

PROBLEMS WITH CULTURAL DISSIMILARITY OF GYPSY ETHNIC MINORITY
IN CENTRAL EUROPE

(SHOWN ON THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC'S EXAMPLE)

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Abstract: Gypsy minority belongs to those social groups in the Slovak Republic, that are most endangered by extreme poverty. A large number of Gypsies live in isolation and social exclusion in settlements of Eastern Slovakia. This paper deals with a key problem from the socio-pedagogical point of view.

Key words: cultural dissimilarity of the ethnic group that is deeply historically rooted, different values and way of life, distrust towards majority population, misunderstanding, exclusion, social exclusion.

Multiculturalism is a significant phenomenon of the life in the 21st century. Europe has always been an area of brisk trade exchange. Its territory has been a crossroad of old trade routes. Its states have been colonial superpowers and high standard of living and democratic environment of inhabitants is also at present an interesting area that attracts political and economical migrants. The migration of emigrants from the war zones of different parts of the world, who as the result of life-threatening or worsening economic conditions in their home countries¹ have decided for permanent residence or temporary stay in the European countries, also increases nowadays. Gypsies were as well among groups which came to Europe from Asia.

In the countries of Western Europe Gypsies live in towns but they live their nomadic way of life in caravans on the outskirts of large cities as well, while in Central Europe their situation is much more difficult as generally the living conditions of dwellers of these countries are more complicated. In the period of economic depression, that affected European economics, the problems of members of Gypsy ethnic group, who mostly live in isolation, socially excluded in settlements and among disadvantaged groups, have increased and have distinctively problematic position.

Situation in the Slovak Republic. Minority groups are disadvantaged in the context of the society even when the education based on the principles of nationality exists. Change of

¹ Among the difficult problems there is the growing tide of refugees, economic and political migrants who identified Slovakia as a target country.

the demographic structure² of the population of Slovakia in the last decades has occurred because of the influence of several factors, but primarily due to a significant increase in the number of Gypsy population. Relevant data are provided by statistics of fertility rates. “*In 2002, 50 thousand children were born and out of them 9 thousand Gypsies*” (Plavčan, 2005, p. 10). The enormous growth of the ethnic group in the line of the last twenty years requires gradual preparation of the members of society for changed demographic conditions of the future, because although the officially reported number of Gypsies is only about 89,920 citizens³, the reality is quite different. Members of the community, probably to a large extent and also because of fear of stigmatization and social exclusion, report themselves to other than Gypsy nationality e.g. to Slovak, Czech and Hungarian. From the side of Gypsy fellow citizens it is a legitimate behaviour, as according to the Constitution of the Slovak Republic and Slovak law, every citizen has the right to a free choice of nationality. That is why we can only estimate⁴ the actual number of members of the Gypsy ethnic group. Thus persistent problems of the past in the new conditions, especially with rising unemployment, have deepened more in this community. Because of worsened conditions and limited opportunities⁵ for self-fulfilment social inequalities of individuals and whole groups⁶ deepened in Slovak society in the last fifteen years. And despite the positive discrimination of the Communist Regime (particularly by the choice of inappropriate tools for support causing dependence on state support) even greater exclusion of this population occurred in recent years that in relation to the majority society found itself in a full-scale cultural isolation and social exclusion with the consequences of extreme poverty (misery). Improvement of this bad

² Increasing number of the elderly population and decreasing birth rate.

³ This figure can also be regarded as an increase (compared to 1991, the share increased in the total population from 1.4% to 1.7%). More comprehensive view of this situation can be found in the data of Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic: The 2001 Census of population and housing, [www.statistics.sk /2005-11-01/](http://www.statistics.sk/2005-11-01/).

⁴ For instance, according to official data, the Statistical Office of the Regional School in Žilina no Gypsy child attends a primary school in the district of Ružomberok. However, on a personal visit to primary schools, e.g. a primary school in Ružomberok-Rybárpole you will find out that there are whole classes, in which Gypsy children are in majority.

