the summer to gather with members of their group (ibid., pp.113). Despite the bad conditions of some dwellings and the lack of hygiene, only few families move out of the quarter because they prefer to be among the people they know and trust and because they can count on the solidarity of their family in times of need. In such communities, they feel secure and understood which reduce the social isolation otherwise incurred among non-Romani neighbours (Greenfields & Smith, 2010). Evidence suggests that a number of these dwellings were illegally built and are thus constantly subjected to political measures by local authorities, which is why the Romani settlements are politically seen as problematic (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights [FRA], 2009a, p.58). In addition, the growth of the *mahalás* not only leads to a geographical isolation from the majority society, but also enforces negative attitudes towards the Romani communities. This is gradually perceived by members of the community, too: “For some, the size and

strength of the local Gypsy community meant there was little social interaction outside of their own community” (Greenfields & Smith, 2010, p.400).

Of course, there are also a number of Romanies who have integrated into the host society and thus refuse to live in isolated Romani settlements or can afford buying their own houses in more attracting housing areas. For instance, it is estimated that in Poland between 10% and 20% of the Romanies live in their own legally built houses, whereas the rate of a town in Slovakia is even 50% (ibid., p.59).

It can be concluded that after many Romanies in Europe were and still are being forced to live a sedentary life, they have continued to maintain traditional customs in their communities where they live together with other Romanies. Those who have always been sedentary did not have the problems of adjustment, but nevertheless mostly prefer to live in Romani settlements or in areas close to family and friends.

4.3 Gender relations

The life in a Romani family and in the larger community is characterised by the patriarchal structure which the members of the group are expected to observe. Although the level of strictness differs among the different groups, there are features that are common among all Romanies. As Ivanova and Krustev (2008) explained, “an important element of the essential units of a gypsy community [...] is the family” which gives security and protection to the individual (p.130). Through the adherence to the social structure and the strict division of gender-related roles the community has maintained the distinct culture of the ethnicity of the Romanies. In the traditional thinking, men are the family leaders responsible for the financial wellbeing and security, whereas women are the housekeepers responsible for the domestic wellbeing of the family. Even after the fall of Communism, many Romani groups in Eastern Europe still adhere to the traditional family structure which means that power is basically concentrated in the hands of the male members (Wasileski & Miller, 2010, 108).

This understanding is taught in the children’s younger days when boys already enjoy significantly more freedom than their female siblings. For instance, as pride of the family they do not have to work in the household but have leisure time besides learning the family’s traditional craft. They are taught to be self-confident as a man as they will be responsible for their own family in the future (Ivanova & Krustev, 2008). Their freedom is also expressed by the common acceptance that they can go out as much as they want and even have sexual experience with non-Romani females before marriage. Romani girls, in contrast, are watched strictly in order to keep their virginity (Grönfors, 1997; Yoors, 1982). The upbringing of girls differs strongly from the one concerning boys as the former are expected to learn skills necessary for their prospective role as wife and mother and therefore are treated more strictly. From an early age on, they help their mother with the household and take care of their siblings as “the care for children is an absolute engagement of women” (Ivanova & Krustev, 2008, p.130). Young girls can thus be seen doing work such as cooking, cleaning and washing every day (Yoors, 1982). Besides learning these skills, they are taught certain values and social expectations such as

obedience to their superiors (parents, future husband and his family), diligence and particularly, the preservation of their virginity. Its maintenance is often strictly watched by the family members as their marriage sometimes depends on it (Ivanova & Krustev, 2008). This implies a strict separation of members of the opposite sex.

In many Romani groups, girls are marriageable at the age of 14, whereas boys are often a few years older when they get married (Kaldova, 1991). For some groups, the average age is between 12 and 14, whilst others in turn get married between the age of 18 and 20. The reason for an early marriage is the belief that it is easier to have many healthy children when the mother is still young. It is also regarded as beneficial for the parents-in-law when the young daughter-in-law is inexperienced and thus easier to influence (Ivanova & Krustev, 2008).

Marriages are mostly arranged by the parents although there are different levels of interventions by the children, depending on the Romani group. They usually have the right to refuse the arrangement (Fraser, 1992). In most cases, it is the family of the male who starts the search for a suitable partner. Once a girl was found, the father of the boy would start negotiations with the father of the girl concerning the bride gift. This is a traditional custom that has become rare nowadays. The amount of the sum depends on her family reputation, her own character and her being a virgin that is of great importance, indicated by the Romani word for “girl” that equally means “virgin” (Yoors, 1982, pp.195). In a number of Romani groups, there is the custom that the virginity is tested by the prospective bridegroom after the settlement of the marriage. In this case, after the girl was deflowered the young couple shows the blood on a white sheet as proof of the girl’s virginity which brings honour to her family and her future husband. If it turns out that the girl is not a virgin anymore, the marriage can be broken off and the family is discredited and will have difficulty to find a partner for their daughter again (Ivanova & Krustev, 2008).

After the marriage, the bride leaves her family and becomes part of her husband’s family where she performs the tasks of the daughter-in-law (Yoors, 1982). Under the supervision and control of her mother-in-law, who leads the household, she performs tasks such as cleaning and cooking every day, whereby she has to respect her mother-in-law and the hierarchy among the daughters-in-law (Ivanova & Krustev, 2008). Her daily work begins early in the morning and does not end before the evening as she is responsible for the meals and the cleanness of the house (Fonseca, 1996).

With the birth of her first child, the Romani woman enjoys a higher authority and more respect and is henceforth seen as a genuine wife to her husband (Ivanova & Krustev, 2008). In families with a traditional life-style, the ideal of the woman is maternity (Yoors, 1982, p.211) and everything she learns is directed towards her life as a mother. Children are regarded as their fortune (Hancock, 2002, p.59). Pregnant women are therefore highly respected in the family and are welcomed by others for her lucky condition (Ivanova & Krustev, 2008). With a newborn in her arms, she enjoys more respect and freedom and is even allowed to go in front of men, which is otherwise frowned upon (Fonseca, 1996, p.60, p.64). As it is a highly appreciated characteristic to have many children, the Romani woman is expected to give birth as long as she is able to (Ivanova & Krustev, 2008). In

contrast, infertility constitutes a great shame for the woman and her family as it is important to have descendents who would take care of the elderly later. A pregnancy is usually expected within one year after the marriage and if this does not occur, the husband has the right to divorce his wife. In this case, she is left to live with her parents again and can even be isolated by the community (ibid.; Fonseca, 1996). Divorces are rarely official and in most cases, it is the man who calls for it. Besides infertility, the wife's adultery is a frequent reason for divorces. As a consequence, she loses authority and is less likely to get married again (Ivanova & Krustev, 2008). In other Romani groups, in contrast, such as those in Finland, pregnancy is rather hidden and regarded as a shameful incidence so that childless women who got divorced could still easily get married again (Grönfors, 1997, p.318).

In addition to the work the Romani woman is expected to do, she is obliged to follow certain preparations concerning her impurity (*marhime*). The Romanies believe that from the beginning of her menstruation, she is unclean and has the power to "pollute" her environment (Fonseca, 1996). This symbolical impurity can happen whenever the woman's lower parts touch something or someone so that either the "dirty" object has to be destroyed or the person has to undergo a washing ritual to be clean again (Fonseca, 1996; Yoors, 1982). The obligation to prevent impurity affects everyday life, when for instance, the women have to wash their clothes separately or have to limit contacts with their surroundings during their menstruation (Fonseca, 1996). Especially male Romanies have to be careful in order not to be polluted accidentally by a Romani women, for "to be declared polluted is the greatest shame a man can suffer, and along with him his household" (Fraser, 1992, p. 245). The purity law appears to be derogative but in fact, it is considered as a protection of the female privacy as she can defend herself by threatening that she has the power to pollute people (Yoors, 1982, p.177).

