



Slovak Republic

“Feeding in” and “Feeding out”, and Integrating Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities

A Study of National Policies

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Summary

This report consists of two chapters. The first chapter tries to assess the overlap of the Implementation Report on the National Reforms Program (October 2006) and the National Report on Strategies of Social Protection and Social Inclusion and, especially, to explicate how the economic growth and social cohesion strategies interact in these documents. The second chapter outlines the ethnic structure of the country, deals shortly with the asylum procedures that do not make Slovakia very hospitable for migrants, and then focuses mainly on the situation of the Roma minority in Slovakia and the policies of improving their living conditions and prospects.

The first chapter is divided into three parts. The part 'feeding in' outlines education and territorial mobility programs and the other measures of social inclusion that have pro-growth side effects. The part 'feeding out' describes territorially sensitive ALMP and state support programs that are the economic measures with pro-inclusion side effects. The last part of the first chapter analyses the ways the Slovak Republic answers to some of the challenges of the integrated guidelines. It pays special attention to the activation works that operate, to a certain extent, as a closed labour segment and the only earning option in some areas. In spite of the original purpose, there are no clear "crossings" with the labour market. Few passable points are represented by the working places for supervisors.

The first chapter suggests that the Slovak strategic documents were based on the three clauses: 1. Employment is the main form and the result of social inclusion, 2. Economic growth and employment increase go hand in hand, 3. Social protection and labour flexibility are rather contradictory phenomena. Such a framing expounds the pro-business measures such as removals of social commitments and cuts in social expenditures as a hopeful stimulation of the Slovak economy, employment growth and social inclusion processes. The comparison of the documents suggests the obvious alliance of the social inclusion (employment) chapters of the National Reform Program, the National Strategic Reference Framework and the National Report on the Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion. The lack of domestic resources makes the opportunity of the EU funds drawing extremely important for the sustainability of many departmental policies and elicits competition among them. The sustainability of social inclusion and social protection policies calls for placement and replication of the "employment – social inclusion – social protection" parts into all strategic documents. On the other hand, the employment and inclusion parts are not much linked to the main pillars of the Lisbon Strategy and the National Reform Plan. The education for employment and social inclusion is not identical with the education that is expected to stimulate the "knowledge economy". Tackling the employment problems is implicitly understood as tackling the long-term unemployment.

The strategic documents do not inform about the funding of the social inclusion and social employment measures systematically. Even the implementation reports do not inform about the drawing the EU funds comprehensively. Some inform about the overall sum drawn from the ESF for a given measure but not about the amount of the Slovak Republic's contribution. Incomplete information makes an impression that the country's investment has restricted to the obligatory co-financing.

The second chapter gives first the general background of the Roma situation in the Slovak Republic and then deals gradually with employment and segmented (project based) market for the Roma education and training (the integration of the Roma children into the standard school environment is the imperative challenge for the Slovak education system for the next years), housing and health-care. It is suggested that several programs that are targeted to the Roma with the aim to promote their social inclusion are, by their side effects, rather segregation practices, and isolate from the majority.

The chapter also debates the numerous strategic documents worked out over the past seven years and passed by the Government. All of them emphasise the necessity of multidimensional approach to tackling the Roma poverty and the use of various interconnected measures, including the mobilisation of the Roma themselves. However, this consensus has not sufficed to warrant the multidimensional approach in the actually implemented policy measures and it has been still necessary to speak about the multidimensional approach in the future tense. Existing projects framed by the Comprehensive Program are far from being comprehensive. The main reason for that is their inadequately poor funding. The program of construction of hygienic and laundry centres in poor neighbourhood offered by the government as a good practice example is assessed here as practice that should not be followed.

The report suggests that the lack of public resources that could be used for social inclusion programs is going to be permanent due to the recent Pension reform and setting up the private pension insurance companies. The necessity to compensate the lacking resources in the PAYG system will last for a number of decades and it will cause the outflow of considerable amount of public resources. Provided the reform had not been held, these resources could have been invested in the comprehensive revitalisation of the Roma communities or backward regions, in better support of municipal social services or schools clubs equipment, or in public housing. However, the pension reform seems irreversible. In the situation of permanent financial stringency it is difficult to expect an increase of the moral resoluteness of the Slovak political elite and general public to tackle the Roma social exclusion and poverty in compliance with their human right beliefs and commitments.