⁵ If the human rights of Gypsies are violated by a Non-Gypsy, it is considered (threats, verbal slander, and physical assault) a racially motivated violence; if it is done by the police, as a police brutality (K. Orgovánová: *Rómovia na Slovensku*, 2004). The 2003 United Nations Human Rights Committee report criticized the Slovak Republic for inadequate protection of women and Gypsies.

⁶ *Social inequality* is a state in which members of society do not have equal access to social resources, i.e. to wealth, to power and prestige (to a respect and esteem in a society). *Risk factors* are unemployment, but also the material and spiritual deprivation, which is nowadays increasingly evident in families of different social classes.

situation means still a long way of implementing an inclusive system measures to overcome the isolation of this ethnic group.

An obstacle in promoting the principles of inclusion in the society is also an internal nonuniformity of the Gypsy ethnic group that reflects rivalry among Gypsy groups themselves. Even in Slovakia there can be seen not only reciprocal hostility among themselves but also antagonistic relationships. The cause of this is a low tolerance threshold that causes deprecation and nonacceptance of any difference of one Gypsy community from another. An obstacle is also the internal division of Gypsies on nomadic (Olah and Wallachia) and settled (Rumungri), and also the ritual exculpatory and nonexculpatory ones (consult Lužica, 2004).

Otherness and difference are natural features of each culture. Values preferred by members of the Gypsy ethnic group are vastly different from those that are valued by members of the majority Slovak culture e.g. education, which is the key to more profitable and socially acclaimed careers, can be found at one of the last places in the Gypsy culture⁷. This lack of appreciation of education and its value is negatively reflected in the structure of society (in which a small percentage of those with secondary education is included) in the approach of parents to teaching of children and overall to the acquisition of education as professional qualification and the necessary condition to obtain the vast majority of jobs.

The priority of life of each Gypsy is to live in accordance with the traditional extended family, which is widely branched⁸ and has a complex network of relations. Such "large family" provides to its members protection and all knowledge and social skills needed to survive in the community.

Within these intentions the younger members of the family are guided by the older ones.⁹ One of the main features of a Gypsy large family is cohesion and strong social solidarity linking all family members together.¹⁰

⁷ Gypsies highly value the wisdom gained by personal experience, not by learning at school.

⁸ Unlike small, mononuclear family typical of the majority society, the Gypsy family, in fact, is a large family, which is the coexistence of a wide community of two or three generations. It has many members. Such large family (family clan) includes, e.g. also all relatives of women who married to husband a man of the family. Large family is the basic social unit, which determines of the family origin of children after name of parents. Gypsies show great respect for mothers. Esteem and respect in the community are used also by the grandmother and grandfather, who are authorities and other members of the community hang on their every single word.

⁹ Individualism is typical of members of most Western European countries. The Gypsy community - as most "natural" nations - is typical of collectivism, which plays a major

Gypsy society is hierarchical and closed towards the majority society. Members have responsibilities to the community in breach of its internal rules which are defined through community sanctions. The one who carries the prestige of the family is a man - a father, representing the family outward as the official representative. In the settlement a daily routine of the family is provided by mother who makes the decisions on finance and takes care of the authorities' matters. A mother plays an important role and has a significant status that is rewarded by community. Her position is strengthened by the increasing number of children. *"If a woman has one or two children she is considered weak"* (Lužica, 2004, p. 67). Although she can not enter the labour market as a man, because of the maternal duties, mother is the one who was responsible for enough food for the family. In traditional families mother chooses a school for their children and later on life partners.

Gypsy children have the same position in the family as it is typical for all natural nations, i.e. the world of children merges with the world of adults. Special attention is paid only to education of the firstborn child, especially if it is a boy. A son means security to old age and recognition in the society to his parents. A son was, and still is, a worshiped family member. He is also respected by older sisters; later on son represents his father outward. In the process of education a mother focuses on the oldest children, teaching them mainly to take care of younger siblings, to honour grandparents and older members of the community. Up to the present time, there is a strict division of roles: Gypsy boy performs only "male works" together with his father, as each girl always does with her mother.