The traditional way of life foresees roles assigned to Romani men and women which are patriarchal in nature. Whereas the man has relatively much freedom and the authority of the family leader, the woman is expected to take care of the family and is subject to the authority of her parents, parents-in-law and her husband. This structure is derived from the importance of having a large family and is thus mostly accepted by the Romani women.

5 Discussion: A multicultural EU policy? – "Roma Inclusion" in conflict with traditional values

In the following sections the disadvantages of the Romanies in the fields of education, housing and gender equality are described. The projects and programmes of the EU tackling the specific problems are divided into two parts: First, the general instruments and plans are introduced, followed by the section on multicultural projects. In the main section of this chapter the political measures will be contrasted with the Romani value system, exploring the potential conflicts for the Romani culture.

5.1 Education

Problems

The disadvantages that Romani children face in national school systems have been an important topic for the EU as they “will act as a brake on economic development and become a drain on welfare systems” (European Economic and Social Committee [EESC], 2009, p.89). There are estimations by scholars that 90% of all Romani adults throughout Europe are illiterate and that only 30%-40% of all children attend school regularly (Levinson, 2007, p. 9). One problem causing high illiteracy among the Romanies is the low school attendance and numerous dropouts before completing primary or secondary education. For instance, in Romania, only 31.7% of the Romani children have completed primary education, whereas in Montenegro, it is even 19.8% (OSI, 2006, p.6). As to secondary education, the figures are much lower: among the 19 examined Central and Eastern countries in the study by OSI, the rate of Romanies who have completed secondary education ranges from 1.2% in the Czech Republic to 28.2 % in Lithuania. In Bulgaria, it is only 7.2% (p.15). Regarding tertiary education, the only country in which the rate is higher than 1.0% is Lithuania with 5.9% (p.21). Another problem contributing to a more difficult access to higher education is the practice that many Romani children are sent to “special” or “remedial” schools with different curricula aiming at children with learning difficulties or to segregated schools that are composed by 50-100% of Romani children. The reason for this treatment is that most Romani children are considered to not only have learning difficulties, but also neurological, psychiatric or emotional disorders which justifies these decisions by local authorities. These institutions show a lack of qualified teachers and appropriate school materials so that this treatment is regarded as discriminatory by non-profit organisations (New & Merry, 2010, p.404; UNICEF, 2007, pp.53).

EU measures

The statistics intensify the urgency that Romanies are excluded to a great extent from higher education and thus from the labour market which is why the EU gives high priority to this topic. Although education falls under the responsibilities of the Member States, the EU has developed several ways for political intervention. One is the Open Method of Coordination that acts by peer pressure and good practice among national governments (EESC, 2009). National measures that have proved to be effective in their outcomes serve as a model for other countries, such as the Sure Start Programme, a mother-baby programme, first conducted in the UK and now introduced to other Member States (ibid.).

Despite the absence of EU binding acts concerning the full integration of Romani children into the mainstream school system and the improvement of their educational success, the European Commission and Parliament have defined goals and challenges in a number of EU documents. They call for an end of segregationist school placements and full access to high-quality education, school curricula adopted to the needs of the economy, the obligation of migrant children to learn the host language and programmes for the early integration of Romani children (European Commission, 2008; European Parliament, 2006, 2010a, 2010b). Although the resolutions of the European Parliament are not binding, they

do indicate a commitment of the Member States to react to the problems by giving recommendations which might be picked up from the governments.

In order to realise these goals, the EU has got funds allocating financial resources to projects by NGOs and private organisations. The ESF plays a major role in funding projects aimed at the improvement of educational conditions of ethnic minorities among which the Romanies are sometimes explicit beneficiaries. For instance, it supports the Hungarian Learning House Programme (“Tanoda”) that offers after-school care and tutoring so that disadvantaged children, especially the Romanies, are more likely to complete primary education and continue with secondary education. The ESF funds a number of projects organising preparatory classes for Romani children not speaking the national language, home-work groups and training for assistant teachers from Romani communities to facilitate the entrance in the school system (European Commission, 2008, p.14).

In 2009, the European Parliament called for a Pilot Project (“Pan-European coordination of Roma integration methods”) with a budget of €5 million in which NGOs focusing on early childhood education, self-employment and micro-credit, and information raising could apply for funds (European Commission, 2009). The project “A Good Start” managed by the Roma Education Fund (REF) in cooperation with three international partners and local Romani NGOs was then selected to be supported by the EU. The project focuses on early childhood education in 16 communities so that Romani children (aged 0–6) receive support for a successful access to the educational system (REF, n.d.). The REF was established in the context of the *Decade of Roma Inclusion* because education was perceived as a high priority area so that a special funding programme was seen as necessary. Funded by governments and private sources, it aims at financing projects by NGOs contributing to a higher rate of school enrolments of Romani children and inclusion in mainstream schools. In 2009, its total expenses amounted to € 5.8 million. The most important fields of action are pre-school education, prevention of school dropouts, desegregation in the sense of providing access to mainstream schools, teacher training, completion of secondary education and an easier transition to tertiary education. One successful project is the Secondary Scholarship Programme for Romani students in Macedonia that gives scholarships and mentorship to these students and helps them to be successful at high-school (REF, 2010, pp.11).

In sum, a lot of EU-funded projects have been undertaken in order to help the Romanies to attain a higher level of education and the EU has proven that it wants to make progress. When reviewing the different political goals and projects actually implemented, the areas of early childhood integration, desegregation and completion of secondary education can be summed up as the most prevailing ones.

Multicultural programmes

The intention of the EU to promote a multicultural policy in the field of education is expressed by several documents and resolutions by the European Parliament and the Commission who acknowledge the importance of preserving and promoting the distinct

culture of the Romanies. This commitment is also written in the Action Plans of several members in the framework of the *Decade of Roma Inclusion*.

A measure often mentioned by various sources is the promotion of the mother tongue Romani that helps Romani students to develop a cultural identity. The European Parliament recognised its general importance in a resolution and called for the introduction of school classes taught in the native language of ethnic minorities in order to “ensure the preservation of their cultural heritage” while teaching the official language of the host country (European Parliament, 2010a, p.4). The importance of mastering their own language is stressed by the European Economic and Social Committee that considered it fundamentally important for the social recognition of the Romanies (EESC, 2009). For instance, the “Lifelong Learning” Programme, which is supported by the Structural Funds, offers possibilities to learn Romani (European Commission, 2008, p.42). This is supplemented by the introduction of textbooks in Romani among which some are financed by the Phare programme (Open Society Institute [OSI], 2007a, p.71, p.375). Here the EU recognises the importance of the mother tongue for a minority group and withdraws from the assimilationist policies in the past, which forbade the use of any language except for the host language. Introducing Romani into the school system is a measure similar to a group-differentiated right.

As the World Bank noted, “teacher training programs generally do not include training in areas such as multicultural education” and Romani teachers were still rare (World Bank, 2000, p.29). Thus a number of EU- financed projects concentrate on the training of teachers and especially Romani teaching assistants who help the Romani children adjust to mainstream schools and work as a kind of overseer preventing conflicts in the school environment (European Commission, 2008; OSI, 2007a). The Romani school assistants are supposed to assist the teachers in the choice of materials and mediate between Romani families and school authorities. Their employment is mentioned in the Decade Action Plan of Bulgaria, for instance, which assigns them to pre-schools as well (OSI, 2007a). The introduction of teaching assistants is also demanded by three Czech Romani organisations which stress the importance to support the Romani pupils to catch up with non-Romani classmates who do not have problems with the systematic learning at school (Romea, 2006). Similarly, there are projects offering multicultural extra-curricular activities such as music, art and literacy, intercultural events and education which are likely to raise awareness for different cultures and traditions (European Commission, 2010a; REF, 2010).