Introduction (New policy development)

Slovakian Parliamentary Elections were held on June 17 2006. The new government was formed by the party SMER-Social Democracy, the winner of the elections (51 seats out of 150 MP) and two right wing and centrist parties: Slovak National Party (14 seats) and Movement for a Democratic Slovakia – People's Party (HZDS-LS) (10 seats). The SMER's social-democratic electoral program has influenced the Manifesto of the Government of the SR for 2006-2010 a lot. The Manifesto claims "the adherence to values of respect to human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, state of law, and observing human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. Social cohesion and increasing quality of life for all are to be pursued jointly with the goals of economic growth, economic performance and employment growth." (p.3) References to social cohesion and right for human dignity make this Manifesto distinct from the one of the 2002-2006.¹ On the other hand, the attempt to combine the growth and the cohesion objectives can be recognised in it.

Besides these considerations, the Manifesto seems to continue in most of the policy of the previous government, including its commitment to enter the Euro-zone in 2009. For that reason, the sustainability of less than 3% deficit is the focal point of the fiscal policy. All intents and new steps are to be assessed by their impact on public finance. On the other hand, the Manifesto also pledges to introduce the assessment of the social and environmental impacts of every new economic law on the living conditions of inhabitants (p.33).

¹ The Manifesto's discourse differences are displayed by the different frequency of words and phrases. The goal to pursue *social cohesion* is mentioned 8 times in the Manifesto 2006-2010, but only 1 time in the Manifesto of the Government of the SR for 2002-2006 (moreover, as the aim of the regional development plan which was to be elaborated). The term *dignity* has also distinct frequency. In relation to the individual life and individual conditions of life, dignity is mentioned 10 times in the Manifesto 2006-2010, whereas in the Manifesto 2002-2006 the term dignity did not appear in this relation at all.

The views on the capacity of the new government to harmonise the social and economic commitments of its Manifesto considerably differ. This way or other, the social commitments will be used as the point of reference in the assessment of the government's further policy programs and measures.

The government has already made some practical solidarity acts in favour of the low-income groups. It has abolished the so called marginal payments in health care that hit mostly pensioners, jobless people and large families (SKK 50 per day in hospital, SKK 20 per one visit of a doctor and SKK 20 per receipt processing in pharmacy). It has set up the bill on the (one-shot) Christmas bonus for pensioners with the pension under the 60% of the average wage. Since 2007, the pensioners raising children will be made up for the child tax bonus that only the working parents enjoy by the increase of their family allowance. Since 2007, the special contribution of SKK 11 thousand will be delivered at the birth of the first child. The government has also approved to pay out the disability pensions for the whole period of their unlawful cancellation (that is, since 2004 and 2005 accordingly) instead since the date of the Constitutional Court judgement². The government has also pledged to introduce the bonus for rates of mortgages for low-income groups since 2007.

The new government has also been attempting to protect inhabitants against the groundless increase of the living costs by improving the capacity of the Regulatory Office for Network Industries to get higher control on the electricity and gas price settings.³

The economic situation has been developing favourably. The unemployment rate has been further decreasing, and in the first quarter of 2006 there were 395.8 thousand of unemployed, which is the lowest unemployment since 1998. According the LFS data, the unemployment rate fell to 14.9% (the inter-year decline by 2.6 percentage points). Average registered unemployment (H-LSAF office data) fell to 10.94%. The number of jobseekers per one vacancy has decreased from 31 in 2005 to 25 in the first quarter of 2006. The number of employed increased by 3.7% and absolutely by 80.1 thousands of persons in comparison to the first quarter of 2005. General decrease of unemployment has not yet had the marked impact on the long-term unemployment.

The number of those working abroad has increased absolutely by 30 thousands of persons in this period⁴. This means that more than one out of three newly employed has found a job outside Slovakia. However, when discussing the decrease of unemployment rate neither the NRP Implementation Report nor the National Report on SP/SI Strategies comment on tens thousands of Slovaks working abroad. The documents attempt neither to estimate how work abroad could contribute to the employment increase and unemployment decrease accordingly nor to assess various effects of rather massive departure of young people from the country.

² http://www.government.gov.sk/aktuality_start.php3?id_ele=6722

³ There was the attempt of the SPP, a. s. (the leading gas industry company) to increase the energy prices <http://www.urso.gov.sk/index.html>. The Government considers this justification of price rising illegitimate.