Girls perform a hard work that is performed only by adults in the majority society (carrying of heavy loads, cooking, laundry, taking care of younger siblings). In the legislation of the majority society it is violation of fundamental rights of the child in many aspects, including neglect obvious in Gypsy families. Obviously there is a denial of the rights enshrined in the international Convention on the Rights of the Child, but experts oppose the Gypsy culture (Lužica, Mušinka, Orgovánová) that by such education a child becomes very soon an independent individual who is able to care for yourself (paradoxically, however,

role in a sense of solidarity.

¹⁰ Each member has own place in Gypsy family. In large family remain boys and girls, if they did not enter into marriage, even after reaching adulthood, as well as orphans and oldest family members. Sick and elderly are looked after in the family. Rarely happens that such depended members get to a hospital or nursing home. Sense of community is so strong that the sick man never remains alone. When hospitalized, family members (or at least his wife, in the case of a husband) remain with the sick in the hospital overnight. Family members bring him homemade meals and spend every moment with him. An individual of traditional Gypsy family does not stay alone neither at home or in hospital, nor on his deathbed (<http://www.rpa.sk>).

Gypsy children neither in adolescence do not make decisions by themselves). Children “*in traditional Gypsy families do not have toys*” (Lužica, 2004, p. 69), imitation learning prevails. There is a lack of consistency of intentionality of parenting with social requirements. Community (collective) education does not have preventive nature. Moral assessment of children is rare; they are evaluated only under the pressure of circumstances.

In Gypsy families a profession (a way of living) is passed down for generations from fathers to sons. Traditionally they devoted to crafts such as blacksmithing, masonry, tinkering, but also unusual ones, e.g. how to understand horses. Today the way of living transgenerationally passes particularly in families of musicians as other traditional crafts dependent on nomadic way of life no longer exist. Gypsy women are often presented by spiritual and medical skills (paternoster of diseases, predicting of the future, palmistry etc.) in majority society which has become part of stereotyped ideas of this society about Gypsies.

Traditional values and way of life of a Gypsy family have changed in the last decades. A demographic trend in the last decades is a challenge for the Slovak government, mainly in the area of social and educational policy, because at primary schools in Eastern Slovakia situated near Gypsy settlements there are already overcrowded classes with two-shift operation.

Causes of school problems of children from ethnic minorities. Slovak education policy declares support of education based on principles of nationality for a long time. In spite of this minority groups are the disadvantaged ones as they are educated in the school system built on the philosophy of education oriented to a majority society. This applies to all minority population groups but most of the issues discussed in relation to the Gypsy community are problems that have much deeper roots. It is undisputed that the most serious obstacle to prove competence of an individual in society is illiteracy. The Gypsy ethnic group has the highest proportion of illiterates in the Slovak society and in spite of social stimuli by the majority population, a high percentage of Gypsy pupils do not even finish a primary school.¹¹ This deficit is highlighted by life in the 21st century when education is the condition for any social post. Straightforward solution is a rebuilding of the structure of the Gypsy society in favour of

¹¹ Almost 80% of Gypsies have only basic education, including the incomplete one (consult R. Rosinský, 2006), e.g. in the 2004/2005 school year about 15 thousand pupils dropped out of school in Slovakia (Ministry of Education of SR, Concept of Integrated Education, No. of material UV 12038/2004).

the middle Gypsy class and intelligence. Finding effective tools to achieve this aim is, after several failures, subjected to an analysis of the leaders of the current school policy.

In addition to cultural specificity and its resulting disadvantages (low degree of intentionality of parenting, less stimulating social environment) and segregation of people living together in settlements present difficult living conditions adversely affecting school performance of Gypsy children (urban Gypsy children have fewer problems than children from settlements). Among the health risks that negatively affect the situation of Gypsy population in particular are:

a) *Low standard and culture of housing* related to overpopulation of Gypsy settlements without basic facilities, water and electricity. In Slovakia we register 50 to 60 Gypsy settlements¹² in which the limited space is inhabited by a disproportionately large number of people. According to statistics in the Slovak population on average it counts one person per room, in an average Gypsy settlement it is six people per one habitable room. This is known as *crowding*, desolation, caused by overpopulation of inhabitancy inside of the settlements by a large number of people living in a small space “*The whole problem began to be examined when it was found that over density of population is related to increased social pathology - e.g. with increased crime rates*” (Tokárová, 2003, p. 413). In one room shacks, there live together several families with more children and often the whole extended families. In a small space crowded by people, children do not have even minimum conditions for life, rest and learning. There is an absence of any personal space, own bed, desk, where they could do their preparations for school, writing utensils and school aids. Parents do not consider preparing for school an important thing they do not create the conditions for learning to their children, and they do not provide them any social or moral support.