A special role is attached to the multicultural training of teachers in several countries who are offered (obligatory) courses and modules during their training in order to learn how to deal with children from ethnic minorities and how to incorporate minority folklore and culture into the pre-school curriculum leading to an increase of positive attitudes towards the educational system (OSI, 2007a). In the context of a Phare programme, several resource centres were established in Romania which provided materials on intercultural education and offered courses on Romani education and anti-bias education for teachers (ibid.). The Croatian Action Plan further includes teacher training on

intercultural aspects and multiculturalism in higher grades (OSI, 2007b, pp.117). In a resolution on educating the children of migrants, the European Parliament considered it important to have curricula adjusted to the cultural particularities of the ethnically-diverse students (European Parliament, 2010a, p.4). A strong attempt to embed Romani values into the school curriculum is undertaken by a project in Serbia whose objective is to introduce Romani culture into the mainstream curriculum so that the pupils feel integrated into the majority society and thus develop self-confidence with regard to their ethnic background (REF, 2010). In fact, there are a few participants of the *Decade of Roma Inclusion* such as Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia who want to include minority and religious topics into the curricular standards and introduce multicultural approaches in the teachings, whereby the content of Romani issues should particularly be focused on (OSI, 2007a).

From this short overview on projects and political goals, it is clear that the EU focuses on multicultural education and the introduction of difference-conscious school policies particularly benefiting the Romani students. The commitment to preserving the Romani culture is realised by funding projects which teach Romani and try to include Romani issues into the curriculum.

Tensions and conflicts with traditional values

From the initial hostility and resistance to compulsory education and the still existing scepticism and mistrust towards schools already described, it should be clear that there may be a number of reasons for conflicts caused by the EU programmes.

One political measure that might compromise the common intention to preserve the distinct culture of the Romanies is the obligation to master the language of the host country and the introduction of preparatory courses, as the European Parliament demanded in its resolution from 2009 (European Parliament, 2010a). This is called for not only as a contribution to social inclusion but because it is often necessary to master the official language in order to find employment and have more options in life. Authors such as Barry (2001) considered it legitimate from a state to demand the members of ethnic minorities to learn the official language. Kylimcka (1995) similarly said that immigrants had no right to recreate their language in the host country that they had chosen to live in, as they knew the cultural and linguistic differences before their departure. It is certainly not wrong that the Romani children learn a language that will make the life in that country easier. On the other hand, by having to speak and read the foreign language all the time it is more likely that it will gradually replace their mother tongue. As Romani is already characterised by being one of the less known languages of Europe, being diverse among different Romani groups and the fact that it is not a language spoken by a majority in any region (Matras, 2003), it is comprehensible why this language is considered at risk of being forgotten by the next generations of Romanies. Although there are about 3.5 million speakers in Europe, most often they do not understand each other as they use variants of this language only used within their community (ibid.). It is estimated that there are about 60 dialects which makes it difficult to spread the written language and reach a high number of readers (Hancock, 2002, p.142). It is imaginable that if the local dialect is not spoken anymore due

to language assimilation and the natural decrease of elderly Romanies, this characteristic of the Romani culture can consequently vanish. The preservation of Romani is not only valuable because it is an important part of their culture, but also because it is part of their identity. Some Romanies even believe that those who do not speak Romani are no real Romanies. Conversely, those people who master the language must then be Romanies. This belief shows the importance that is attached to speaking the mother tongue (Hancock, 2002, p.139). This is why the EU and participating countries in the *Decade of Roma Inclusion* call for classes teaching Romani to Romani pupils and help them preserve their native language. Yet according to a study by the Open Society Institute (2007a), there is a gap between commitment and realisation: in Bulgaria, for instance, there is no school with a bilingual curriculum and none where the entire curriculum is taught in Romani (p.67). In Romania, Romani is taught as a mother tongue as a separate subject in which the performance of the pupils is not graded which decreases the motivation to learn it properly (p.386). Furthermore, the lack of Romani literature in libraries and the lack of qualified Romani teachers (p.70) hinder the proper learning of Romani. Currently it is doubtful whether Romani pupils actually learn their native language at school effectively. If not, the preservation of Romani is indeed strongly affected.

In addition, even more serious tensions with the traditional values of the Romanies are caused by the intention of the EU to increase the overall duration of school attendance. In order to improve the level of education and better prepare Romani pupils for the labour market, the EU funds a number of projects in the fields of primary, secondary and tertiary education, and early integration. But the pressure to attend school regularly and continue with higher education conflicts with traditional Romani values in many respects. First, since schools are adjusted to national holidays and mostly do not take into account the traditional customs of minority groups, the pupils have to choose whether to attend school or celebrate certain customs with the family. As Spinner-Halev (2000) said about religion and school, "Some students try to maintain their family religious practices despite their differences with the norms and practices of the public schools. For many, however, maintaining these differences is too hard, and conformity slowly set in" (p.117). This is similar to the situation of the Romani pupils. The celebration of certain cultural holidays is an important factor for the group solidarity and the development of a cultural identity. Thus the compulsory attendance hinders the pupils to fully pursue the traditional customs in the community. As the non-formal education in the Romani community is part of everyday life, it is never in conflict with any customs and social obligations, which is contrary to the systematic teaching at schools. Many Romani families travel during the summer holidays either as important part of their economic activities or as meeting up with relatives and friends. Therefore they often extend the break which causes school authorities to consider them truants and consequently to fine their parents. It seems that the school calendar misfits the agenda of the Romanies. Additionally, in the traditional value system of the Romanies, the family is the most important factor in their lives which is why family obligations such as baby-sitting and working have a higher priority than school attendance. The older the Romani pupils become, the more responsibilities they are expected to take.

Depending on the country and its educational system, often the pupils are by law obligated to attend school until 8th grade, i.e. they are about 14 years old by then. This is about the age when Romani girls and boys are often considered old enough to go to work and get married. Thus the high number of dropouts before the completion of primary education can be explained in terms of the Romani value system. Through an obligatory completion of primary education the traditional age of marriage may be shifted and the males have to start work later than usual, which means that the school would stand in their way of being adults. However, the greatest conflict related to school attendance is the clash of different values at school. As Krause (1988) stated, pupils from marginalised groups are confronted with foreign and dominant values (p.13). Schools are not value neutral: the curriculum teaches certain values either directly or indirectly, and teachers can influence the way of thinking in their classes as well (Spinner-Halev, 2000). So it is of little surprise why many Romani parents are hesitant to send their adolescent children to school. From a study by Levinson (2007), it is known that

Whereas some parents were keen for their children to have opportunities that were denied to them, there was also a widespread apprehension that literacy skills remove children further from traditional Romani economic and social spheres (p.31).