⁴ Mzdy, zamestnanosť a nezamestnanosť. Prvý štvrťrok 2006. MPSVR SR

Chapter One Interaction between Cohesion and Growth

During the previous government (2002-2006), the ambitions in the field of social protection and social inclusion were to stimulate individual responsibility, and to prevent alleged misuse of social protection and social welfare systems. The employment was considered the main tool and the main way to social inclusion, and various measures have been simultaneously taken to encourage this form of social inclusion, the cuts of social protection included. The creation of jobs (almost identified with social inclusion process) was seen as preconditioned with economic growth and formation of business-friendly environment. Economic growth and formation of business-friendly environment explicitly structured all the government policies as the key political tenets. On the contrary, (too generous) social protection was taken on the one hand as the burden and hindrance for enterprising business power and economy growth, and as lowering work motivation on the other⁵. In case of the 2002-2006 governance, it is more suitable to speak about the translation of the pro-business-objectives or, at best, about the translation of employment priorities into the overall policy than about centrality of social protection. Strategic documents like the Lisbon National Reform Program (2005) and its Implementation Report (October 2006) did not deflect from this standard.

The new government has not managed to amend the strategic documents like the National Reform Program (NRP) to fit more to its Manifesto (August 2006). The Government Report announces amendments to the NRP Implementation Report⁶ and sets out “institutional, personal and financial conditions for the work on comprehensive Strategy of the SR development in the middle and long term perspective and for winning broad political consent that would secure the continuity and stability of that strategy irrespective to programs and ideologies of subsequent governmental coalitions”. (Správa o stave... 2006: 5)

1.1 Feeding In

1.1.1 Stakeholders' involvement/consultation in the NRP

The implementation NRP report gives evidence of the careful alliance of the reform plans and the drawing of structural funds. The programming of structural funds is the dominant tool and resource for development of particular sectors, including employment and social inclusion.

The main organisational body for the preparation of the National Reforms Plan (NRP) has been the Inter-departmental (inter-ministerial) group for the Lisbon strategy. The group originally consisted of the representatives of the Ministries responsible for four priority domains: 1. *Education and Employment*: Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MLSAF), Minister of Education, and Plenipotentiary of the Government of the SR for the Information Society; 2. *Information society*: Plenipotentiary of the Government of the SR for the Information Society; 3. *Science, Research and Innovation*: Minister of Education, Minister of Economy and Minister of Finance and 4. *Business Environment*: Minister of

⁵ The first semester report outlines the basic assumption of the social reform of the government 2002-2006 (Kusá, 2006). It is useful to remind here the presumption of „character-spoiling“ effects of „generous“ social protection on unemployed' motivation to work. This assumption puts social protection and social inclusion (understood as employment) against each other. In the conceptual framework of the Slovak social reform, social protection is rather an isolated activity.

⁶ On 13 December 2006 the new government according to its resolution No. 855/2006, approved the Addendum to the National Reform Program (res. No. 1056/2006). Because of the term of submission, this report could not cover this event. Addendum will be analyzed in 2007 reports.

Economy and Minister of Justice. The working group for Lisbon strategy has been gradually widened and now it includes more ministries (health care, regional development, environment).

The proposal of the NRP pointed to the necessity to cooperate with the expert public and stakeholders. In the proposition of the Office of the Government (February 2005), prospective partners, such as the Slovak Rector Conference and the Council of Universities, the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Self-governmental regions, social partners (Confederation of Trade Unions and associations of employers Unions), and the NGO representatives, were identified. The NGO representatives were to be chosen by the Council of the Government of the SR for NGOs. The Section for European Affairs of the Office of the Government was responsible for “the bi-directional information flow about the progression of the work on the National Reforms Plan”.

According to the NRP Implementation Report, the Section for the European Affairs of the Office of the Government “manages the Lisbon working group”. To an external observer, the position of the Office of the Government does not seem central to the “Lisbon” process. Neither the Section for the European Affairs, nor the Office of the Government has published the information on the Lisbon process on their web pages. The Lisbon process is not listed among the main topics of the work of either the Section or the Office of the Government.⁷

According to the Implementation report, every concerned Ministry sets the coordination or working group responsible for the Lisbon in its own way: “it is fully in the competence of every Ministry to decide how to deal with the Lisbon agenda in the framework of its organizational structure.” (Správa o pokroku 2006: 8)

The list of the Ministries in the basic working group, and other central institutions (Statistical Office, National bank, Anti-monopoly Office, etc.) in a wider working group has become longer. The importance of having the impact on the content of the strategic documents for the next drawing from the EU funds has been increasingly recognised. Domestic tax revenues are possibly not certain enough for buttressing strategic policy and getting a ministry’s agenda into the NSRR is for that reason enormously significant for sustaining its policy. The strategic importance like this assures the participation of the ministries in preparation of the NRP and facilitates the delivery of departmental inputs.