In addition to desolation the serious problem is an absence of any hygienic facilities. It prevents the creation of basic hygienic habits in children. Drinking of unwholesome water contributes to a spread of infectious diseases in the settlements. The World Bank (2002) defined absolute poverty as “*the lack of adequate housing, clothing, food, access to basic infrastructure and utilities (tap water, sanitation, electricity, access paths).*” In terms of these criteria the Gypsy population in the settlements has all the characteristics of people living in absolute poverty.

¹² Among settlements of this type experts included also the housing estate Luník 9 in Košice.

b) *Increased health risks of the ethnic group.* The impact of unhealthy lifestyles (research has shown a regular smoking of seven-years old children and women during pregnancy, use of toluene and other drugs, preferring high-energy high in fat diet, immoderate drinking of alcohol) as well as marriages between relatives, lack of preventive health checks, vaccination, failure medical therapies. In this ethnic minority there is a provably higher infant mortality and a lower life expectancy of adults. Unlike the majority population there is also reflected a significantly poorer health condition from birth: lower birth weight of infants, a high percentage of child malnutrition, a higher incidence of acute and chronic diseases in the population, a high percentage of disability among adult Gypsies. Poor health situation is worsened by a long-term material deprivation and inappropriate lifestyles of a large number of people of this population¹³ with a relatively high number of children. Difficult situation of children in poor families of ethnic group is even exacerbated by high unemployment of both parents, poor level of health services even caused by a low health oriented awareness of parents.

School-age child coming to school from the environment of the ethnic group can meet with incomprehension of his classmates at school and elsewhere. His success at school is primarily conditioned by the basic knowledge of the majority culture (command of written language, exploring the foundations of social behaviour, the ability to adapt and cooperate). Adaptive problems of the Gypsy community students in the processes of schooling are caused by factors rooted especially in a different culture. According to Cabanová (2006) and Řičan (1998), school performance problems are mainly caused by:

1. *The absence of language bilingualism.* Everyone who wants to be successful within a certain society has to have the command of the specific communication of given society.

Language represents a comprehension code among members of a society. A common language allows communicating and understanding each other and allows one to understand the requirements and expectations of a society. It is a basic condition of survival within a given culture, “*We inherit capabilities for language, but acquiring a particular language is culturally conditioned*” (Chromský, source Ďurošová, 2005, p. 4). Language is an important social determinant in educational processes (Průcha, 2002, p. 134). Language is a gateway and its limits are “limits of my world”. A particular language of a home country is an essential means in human biodromal path: to be and to succeed. It forms the basis of other skills that

¹³ An unhealthy lifestyle is in bad regimen: in the increased consumption of alcoholic drinks and smoking. On average, 70% of Gypsies are smokers.

are necessary for a successful life. For these reasons it would be unwise for a man not to learn an official language of a country where he lives. This would mean that the radius of an individual shall be limited to activity within a community without an application within a wider society.

Didactic processes based on tutorial dialogue in an elementary school, conducted with pupil, who does not speak Slovak, fail and are unproductive. Verbal communication with a pupil of minority who has good or partial command of language (but also with a foreigner or with a pupil who knows only dialect) has different qualities. Dialogical factors of nonverbal nature, that could be described as inept under other circumstances and in other situations, or even wrong at the first contacts with pupils speaking another language, represent initial elements of communication that contribute to mutual understanding.

Many Gypsy children who enter school do not have knowledge or only partially understand a language of a country in which they live. According to the *World Bank* (2001) almost 70% of Gypsies in Slovakia speak Gypsy language. A problem is that there is no official Gypsy language, there is only a common language form enriched with local expressions and dialect. There are different Gypsy dialects; even Gypsies from different regions do not understand one another well. For these reasons a key issue remains an adequate training of teachers and assistants of Gypsy language.