Another respondent had the impression that the systematic way of learning moved the children away from the “instinctive” way of thinking (p.25). Many parents fear that their children learn and adopt things from school that are contrary to their own belief system and thus pull them out from the school system after having acquired the basic skills such as reading and writing. Especially sex education poses a great difficulty for a cultural group that strictly separates the sexes and avoids any reference to sexual activities, pregnancy or even visiting the bathroom (Hancock, 2002). The sole mentioning of these topics can cause impurity. In regions where the people from the majority society have similar norms and values, it is certainly not a great problem if the children interact with others at school. Especially in segregated or special schools where a high number of Romani children are taught, they are not highly at risk of being influenced by conflicting and alien values. But they can find themselves in a more difficult situation when they live in a more liberal society. The Kalderas, for instance, live in the USA and refuse to participate in the educational system although they would like to acquire the skills for computation. The reason for their resistance is the fear of becoming “americanized”. There are indeed paradoxes that the children have to deal with, as the values taught at home are not important at school and vice versa (Levinson, 2007, pp.10). For instance, when they are expected to take care of their siblings at home, at school they may find that the teachers want them to be independent and get along without the help of relatives. Or they may learn that there are many other occupations that are less physically wearisome and better paid so that they want to continue with higher education and abstain from learning the family crafts. The same problem is faced by fundamentally religious parents who want to keep their children away from influences damaging their world view and rather have them taught at private schools or at home. Naturally, they want to pass on the values that they regard as forming a good life and do not want their children to learn to reflect critically on

their ideals (Spinner-Halev, 2000, pp.110). Similarly, Romani communities, like other ethnic minorities, have an interest in passing their cultural norms and practices on to their children. If they see the preservation of their culture at risk they intelligibly seek measures hindering this process, which is the restriction on school attendance in this case. Hancock, a Romani himself, therefore believes that education would ideally take place in “an all-Romani environment, with trained teachers who are themselves Romanies” (as cited in Levinson, 2007, p.33). Through early involving the young females in doing housework, for instance, they discourage them to pursue higher education and direct them towards the traditional way of life instead. Spinner-Halev (2000) believed that for some cultures to survive it is necessary to impose external and internal restriction on its members. Thus the state should not intervene in the communities’ restrictions as long as the children have a decent education and are not cut off from majority society. It is assumed that they will choose their own way of life when they are older. In contrast, other liberals call for interventions when members of minority groups are restricted internally. Barry (2001) argued that in this case, the pupils should be provided with all necessary means, i.e. a good education, to get along in life when they decide to leave the community later. The discussion shows that the EU faces another difficult situation: By imposing school attendance and introducing many school projects, it may put the Romanies under pressure to spend many years in an institution that is tangent with core values and likely to have a negative impact on their culture. On the other hand, it is important that all citizens are provided with qualifying programmes so that they have more options in life. In order to reduce the tensions with the Romani value system, the EU and the members of the *Decade of Roma Inclusion* promote the realisation of intercultural extra-curricular activities and the introduction of multicultural education at schools so that different cultures from ethnic minorities are dealt with in class. It is tried to include Romani issues into the curriculum as they constitute a large minority in some countries. Special training for teachers in multiculturalism provides necessary skills to deal with cultural conflicts in class and encourage pupils from different ethnicities to be actively engaged with school activities. Scholars stress the importance of using resource materials that reflect the Romani community life because they have the positive effect of increasing the pupils’ self-esteem and motivation and giving them good learning experiences (O’ Hanlon & Holmes, 2004). By learning about the richness of diversity in class, the Romani pupils feel more integrated into the majority society and better understood by non-Romanies regarding their way of life. This way “a creative dialogue between its different cultures and their moral visions” and mutual respect can be fostered (Parekh, 2010, p.240). The Romani pupils are encouraged to be “authentic” and not to hide their cultural background, as Taylor (1993) would apply his theory of originality. The commitment to a multicultural education is certainly a way to reduce the effects of dominant values on the Romani children since all pupils learn that diversity is valuable and thus are encouraged to cherish the cultural characteristics and be proud of their cultural heritage. However, this can only be realised when multicultural education and inclusion of Romani issues into the school curriculum are properly implemented. As with teaching Romani, there are still deficits regarding the

actual realisation of those plans. Although national minorities are increasingly referred to in some textbooks like in Bulgaria (OSI, 2007a, p.68), the content of those books is not always bias-free. As in Hungary, a book was examined by the Open Society Institute and evaluated as containing prejudices against the Romanies (p.239), whereas in Slovakia textbooks not only hardly focus on minority issues, but are also culturally biased (OSI, 2007b, p.464). It seems that some of the examined countries such as Croatia officially claim their commitment to multicultural education when in fact they have not shown any steps yet (pp.115). Some do include Romani issues into the curriculum but only in classes provided to the Romani pupils so that the majority does not learn about diversity and multiculturalism (OSI, 2007a, pp.388). These examples show that multiculturalism has not been effectively implemented in the school system so that the positive benefits described above are unlikely to occur. When the Romani pupils do not regard their “otherness” as valuable when being among other children, they might question their traditional way of life that gives them more constraints and responsibilities compared to their classmates. This is a conflict that the parents have to face when sending their children to school. At the same time, it is a conflict that the children have to deal with since they are exposed to values partly contradicting their own belief system.

This problem is even enforced by the desegregation programmes by the EU. Whereas it has the positive effect of enabling Romani pupils to attend mainstream schools with better standards and better qualifications, it means that related pupils are separated according to their school performance. It has already been observed that the division of pupils according to age is a problem to the Romani parents, but sending them to different schools can be more problematic. The Romanies traditionally attach much importance to solidarity and togetherness which is why they fear that the younger children are isolated from friends and family (Levinson, 2007). The children usually learn in groups with children of different ages. It is thus a difference when older siblings cannot take care for the younger ones anymore at school. A different kind of problem exists when considering the purity law of the Romani groups: As the *gadje* are commonly regarded as *marhime* and the contact with them to be avoided, the Romani pupils have to keep a limited company with other pupils at mainstream schools in order to prevent “pollution”. This is certainly difficult to accommodate in an ethnically mixed environment. On the other hand, it must not be neglected that segregated classes may reinforce social exclusion from the majority society and marginalisation, a situation that political actors want to combat.

From this discussion, it can be seen that the school attendance poses different problems to the Romani communities: due to long years of education, the traditional way of life is affected and the Romani pupils are exposed to different values which can, at worst, lead them away from their community. Despite the commitment to language courses and multicultural education, there seems to be deficits with the implementation so that the effects on the Romani culture are only minimally reduced. As a minority group that has long been living without formal education and within the community, the obligation to attend school is indeed a grave interference in their way of life. Now that the EU

increasingly introduces projects and programmes to improve the level of education of Romani pupils, it can be said that they may not be without consequences.

5.2 Housing

Problems

Reports and surveys have shown that many Romani families face multiple disadvantages with regard to housing: Although official statistics regarding forced evictions rarely exist, evidence suggests that a high number of Romani families constantly face evictions due to unauthorised buildings and settlements. One reason for the illegal establishment of homes on private ground is the fact that many Romanies cannot afford their own house, the rents for private housing or the bills for utilities so that the accumulation of debts eventually cause local authorities to react by evictions from their homes (FRA, 2009a, pp.69). Housing conditions *per se* also constitute a problem that not only affects the living standards of the Romanies, but also their health, education, and employment. For instance, small houses and flats for the usually large number of family members lead to overcrowding and the lack of access to running water, gas, sewage or electricity have repeatedly caused the spread of diseases. Furthermore the location of segregated and isolated Romani neighbourhoods makes the access to public infrastructure and public services more difficult and thus decreases the possibilities to find employment in adjoining places (World Bank, 2000, p.12). The most visible evidence of bad housing conditions is the location where the Romanies live: Often the informal settlements can be found close to dumps and in shacks where the inhabitants do not have access to water and electricity and where sanitation is missing (ibid., p.73). Although housing conditions vary depending on the Member States and their individual housing policies so that less poor conditions can be observed as well, the EU attaches high importance to this problem.