This holds certainly true for the Ministry of LSAF. Sustainability of the ALMP and the next social inclusion programs has called for placing the “employment – social inclusion – social protection” into all strategic documents. The Ministry of LSAF ensured systematic delivery of its agenda⁸. That is why the policies in the administration of the MLSAF are processed in all the documents in question in the same way. Therefore, the social inclusion challenges addressed in the NRP and its Implementation Report are coherent with their rendering in the National Strategic Reference Framework and in the National Strategies Report on Social Protection and Social inclusion. It does not matter that the Implementation

⁷ See <http://www-8.vlada.gov.sk/index.php?ID=1057> The MLSAF raised objection here that the information on the Lisbon process is published on www.euroinfo.gov.sk and the official web site of the Office of the Government includes the link to this site. However, checking of this objection did not challenge my previous statement. The present government has not improved information policy in this regard. The web site www.euroinfo.gov.sk contains obsolete information, the pages have not been updated or hyper-linked to new events: for instance, the last updates of the information on the National Lisbon Strategy was on “27.10.2005” <http://www.euroinfo.gov.sk/index/go.php?id=1321>

⁸ Getting any program into the NRP and the National Strategic Reference Framework seems to be an essential precondition of its sustainability in Slovakia. For instance, the Slovak Lisbon Competitiveness Strategy of Slovakia (2005) did not mention Roma minority or the programs like LPSI and community work tailored to poor Roma settlements. However, MLSAF has secured their placements in all other strategic documents to ensure their sustainability at least during the next programming period.

Report does not refer to the National Strategies Report (but there are references in the opposite direction). All documents nearly replicate the *employment & inclusion* parts.

On the other hand, the employment & inclusion parts are clearly a “departmental” product. They seem to be autonomously inserted into the NRP Implementation Report without any necessity or opportunity to interact with its next parts. The structure of the Chapter Four “Employment Policy” differs considerably from the Chapter Five “Microeconomic Policy” that accounts for the next three priorities of the NRP. The Chart in the Annex 2 demonstrates the autonomy of employment & inclusion plans: programs of human resources or education and employment *do not intersect with any other strategic or programming areas*. Support of employment and social inclusion has nothing in common with information society, business environment or science, research, and innovation priorities.

If the lack of the interaction between the Chapter Four and Chapter Five of the NRP Implementation Report is evident, interaction of social partners, academic community, regional self-governments and NGOs in the central Lisbon working group is far from being visible. According to the Implementation Report, the NGOs participate in the ministerial working groups. However, the information about the personal composition and work of these groups is not publicly available⁹. For that reason, it is not possible to say if the involvement of academic community, social partners and NGOs has been an unfulfilled ambition, or if it has been met partially via the internal Ministry councils or commenting process.

‘Discreet’ web pages of the Office of the Government allow but inferring that the preparation of the NRP is organised flexibly, but not transparently enough.

1.1.2 Protecting access to education

The NRP Implementation Report confirms the continuation of the special support for families with children in material deprivation and for low-income families from the areas with high unemployment. Its purpose is to promote “equal access (primarily of children) to education and health” and prevent poverty transmission in family. The National Report on SP/SI Strategies further substantiates this goal by referring to PISA 2003 findings that proved significant dependence of school grades on pupils’ social background in Slovakia.

The support of *individualised nature* (scholarships, school stationeries, meals offered at school) was introduced after the Roma riots in February 2004 under the headline “the measures for strengthening the positive impact of the social benefit reforms”.

In 2005, subsidies for the pupils of basic and special schools were provided for the target groups in the following way:

- Stationary subsidies: In the second half of the school year 2005 for 64,673 children (10.9% of all pupils of elementary schools)
- Subsidies for school meals for the children in material need in kindergartens, elementary and special elementary schools were provided monthly for 80,900 children (11% of all children in elementary schools, special elementary schools and kindergartens.)