The early failure was misunderstanding of teacher's instructions because of unfamiliarity with a language. For a pupil who does not understand the language spoken in the classroom it can be difficult to master even the basic requirements of a teacher and thus failure emerges in early school days. A Gypsy pupil accepts only unintelligible requirements. He tries to avoid their fulfilment grudgingly by all means.

The first condition of an increase of a school success is a pre-treatment of Gypsy children in a command of an official language at least on a basic level of communication. In preparatory classes that implemented pilot programs of Gypsy assistants (often acting as intermediaries and interpreters) for application of compensatory programs, the shifting of children in special schools was provably reduced by up to fifty percent (consult Mušinka, 2005).

A language interdependence of learning shows that a command of language bilingualism is an unconditional step for children of all minorities and children of foreigners is. It is optimal to postpone teaching of Slovak language to a preschool period. Not tiny compensatory role could be played by nursery schools that, as the 2003 PISA research proved, facilitate training and compensation of different (stimulus, cultural) deficits and thus the effect of these institutions would have multiplied.

2. *Cultural paranoia*. A school aims to pupil demands in the context of a traditional school culture and expects behaviour subjected to self-control and self-discipline, as Ondrejko (1997, p. 81), in this regard, speaks “*about the coercive nature of a school*”. From the perspective of majority society members only reasonable demands for successful schooling are made at present school. Their evaluation stems from a similarity between their own majority and a school culture. However the Gypsy culture is completely different. At home environment Gypsy pupil sees adult patterns of emotional and spontaneous behaviour without restrictions - absolutely free movement (comes and goes when he wants, does not know knocking, greeting, verbal release from an adult) which is in stark contrast compared to the controlled and disciplined behaviour required by school. Views on an existence of a man in a society are different in these two vastly different formative effects, e.g. a school sanctions shoplifting offences as a misdemeanour against morality, in a view of the Gypsy ethnic group a theft is a manifestation of a skilfulness of a cunning Gypsy to deceive “*ocigánit*”¹⁴ a capable “*gádžo*”¹⁵. A communitarian way of cohabitation based on a mutual interdependence blurs boundaries between private and public life and property. Nowadays members of the community have also feeling that a property of a family is in the same way a property of each of them. This is still true also in families that are not socially deprived. In the majority society a private property is unquestioned by individuals and is strictly defended and legislatively protected against other members of the majority. Any crossing of this border is heavily sanctioned.

Even by a cooperation of the Gypsy family with a school, a pupil occurs in educational expectations of intermediation of two value separated and often contradictory worlds in which a pupil has to exist during every (school) day. Due to an influence of family education a pupil is unable to move from limited to advanced code.¹⁶ Since there is no unity of educational influences and pupils are tightly tied to their families, they are traumatized in a school environment or have become indifferent and always meet requirements of a school with difficulty.

3. *Great dependence on the ethnic group*. *Individualism* is rather typical for the majority of members of the Slovak society, though it is not as noticeable as in other Western European

¹⁴ Translator’s note: the Slovak term “*ocigánit*” is synonymous with the English verb “to deceive someone” and it is derived from the noun “*cigán*” that is colloquial term for a Gypsy.

¹⁵ Translator’s note: the Gypsy term “*gádžo*” is used to name a man who is of other than Gypsy origin; it has negative connotation.

¹⁶ Consult Bernstein’s theory of determinism of education in Průcha, 2002.

countries¹⁷. For members of the Gypsy community is typical collectivism in which a society means a base, a vital need and is typical for members. A cohesive community provides a member with a protection and a sense of solidarity, but in the same way he is being subjected to a detailed social control and expects a lifelong loyalty for protection from community members. An everyday social control suppresses any effort to distinguish oneself and the signs of otherness, but also the efforts of members to escape from a control of the community.