EU measures

Like the field of education, housing is an issue that falls under the responsibilities of the Member States and thus there is no common European housing policy (European Commission, 2008). Nevertheless, national measures must comply with the Racial Equality Directive, especially with Art. 3 (1) of the Directive that says that discrimination relating to the “access to and supply of goods and services which are available to the public, including housing” is to be combated (Council of the European Union, 2000). The Directive also provides for the establishment of equality bodies (cf. Art. 13) that is relevant for the field of housing as they serve as contact points for complaints by victims of discriminatory measures. However, research shows that most Romanies are not aware of this possibility so that the majority of housing-related matters remain unreported (FRA, 2009a, p.22). The need to improve the housing conditions of the Romanies has been an important issue for the Parliament and the Commission. For instance, in a resolution on Romani women from 2006, the Parliament demands a right to adequate housing and socially mixed housing (European Parliament, 2006b). In a Commission paper, the problem of segregated housing is recognised and the use of the Structural Funds aiming at

building new and renovating old houses is emphasised (European Commission, 2010b, pp.4). In another resolution on the social situation of Romanies, the Parliament calls for an end of discriminatory practices and the realisation of concrete housing projects (European Parliament, 2010b, p.69).

In addition to the efforts shown by the EU bodies, the *Decade of Roma Inclusion* requires each member to issue national Romani housing Action Plans with concrete measures. As an example, the Action Plan by the Czech Republic entails measures such as the increase of social workers in Romani settlements and the adoption of programmes for the construction of rental housing and technical infrastructure (Decade of Roma Inclusion, n.d.b).

Housing projects undertaken by local authorities, local Romani communities or NGOs can be financed by the ESF comprising several funding programmes. After the adoption of the Regulation on the European Regional Development Fund from 2010, also the resources from the ERDF can now be used to realise housing projects benefiting marginalised communities (European Parliament & Council, 2010). The financial possibilities that have been made available form an important step towards the successful implementation of political interventions so that twelve EU Member States decided to establish the network “*EURoma*” in order to exchange strategies regarding the effective use of the Structural Funds to help improve the living conditions of the Romanies (FRA, 2010, p.40).

Concrete housing projects can, for example, be the establishment of public rental housing with technical infrastructure aimed at Romani families living in overcrowded houses in Slovakia (FRA, 2009c, p.12), local funding programmes for socially excluded families to help them finance their own house in Spain when committing themselves to social inclusion measures (school attendance, health monitoring), relocation programmes for Romanies living in slums so that they have adequate housing whereby another objective is the avoidance of segregation (FRA, 2009b, pp.9), renovation of old houses and public places in segregated areas in Hungary (FRA, 2009a, p.71) and the creation of multi-ethnic communities with new houses in the Czech Republic (ibid., p.81).

Although there are a number of different national approaches regarding the improvement of housing conditions of the Romanies, it can be concluded that most projects focus on the provision of adequate housing either by renovating the old buildings and modernising the infrastructure or by building modern houses for rent or sale, and on the resettlement of Romani families into multi-ethnic communities in order to abolish segregation and the habitation in slums. As housing is an issue related to fields such as education, employment and public health, housing projects also serve as an instrument to contribute to an improvement there as well.

Multicultural programmes

Despite the fact that housing is the field that has the strongest effect on how people live, there are not many projects on EU level that reflect the multicultural approach. According to a study in the UK, most dwellings allocated to Romani families do not meet their

cultural needs, such as the cultural practice to keep toilets out of reach of the kitchen (FRA, 2009a, p.83).

The Commission suggests investing means of the Structural Funds in the “restoration of cultural or historic centres in Roma neighbourhoods” in order to raise their attractiveness toward non-Romanies and to include them into the townscape (European Commission, 2008, p.20). Besides the introduction of Romani mediators and mediation centres which have the task to encourage good relationships between Romanies and non-Romani neighbours and which are called for in case of disputes (European Commission, 2010a), there are some concrete housing projects which explicitly take cultural values of the Romanies into consideration: In Slovakia, a new settlement (funded, *inter alia*, by the Phare programme) for Romanies was built aiming at the relocation of families who had lived in overcrowded and suboptimal dwellings. The architects of the housing project designed the arrangement of the houses in such a way that the Romanies can have a common fireplace in the middle of the circle and can continue their crafts as blacksmiths with their individual blacksmith hearths (FRA, 2009c, pp.18). Another project in Italy provided houses to six related families in a Romani settlement in which each family has enough space for its own needs and which respects the cultural particularities (FRA, 2009a, p.85). Despite the importance of culturally adequate housing, these are the only positive examples found in the reports by the FRA.

It remains to be seen whether there will be more EU-funded housing projects that effectively adjust schemes to cultural particularities.

Tensions and conflicts with traditional values

Apart from the fact that many Romani families were forced to settle and give up their nomadic way of life consequently leading to an identity crisis among many Romanies, the political measures today have a few serious repercussions, too.

Regarding the equality bodies that have the task, among others, to be the contact point for complains about the unequal access to dwellings, there is no objection to their establishment as they can indeed contribute to better living-conditions for the Romanies without having a negative impact on their culture. The same applies to the modernisation of settlements so that the Romani communities have access to gas, electricity and fresh water, which equally improve their way of life. Furthermore, a modern infrastructure provides access to public transportation, for instance, and broadens the range of employment opportunities and school choice.

On the other hand, the building of new settlements and houses for Romanies must be looked at carefully. Cultural characteristics can easily be ignored when the aim of local authorities is just to provide bigger homes for large families. As mentioned earlier, one problem faced by the Romani families is the style of the house that is often not culturally adequate. For instance, due to the purity law the houses should have only one storey so that an annexe to existing buildings should be made horizontally. Further, in most Western-style houses the toilet is part of the interior, which is contrary to the Romani understanding of cleanness (FRA, 2009a). As the Romanies value togetherness which they used to

express by sitting by the fireplace the architects should consider enough space for gatherings, too. Thus it is important that housing projects take into account the cultural particularities of the Romanies if they do not want to appear to impose dominant values of the majority society on minority groups. One step towards the accommodation of cultural needs is done by certain housing projects tailored to the Romani characteristics introduced above. As these are still rare, political actors need to encourage their increase.

Projects that have the aim at encouraging Romani families to move to multi-ethnic communities appear to lead to conflicts. As the Romani families prefer to be among themselves and do not mix with non-Romanies in most cases, there may be tensions caused by the coexistence of different ethnic groups with different customs and ways of life. For instance, the non-Romani neighbours might object to the loud gatherings of several Romani families in one place or the Romanies might object to the liberal lives demonstrated by some families. But these conflicts can be eased with the help of the mediation centres funded by the EU that help to increase mutual understanding and respect for ethnic diversity and intervene in case of conflicts. The establishment of mediation centres is thus capable of fostering multiculturalism in the community as long as they work effectively. A consequence could be that Romani families become gradually integrated into the majority society or at least reduce the prejudices spread by ignorant non-Romanies.