⁹ Though the Ministry of LSAF was one of the key responsible ministries for the Lisbon process, and, according to its officials, they managed to introduce also the social inclusion issue to the National Reform Program, which was primarily not on the agenda, similarly to the next Ministries, the information on inter-departmental group for Lisbon Strategy and on the composition of this ministry’s working group are not available on the Ministry web pages.

- Subsidies for scholarships - for children in material need who are pupils of elementary schools and special elementary schools (with the exception of special schools for children with mental disability) monthly for 20,058 pupils in average (3.5% of all pupils in question)¹⁰.

These programs will continue in the new programming period. The endowment for Slovakia is SKK 815.8 million for 2006, SKK 807.5 million for 2007, and SKK 822.5 million for 2008.

1.1.3 Ensuring inclusive labour market - active labour market policy

The NRP, National Strategic Reference Framework, and, surely, the SI/SP National Strategy Reform consistently describe the identical set of measures of social inclusion and social protection. This has been achieved by its systematic delivery into all documents that are decisive for the future drawing from the EU funds. Besides the Tax Reform,¹¹ the main attention is given to the *ALMP tools* that are regarded as the tool of "necessary integration of marginalized group in education and work process" (p. 10, p.18).

The NRP implementation Report (similarly to the SI/SP Strategy Report) gives overview and evaluation of the ALMP tools. It is evident that the ALMP tools form an open and dynamic system. Its dynamism is maintained by supporting various pilot projects that test the new ALMP tools, including bottom up initiatives, and by small-scale projects tailored to the local needs (or attempting to do that). The ALMP has been permanently updated to secure as high flexibility as possible, and to strengthen the commitments of those taking the subsidies for job-creation to sustain the working places for as long as possible.

According to the Implementation Report in 2007, the Act on Employment Services will be amended with the aim to facilitate more flexible ALMP and to reflect the changing needs of labour markets. There is no outline of the amendment except the information of their relation to „the necessity to create systematic model of employment services outsourcing“. The model would probably follow (its Feasibility Study will be launched due to the World Bank credit) the *Australian Employment Services (APES)*, mainly their system of employment services purchase by specific contracts with non-governmental providers. (Implementation Report 2006: 56)

As I do not have enough information about APES, it is not proper to doubt in advance the attempt to learn from Australia instead of some EU-member. However, the workfare principle of the Slovak employment services, similar employment problems of the Slovak Roma and the Australian aboriginals and the history of civil rights deprivation of Australian aboriginals nourish apprehensions. Public discussion about the APES model would be necessary. On the other hand, some amendments will be certainly welcome. Experiences from small-scale experimental projects suggest the need of widening the space for innovations and varied forms of employing and subsidising.

¹⁰ Správa o stave a vývoji regionálnych nerovností na Slovensku. MPSVR január 2006, p. 27

¹¹ Every strategic document puts emphasis on the Tax Reform (2004) that is supposed to make entering the labour market more advantageous even for the low-income groups whose taxes in fact went up. Though the lowest income tax raised from 10% to 19%, the introduction of the children tax bonus and the increase of the non-taxable basis has made the resultant situation favourable also for low-income groups.

Since January 1 2006, the non-taxable basis of the tax has been increased to SKK 90 816 and this step is considered to lower the tax burden of low-income groups. Similarly, the tax bonus for children of working parents was increased to SKK 6,480 per year for each child that lives in the same household with a taxpayer. Indeed, these changes are favourable for the people who are on the labour market, though not for pensioners and unemployed.

The ALMP measures can be sorted at least by two ways: according to the site of investments (direct support for job creation or human resources development support or in removing various hindrances and making taking job sustainable) and according to the type of mobility they promote. Here I am sorting the ALMPs according to the type of mobility. I will start with ALMPs that are to promote professional mobility (including “employability” and sustainability of jobs) and, in the second part of this chapter, I will deal with ALMP measures that are to promote territorial mobility.

1.1.3.1 Professional mobility

Importance of life long learning, re-training and the professional mobility is recognised and reflected by many education programs that are secured by the contracted agencies. There are various measures promoting professional mobility. They comprise various forms of education and preparation of jobseekers for the labour market, and also of employees who are already on the labour market and need to sustain and further develop their working capacities (Act 5/2004 On Employment Services, § 46).