4. *A lack of loyalty to institutions.* The Gypsy community is a closed system, which as the result of a disintegration of their own culture does not have its formal institutions. In cases of personal dealing with institutions of the majority society (e.g. in dealing with the authorities) there is often shown an ignorance of procedures, dealing is complicated because of illiteracy or functional illiteracy. These difficulties are noticeable mainly in situations and acts, which require production of documents, a completion of questionnaires and other forms, a submission of requests, a proving of ownership and so on. This situation logically contributes to the frequent failure of negotiations (refusal, nonacceptance of claims). Such personal failures the community understands and oftentimes attributes to unwillingness and a discrimination of authorities. A low reliance of the Gypsy ethnic group to official institutions has its roots not only in these personal failures, but also in a total lack of understanding of a state apparatus processes and a social system as a whole.

5. *Distrust of the majority society law.* An essence of law and especially the Constitution as a fundamental law of a state is to protect the rights of every citizen. The problem of the Gypsy ethnic group's distrust of law is of the same nature as referred in the case of distrust of institutions.

Regulations and laws of the society were constituted into a legal system of a state in the majority society on the basis of its historical development for centuries. The Gypsy community has not become a part of the society until the 14th century. According to evaluation of the community, some deeds and acts are considered excessively strict and severe by laws of state. Other very serious offences, such as their assessment of marital unfaithfulness, are not punished, but tolerated and overlooked by the majority society. An unequal assessment of facts leads to misunderstandings and clashes with the majority society. The second serious factor of an increased Gypsy criminality is also poor law enforcement. This state, in the context of hidden racism, contributes to more frequent crossing of social

¹⁷ Consult a comparison of individualistic and collectivist cultures through the research of Holsted (1999, source Průcha 2004).

taboos and violations of laws. Codified rules (laws) and penalties for violation of the law do not match the order of sin size, of their importance in the value ladder (and therefore contribute to the higher incidence of criminal offences and acts of criminal nature).

6. *The internal uncertainty* (borderline or even acculturation stress) is also related to low self-esteem of ethnic group, no command of language and misunderstanding of the society's culture. The voluntary isolation of Gypsies from the majority society also contributes to uncertainty.¹⁸ Reclusiveness of the community in itself has resulted in a lack of social experience outside - with communication and different models of social behaviour. They are experiencing stress and increased psychological strain in social contacts outside their community. Failure to act adequately in everyday life situations resulted in a tendency to react in excessively emotional way, act rashly and callously. It is reflected in a deepening exclusion in interaction with the outside world. A low self-esteem is also a serious problem of ethnic group. Emancipatory efforts are only sporadic attempts by some members of the Gypsy community even in a today's society. The majority society has its share of a deepening adverse situation of the Gypsy ethnic group by its misunderstanding and maintaining of prejudices, which contributed to the segregation and extreme forms, such as racism, on the other hand by extreme approach in an effort to help, namely through the behaviour towards the Gypsies as "infantile" fellow citizens.

7. *Discipline versus freedom*. Pupils of Gypsy families have free education without any restrictions (spontaneity and unrestrainedness represent key attributes). After entering the educational process many of them have more serious problems with respect for school rules. This is especially true in schools where a strict discipline is required. Principles¹⁹, to solve the problems of Gypsy children in school education, were accepted in the intention of the Government of SR aims. They should allow a creation of more adequate conditions for their

¹⁸ Old Gypsy stories and tales sharply divide the world of non-Gypsies and the world of Gypsies.

¹⁹ Reflection of the situation of the Gypsy society and the foundation for a comprehensive solution to the Gypsy problem in Slovakia were conceptual intentions of the Government from 1997 (Government Resolution No. 796/1997). The main task was to prepare and implement specific programs for development of speech and communication of Gypsy children, to develop a differentiated educational program for primary schools that respects the particularities of pupils in the content, forms and methods. To this purpose, the complex project was prepared to complete the implementation of zero grades in primary schools and other measures - a preparatory year, guidance for teachers of Gypsy pupils. The rights of Gypsies are expressed in Discrimination Act 365/2004 applying the principle of equal treatment in order to ensure equal opportunities as a basis of an ethnic inclusion in life of the Slovak society.