The most drastic political intervention into the Romani community life is the intention to promote desegregation in housing and relocate Romani families to less isolated areas, leading to the separation of community members. The goal is to include them into the majority society and end their marginalisation. But as the Romanies traditionally live close to their extended family and friends and rely on the solidarity within the community, this constitutes a grave impact on their way of life. In their study on English Romanies, the authors Greenfields and Smith (2010) referred to scientists who had observed that the loss of close community ties and the resulting physical isolation and loneliness led to physical and mental damages. Furthermore, the intended social inclusion by relocating the families to different places reversely had social isolation as consequence (p.398, p.403). Especially to the elderly Romanies the separation from their children and grandchildren is a hard step to take, as the children are naturally supposed to take care of them later. Similarly, relatives in difficult situations normally rely on their extended family. Through desegregation programmes the family pattern and the bonds in the community can be weakened, which has negative effects on the individual, for the membership of the community can help overcome social isolation and strengthen self-identification (cf. Rex, 2010). If they have to live apart from each other then the way of life that they have been used to from their younger days is severely damaged. Another consequence of separating the families is that their cultural identity is equally affected. In the extended family the Romanies share the same belief system and customs and have them confirmed by other members in everyday life. As many Romanies are grown up in their community or settlement with many different Romani groups (*mahalá*) where they enjoyed their primary socialisation and developed their cultural identity, it is comprehensibly not easy to have to live in a community with non-Romanies. Some authors believe that the ties to a specific culture are

normally too strong to give up and that the cultural membership provides self-identity to the individual (Kymlicka, 1995). This explains why some Romanies feel depressed and lonely after being pulled away from their trusted environment since it is hardly possible to fully live the traditional way of life in an environment where their cultural background is seen as alien by others. It seems there is no countermeasure proposed by the EU which aims at reducing these negative side-effects. In fact, it is a dilemma that is difficult to solve: On the one hand, the political actors want to help the Romanies to become part of the majority society, improve their social and economic living-conditions, and develop a corporate feeling with non-Romanies, on the other, it has the intention to promote the preservation of the culture of the Romanies which is at risk due to those measures. This dilemma has been repeatedly discussed in literature. Whereas some warn against the creation of ghettos and the political instability caused by the lack of a common sense of belonging to a shared community (Modood, 2010; Parekh, 2010; Prato, 2009), others argue that multiculturalism and liberalism demand that these groups should be left alone (Kukathas, as cited in Kymlicka, 1995, p.155; Spinner-Halev, 2000). The EU decided to give priority to its political goals and funds programmes to relocate the Romani families to separate places. This drastically means that the EU does not fully respect the Romani culture and its value system when dealing with housing. Its approach is similar to the conservative multiculturalism model described by Fleras (2009) which is characterised by a culture-blind governance and the requirement of keeping cultural differences in the private domain and complying with mainstream values. The Romanies with their significant need for the extended family are not treated differently and exempted from the desegregation projects. Instead, they are expected to integrate into the majority society at the cost of their customs.

Whilst the former measures in the field of housing are likely to help improve the living standards of the Romanies without sensitively affecting their way of life, the desegregation programmes constitute the most problematic measures among the housing interventions as they touch the important values of solidarity, family and cultural identity. From the findings of some conducted field studies it seems that the relocation programmes are even likely to harm the quality of life of the Romanies.

5.3 Gender equality

Problems

The observation that “Roma women are [...] more disadvantaged than Roma men and members of other ethnic minority groups in almost all dimensions considered” was made in a report issued by the European Commission (2005, p.105). One indicator is the usually higher illiteracy rate among Romani women in contrast to Romani men and non-Romani women; for example in Bulgaria, the women are twice as likely to be illiterate compared to men (ibid., p.107). The traditional roles and the low educational attainment hamper access to the labour market so the majority of Romani women are unemployed (ibid., p.118). They find themselves in the situation of being treated differently because of both their ethnicity and gender: On the one hand, they are discriminated against by the majority

population for being Romani, and on the other, they are subordinated by Romani men in the traditional patriarchal communities (ibid., pp.122). Evidence suggests that they are more likely to be victims of domestic violence than women from the majority society, particularly when their partners are unemployed or alcoholics and strictly adhering to the patriarchal structure (Wasileski & Miller, 2010). According to one of the scarce researches on domestic violence in Romani households, nearly 90% of the Serbian participants responded to have experienced violence in the family from early childhood on (ibid., pp.109). In addition, forced marriages and cases of honour killings have been registered. Because of their economic dependency on the Romani males and the poorer knowledge of their legal rights, most victims do not report their maltreatment to the local authorities so that it is not easy for political actors to assess their situation (European Commission, 2005).

EU measures

The disadvantaged situation of Romani women has attracted more attention in recent years. This is due to the commitment of Romani activists who fight for gender equality and policies actively improving their economic and social situations. Among the many organisations and networks, the most influential International Roma Women's Network (IRWN) comprises of members from all Romani groups in 18 European countries. Launched in 2003, it aims at combating individual and institutional discriminations and improving the overall situation of the Romani women. Furthermore, they want their culture to be "recognized, respected and resourced" (Izsak, 2009, p.2). Among the female members, there are different opinions regarding the education of Romani girls, which has a negative effect on the Network's activities and progress: Whereas some have a more traditional thinking and promote the leadership of the men, others who are more modern and progressive urge the Romani women to accept genuine gender equality. As the activists seem to have no consistent approach, Izsak (2009) considered the Joint Statement of 26 Romani female activists from 10 countries in 2006 a milestone which says, *inter alia*, that "We want to preserve our Romani culture but also acknowledge that there are harmful practices which violate the human rights of Roma women" (p. 8). It seems that they begin to question the patriarchal practices and the subordinate role that the community assigns to them. With explicit aims, the Romani women's organisations make campaigns and lobby for their concerns in order to achieve a differentiated thinking among policy-makers and Romani communities.

Besides the private organisations and NGOs that get involved with the rights of Romani women, the EU is also strongly committed to gender equality as set out in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (cf. Art.20). Furthermore, it has implemented a number of directives aiming at the equal treatment of men and women in the fields of (self-) employment, social security, education and vocational training (European Commission, 2005). These principles are now summed up under the Gender Equality Directive, which was passed in 2006 and binds the Member States to consider equal opportunities for men and women in matters of employment and occupation (European Parliament & Council, 2006). As the principle of gender mainstreaming is implicit in all political instruments,

there is no legislative act focusing on females of ethnic minorities alone. However, the importance of action to strengthen the position of Romani women has been particularly recognised by the European Parliament: In the Resolution on the social situation of the Romanians, it urges the Member States to provide access to high-quality education for Romani women and girls, improve the access to vocational training and enable them to adjust to the local labour market, and promote self-employment by facilitating access to micro-credits (European Parliament, 2010b, p.63). The strongest attempt to put this issue on the political agenda has been made with the Resolution on the situation of Romani women that explicitly addresses problems and actions to promote social inclusion of disadvantaged Romani women. Among others, the European Parliament calls for national measures to promote family planning and sex education, prevent forced sterilisation, provide help to victims of domestic violence, improve the access to health care facilities even in remote areas, tackle high unemployment rates among Romani women, promote higher representation in local politics and develop social entrepreneurship models (European Parliament, 2006b). In addition to this comprehensive catalogue of proposed interventions, the Commission has suggested to use the resources from the Structural Funds, particularly from the ESF, to finance projects in the fields of education and lifelong learning, labour market, self-employment and awareness-raising of women's rights (European Commission, 2008, p.18). Moreover, the EU programme DAPHNE focuses on projects by NGOs and initiatives that are targeted at the protection of children, young people and women against all forms of violence. Although this programme addresses these groups of people in general, Romani women and girls have been especially aimed at in several projects as well (ibid., p.9). Examples for EU-funded projects directly concerning the empowerment of Romani women are: training for school and health mediators in Romania (ibid., p.42), seminar for the training of female political leaders and activists in Bulgaria (ibid., p.50), project providing access to sexual and reproductive healthcare in Serbia (ibid., p.52), training for female Romani care consultants in the Netherlands, training in small business and entrepreneurship in Bulgaria and qualification courses in Romania (European Commission, 2005, pp.135).