education. A primary objective was to create special classes for Gypsies²⁰ in common primary schools, but also to penalize inconsistent parents who neglect their children's schooling. *“The aim of all actions is to increase the educational level of the Gypsy ethnic group and thus proving the competence in the labour market, as well as participation in life of the society”* (Kováčiková, 2004, p. 88). For these reasons, the most important thing is to concentrate on these points:

a) through sober arguments to influence Gypsy mothers who have, in this ethnic minority based on the gender dimension, a privileged position in their children's education issues;

b) through education to influence fathers of families to see in education of their children a premise and a guarantee of their employment and a better future (through proving their competence in the labour market);

c) propagation, which encourages further education of adult members of the ethnic group through additional completion of compulsory schooling and obtaining of vocational certificate. To increase their proving of competence in the labour market through a variety of training courses;

d) a motivation support of its members to obtain professional education;

e) generally to increase the value of education in the eyes of the ethnic group (applies to a pre-school education, to support pupils in primary and secondary schools, but also to work with parents). Barrier in a pupil's training becomes inability to understand the official language, regional dialects (Gypsy dialects differ considerably), slang²¹ or a use of special vocabulary in the family, as well as a poor personal hygiene. Let us not deceive ourselves that promotion of tolerance by teachers is sufficient. A barrier in a classroom is often created by obstacles such as low personal hygiene, aggression as a learned behaviour and a bunch of other problems.

²⁰ Consult Belková, V. *Nové trendy vo výchove a vzdelávaní rómskych žiakov*. In: Kováčiková, D. *Základy pedagogiky pre sociálnych a misijných pracovníkov*. Banská Bystrica: 2004, p. 89 – 97.

²¹ Slang expressions as such are not an obstacle. It is an inability to move from a limited to an advanced code and to modify it according to environment. Therefore to use a different vocabulary (conceptual cluster) in communication with officials (teachers are also state representatives) and others in contact with friends and family (consult a theory of the sociolinguist Bernstein in Průcha, 2001).

T1 Gypsies in member states of EU

Country	Number	Percentage of population
Belgium	30 000	0,29
Denmark	5 500	0,10
Finland	11 000	0,21
France	400 000	0,62
Greece	265 000	2,47
Netherlands	40 000	0,24
Ireland	37 500	0,90
Luxemburg	300	0,06
Germany	105 000	0,13
Portugal	55 000	0,52
Austria	25 000	0,30
Spain	725 000	1,57
Sweden	42 500	0,46
Italy	140 000	0,23
Great Britain	225 000	0,37
Bulgaria	750 000	10,33
Cypruss	1 250	0,16
Czech Republic	3 000	1,96
Estonia	1 250	0,10
Lithuania	3 000	0,08
Latvia	14 500	0,65
Hungary	700 000	7,05

Malta	0	0
Poland	37 500	0,10
Romania	1 850 000	8,32
Slovak Republic	500 000	9,17
Slovenia	8 500	0,42

Source: Euractiv, August 2012

Conclusion

The UN Commission on Human Rights report criticized the Slovak Republic already in the 2003 for inadequate protection of women and Gypsies. Nowadays, Gypsies represent the largest ethnic minority in Europe. At present time the European Union has more than 6 million Gypsies. Their number is estimated to be 10 to 12 millions in Europe. No common strategy of how to combat the problems faced by Gypsies originated on the EU level so far. Within the European Union, their rights, as well as the rights of all minorities, are given specific remark in the Lisbon Treaty, as well as the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Poverty is an ideal climate for political extremism, because what is easier as to justify the blame for their poverty, for their own failure, for failing at finding a job, and other personal and social problems as a result of exposure to other people (race, nation, ethnic group) or to offer a simple populist solutions to eradicate poverty.

All problems of an exclusion studied by social pedagogy are intertwined and mutually linked. Thus their resolution requires a comprehensive approach; one of the most important tasks today is to create optimal conditions for the process of school inclusion, which is linked to a whole society inclusion. The philosophy of this problem solving, demands of a social protection strengthening of the weaker society member and their protection from segregation, social exclusion and differentiation. The solution is to strengthen *the support of consulting and further education function of methodological centres and their contacts with rural primary schools*, which might mitigate the qualitative deficit of education in rural elementary schools. Preparation for the process of social inclusion in the undergraduate teacher education must be accompanied by courses of special pedagogy, social pedagogy and multicultural education.

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