Altogether, specific programmes aiming at the economic and social inclusion of Romani women are relatively rare and the EU documents suggest that there is a need for more research on women of ethnic minorities. The projects introduced above have a strong focus on education, health and employment as improvement in these fields of action are likely to contribute to the development of a stronger self-confidence and independence of Romani women and the awareness of their rights.

Multicultural programmes

As mentioned above, Romani women are often involved in health mediations as they are more likely to overcome negative attitudes towards non-Romani institutions and more importantly, they know the cultural practices related to health issues and can therefore mediate between the two different worlds. The EU thus supports their training in a number of projects. As employment is an important field of action promoting the empowerment of

Romani women and has, at the same time, repercussions in the Romani family structure, there are some projects that consider the importance of the preservation of the Romani culture as well. Most of them concentrate on the existing skills in traditional crafts and arts and aim at promoting their continuing exercise (European Parliament, 2010b). For instance, a project in Romania supported by the ESF focuses explicitly on Romani women and helps them find employment in the local labour market whereby they use their skills in handicrafts (European Commission, 2005). Similarly, some employment projects in Italy and Portugal promote those skills that Romani women are already familiar with (European Commission, 2010a), such as dressmaking and cooking, and thus facilitate their entrance onto the labour market without having to undergo time-consuming training. Furthermore, these programmes take into account the responsibilities of the women in childcare and thus adjust the timing to their personal timetable.

Although the number of projects with a multicultural approach in this field is relatively low, the intention of the EU to improve the economic and social situation in combination with the respect of the cultural needs of the women can be seen. This also complies with the women's organisations' emphasis on the respect of their culture.

Tensions and conflicts with traditional values

From the previous sections of this paper it is known that Romani communities are characterised by a strong patriarchal structure that does not consider Romani women as equal to their male counterpart. The respect for cultures with such characteristics has been much criticised in literature. Critics claim that multiculturalism enforces gendered power relations by tolerating the cultural practices that violate the women's rights (Shachar, 2007). Kyrimcka (1995) and Fleras (2009) both proposed to restrict or prohibit the internal restrictions imposed by group members in the name of group solidarity. A more gentle solution was put forward by Weinstock (2007) who suggested that the state should intervene by providing effective exit rights for the women in form of education. This way the females are shown alternative liberal gender relations and are given possibilities to escape the oppressive customs of the community. Phillips and Saharso (2008) stressed the importance that public authorities do intervene in the oppressive customs of minority communities, but not without being culturally sensitive. Without doubt the Romanies belong to one of those cultural groups in the world that subordinate females although they are mostly not explicitly taken as example in the scientific community. Most authors dealing explicitly with gender relations and multiculturalism seem to take the position of demanding state intervention in order to enforce the compliance with women's rights.

This paper will restrict its discussion on the potential conflicts caused by the "Roma Inclusion" policy and will therefore neglect the question on the legitimacy of state intervention in enforcing Romani women's rights and the demands by women's organisations because they have not succeeded to create a singular framework yet.

As a means to qualify Romani girls for the labour market and reduce their economic dependency, many EU projects in the field of women's rights are about the higher education of Romani females. With a higher educational attainment it is hoped that

they are more likely to pursue goals other than the traditional tasks such as childcare and housekeeping. However, education is, as was previously discussed, a field of action that is in tension with Romani values in several perspectives. Besides the fact that a longer duration of school attendance conflicts with the traditional practice of many Romani communities to wed the girls at an early age, there is the overall concern of the parents that the different influences transferred at school and intensified at higher education may affect their daughter's way of thinking. For instance, Levinson and Sparkes (2003) found in their study that "alternative gender roles and identities propagated within the school environment are often perceived as a threat to cultural tradition" (p.600). Similarly, in another study by Levinson (2007) the interviewed Romani parents admitted their fear that their daughter might be "too clever to marry" when staying too long at school (p.30). Another concern is that in the Romani families, the genders are strictly separated, whereas at school the sexes are constantly mixed (O' Hanlon & Holmes, 2004). As Romani girls are usually watched carefully in the community for not being together with other boys (particularly after puberty), the parents cannot be sure whether their daughter keeps the Romani norms at school as well. Once they got used to the less strict pattern in class they might neglect or even oppose to the rules at home. Since the institution school is not value-neutral there is, in fact, a risk that Romani girls become attracted by the more liberal way of life and the principle of gender equality that is contrary to their traditional belief system. With a higher level of education they might be interested in the number of opportunities that the labour market offers to them and refuse the roles traditionally assigned to Romani women. One consequence is that they prefer staying at school to getting married at an early age, which is contrary to the practice of early maternity. The other is that they begin to question the subordination of Romani females that is a significant characteristic of the Romani culture. By adhering to the pattern of gender-related roles and the division of tasks, the Romanies have been successful at preserving their cultural customs. The projects funded by the EU aiming at the attendance of higher education for Romani girls are capable of contributing to the empowerment of Romani females advocated by the more progressive Romani activists, but are also capable of affecting the traditional belief system because they cause conflicts with important cultural characteristics.

Further political measures that may affect the traditional value system of the Romanies are the projects aiming at a better access to vocational training and self-employment. This way the EU wants to improve the economic situation of Romani women and strengthen their independence from Romani men. Although the Romani men are usually responsible for earning the family income, their wives often make contributions, too, by doing little work such as handicraft, fortune-telling and other forms of service. Thus a better job qualification and access to micro-credits for their own business certainly benefit the family income and economic wellbeing for the whole family. On the other hand, the projects cause repercussions that go beyond the mere improvement of the economic situation of the women. Just like education, the promotion of employment of the Romani women may lead to a change of the traditional role perception. This foresees that a Romani woman is mainly responsible for housekeeping and child-caring, whereas the husband as

the family leader works in order to support his family. His reputation and authority are much influenced by his ability to care for his family. But if Romani women have a regular employment or have their own business, they are then perceived as sharing the role of the family leader with the husband, undermining the man's power. In case the husband is unemployed and the wife is the only person to feed the family, this role model is even more disturbed. Even in liberal societies, some men have difficulty to accept the fact that their partners earn more money and support them financially which is contrary to the social expectation and deeply-rooted role perception. In a cultural group that more strictly stresses the leadership of the man, it may be even more difficult to achieve the social acceptance of the economic independence and increased power of the woman. Therefore, the traditional role perception is at risk of being damaged. Yet this is not the only potential conflict caused by the EU programmes. Another tension arises when the working Romani woman becomes too attracted to her employment and loses interest in the tasks she would normally have to do at home. For instance, she could neglect the upbringing of her children and leave them to her parents-in-law or the siblings of her husband instead. This may not be problematic as the Romani children normally grow up in the extended family and regard everybody as parents. Even if there is no one to look after the children at home, working is still possible when they can benefit from EU-funded programmes which take into account the time for child-care. The EU acknowledges the cultural practice of having many children and thus tries to balance the need for the domestic tasks and the ability to attend the training courses. However, the larger problem is that the mother might want to stay in her job and refuse to have any more children, which strongly conflicts with the cultural values of the Romanies. Similarly to the school environment, the working environment might contribute to a differentiated way of thinking and lead her away from the cultural practices that largely disadvantage Romani women. These side-effects are not likely to be reduced by the EU programmes that support the Romani women in using their skills in handicrafts, cooking and dressing in order to find a job in the labour market. Certainly this way some traditional female skills are preserved and promoted and made known for non-Romanies, but they may not be able to prevent the development of an empowered gender which does not fit into the Romani way of life. Therefore the EU programmes promoting the employment of the Romani women cause tensions with important cultural values. It must be added, however, that the emergence of this empowered gender is what many Romani women wish according to the women's organisations.

The same applies to the intention of the EU to increase the political representation of Romani women in local politics. Whereas the more conservative Romanies regard the political leadership of Romani women as not in compliance with their role perceptions, the more modern females advocate these measures so that they can influence local politics.

Another cluster of EU interventions concerns the health issue with the focus on better access to healthcare services, family planning and sex education. The health condition of many Romani women is relatively bad compared to the women from the majority society. The reason is that they have become weak due to long years of hard work in the household and early and – often uninterrupted – maternity. With a better access to

healthcare services even from remote areas the Romani women are more likely to have a higher life expectancy. From the perspective of the Romanies, it would mean that they can have more and healthy children they can take care of until they are grown up. They can further take little jobs and contribute to the family income, while additionally keeping the house. The plan of the EU to improve the health condition of the Romani women thus benefits the involved families. Even if there are doubts about the medical treatments of the non-Romanies, the EU-funded training and employment of Romani health mediators is capable of reducing the mistrust towards *gadje* institutions as they not only can talk to them in their language, but also consider culturally sensitive matters (such as the common belief that some illnesses are caused by the non-Romanies) which often keep them from going to a trained doctor. Normally the Romanies would apply traditional cures instead and ask the female healers in the community (Hancock, 2002). With the help of a trained health mediator the Romani women are more likely to overcome their mistrust and listen to the non-Romani doctor's diagnosis and cures. These measures are therefore capable of improving the health condition of the Romani women while respecting their cultural particularities. However, this does not apply to the other intended measures that are seriously in tension with the preservation of the Romani culture. Family planning and sex education either at school or through campaigns aim at raising the awareness of different methods for contraception and the alternative family pattern. Instead of having many children, the Romanies are encouraged to have smaller families so that they do not have to live in overcrowded houses or have the time to pursuit a job once the children are grown up. The state also has an interest in smaller families considering the social spending. Sex education is particularly focused on Romani girls who are expected to get married early. Since they are not fully grown they may be too weak to give birth at an early age and thus contraception serves as a way to protect their health. But here the state campaigns for an issue that is at heart of the Romani culture. As repeatedly mentioned before, the Romanies value large families and their many children. This characteristic of their culture is so strong that Romanies are often associated with many children. The political measures can therefore have two possible consequences: First, it is likely that the campaigns and sex education at school are not able to achieve the demanded result because the Romani females too strongly adhere to the cultural customs and values deeply-rooted in their upbringing. Instead, a side-effect might be that the parents refuse to have their children taught sex education at school. The other consequence is that the campaigns are fruitful and lead to a shift in their way of thinking so that more and more couples decide to have a nuclear family. Of course, this can be a gradual development over time considering that many cultures in the world now have smaller families. However, in this case the change would be consciously brought about and even resembles some kind of adaption to the norms of the majority society. Furthermore, the Romanies cherish solidarity and community to such an extent that children in general can be regarded a core feature of the Romani culture. An intervention in this sphere would therefore cause great damage to their value system. Whether the projects of family planning and sex education are effective or

not, they constitute a serious conflict with the traditional belief system of the Romanies and show that political actors do not fully respect their wish of having large families.

As expected, the projects in the field of Romani women's economic and sanitary improvement cause strong tensions with the traditional patriarchal structure in the Romani family. Although there are a few projects that try to take into account the cultural particularities, the impact of those measures on the Romani culture is hardly reduced. Characteristics such as early marriage, male leadership and large families are affected, indicating the EU's shift away from the full tolerance of cultural (non-liberal) practices towards the provision of stronger exit-rights for Romani women. Some of these rights are promoted by women's organisations which oppose early marriages and work towards the recognition of Romani women as equal to their male counterparts. Despite their commitment to gender equality and their knowledge about harmful traditional practices, they still stress the importance of their culture so that the EU measures may constitute negative impacts from the perspective of many Romani activists, too.

6 Conclusion

In the last decade, the European Union has been more strongly working on the improvement of the living-conditions of the millions of Romanies living in Europe. To this end, it has engaged in network building with NGOs, organisations, and other European countries to work out plans to tackle discrimination, high unemployment, social marginalisation and health problems. In order to finance the many programmes and projects that focus on the wellbeing of the Romanies, the EU has made available funding programmes such as the ESF or the ERDF; particularly in the field of education the REF provides means to promote higher education for Romani girls and boys. Furthermore, a number of reports, resolutions and directives indicate the commitment of the EU to be active in the social inclusion of ethnic minorities.

This paper dealt with the question to what extent the measures of the EU are capable of achieving the political goals while respecting the distinct culture of the Romanies, with the commitment to multiculturalism explicitly stated in the Charter of Fundamental Rights. In the course of the analysis, a number of projects and proposals were distinguished that respect the cultural characteristics of the Romanies and aim to promote the preservation of their culture. In the field of education, the projects concentrate on Romani courses, multicultural education and curricular standards. As to housing projects, there are a few reported examples which include cultural issues into the planning of the dwellings besides the introduction of mediation centres in ethnically mixed communities. Regarding the improvement of the social and economic situation of Romani women, most programmes concentrate on the training of health mediators and the promotion of traditional crafts. However, these multicultural programmes only constitute a few examples among many general instruments. In order to identify the conflicts that may be caused by the political interventions, both kinds of measures (general and multicultural) were

contrasted with the value system of the Romanies. The result of the analysis is a predominantly negative attestation of the supposedly multicultural EU policy:

Despite the many school projects that follow a multicultural approach, the ineffectiveness and improper implementation compromise the commitment to help preserve the Romani culture and raise awareness for their customs. Instead, the demand of learning the host language, longer school attendance and desegregation leads, at worst, to a gradual assimilation process or the exposure to conflicting values, which poses a difficult situation for Romani parents and pupils alike.

As there are only a few kinds of interventions in the field of housing, the only serious threat to the preservation of the Romani culture is the intention to promote desegregation and encourage the Romani families to live separated from their community members and integrate into the majority society. With no counter-measure, some affected Romanies are reportedly confronted with the consequences of splitting the extended family members: social isolation, depression and loneliness.

Finally, the measures aiming at the empowerment of Romani women by encouraging higher education, working and alternative family patterns are strongly in conflict with the traditional (patriarchal) structure and the important characteristic of large families. Even among Romani activists the adherence to traditional customs are valued. Although the effects on the Romani culture are relatively high, there are only a few kinds of culturally sensitive projects which do not effectively reduce the impact in any case.

From the analysis in this paper, it can be concluded that the current EU policy does not fully take into account the cultural characteristics of the Romanies and instead intervenes in their way of life. By means of improving the economic and social situation of the many Romanies in Europe, the EU neglects the conflicts caused by its numerous interventions. Contrary to the commitment to ethnic diversity and the preservation of different cultures, some measures, which are indeed likely to contribute to better living-conditions, appear to dispose them to conform to the majority society. There are, in fact, programmes that can be labelled multicultural in its intention but their effects and range are too minimal to seriously consider them genuine multicultural.

As the project “Roma Inclusion” is still a relatively new topic on the political agenda of the EU, there is a need to make research on the impact of political interventions on the lives of the Romanies. This minority group has undergone so many years of assimilation policies and discrimination that it is time for modern liberal democracies to respect their culture and ways of life. It remains to be seen how the EU will deal with the tensions between cultural diversity and political goals in the future.

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