Education Programs

The interest in education programs has been actually high. In the year 2005, the labour offices received *twice more* applications for placing in education and preparation for labour market programs than they could accept. They accepted 35,689 applications. Of all accepted for education, 61.4% were females and 59.1% were disadvantaged categories of jobseekers¹². This ALMP was the most used in the Bratislava district, where 13.32% of jobseekers were placed in the education programs and the least used in three eastern Slovakia districts (Michalovce, Humenné and Košice) and one southern Slovakia district (Nové Zámky): less than 3% of jobseekers were placed in an education program in these districts.¹³ In Bratislava, also the absolute number of jobseekers placed in education programs was the highest one (Bratislava: 2,707 jobseekers = 13.32%; Košice: 1,151 jobseekers = 2.4% of jobseekers).

The main indicator of the effectiveness of education programs is the proportion of the jobseekers who found a job after they had finished an education /training program. In 2005, 12,264 jobseekers got a job after they finished an education/training program. There are big regional differences in this indicator. The highest level of effectiveness was achieved in the Pezinok district (near the capital Bratislava) with almost 95% of those getting a job and the lowest one in Rimavská Sobota (district with the highest level of unemployment and long-term unemployment) – only 5%¹⁴.

There is the effort to make education and retraining programs more addressed to the requirements of the labour market and therefore some ALMP legislation/regulation was amended.

Since January 2006, *differentiated contributions have been introduced for the repeated participation in education programs*. Only the first education course/retraining program is provided free of charge. The second and the next courses have become now co-financed by jobseekers. The purpose of introducing the jobseekers' co-financing has been “to motivate jobseekers and providers of education/retraining services as well as to find jobs for the participants as soon as possible.”

Education costs are fully reimbursed if jobseekers are capable to find a job within the three month period after the end of an education program. The ALMP allows supporting education and retraining programs for the staff of employees. In 2005, the state (irretrievable) assistance for education programs

¹² The Bratislava district was on the first place also in absolute numbers (2,707 jobseekers participated in education programs). The lowest participation in absolute numbers was again in eastern Slovakia (Stropkov 345 and Stará Ľubovňa 362) Realizácia Marec 2006

¹³ Realizácia ... 2006 p. 9

¹⁴ *ibid*, p. 10

was given to 49 claimants in the total sum of SKK 9.28 million and for the claimant Peugeot Citroen Automobiles Slovakia Ltd. in the total sum of SKK 170 million¹⁵.

Though the idea of education courses co-financing appears sound, its possible unintended consequences should be thought over more carefully. Actually, this precondition seems to be betting considerably on the power of jobseekers' motivation. Its suitability needs to be more discussed. There is, after all, negative correlation between the effectiveness of this ALMP tool and unemployment rate in the region, and the motivation of jobseekers or the content of the education program seem to be much weaker factors here. It is possible that in the areas suffering from high unemployment rate and low purchase power of inhabitants, no kind of education can be inclusive and no training programs can help bring people back to the shrunk or almost absenting labour market. The question is, if such situation (structural impossibility) gives reasons for cancelling the education and retraining programs or for charging their attendance in some way. I am writing about cancelling because it is more than probable that charges for education/retraining programs will incite jobseekers to refuse participation in them. As a consequence, this will result in further deterioration of their working skills and habits.

Graduate practice program

In 2005, 24,839 graduates took part in graduate practice. It is by 71% more than in 2004. Almost 67% of them were women. If the interest in education programs is even, the interest in the *graduate practice program* significantly differs among regions. This program is based on the idea that working experience is an important investment in the graduates' future and its value replenishes a modest payment and transport and other costs that arise to person undertaking the graduate practice. It seems that the modest reward of SKK 1,700 monthly (for 20 hours per week) has the crucial role for young jobseekers. This sum is not at all attractive in the areas with low unemployment where unemployed graduates live with their employed parents, who can give them similar amount as pocket money. The higher the unemployment and earnings difficulties in a region are, the higher interest graduates have in the graduate practice (GP). The areas with high unemployment rate differ, however, in the ratio of GP participants of the total amount of the jobseekers under the 24 years of age. It is difficult to explain the difference between 77.6% and 72% of GP participants of the given age category in Topoľčany and Lučenec respectively, and only 18.2% in Rimavská Sobota and 11.3% in Kežmarok (ibid, p. 11). The different geographical conditions (scattered settlement, transport costs) and lack of suitable employers can matter. Ethnic prejudices of employers can matter, too.¹⁶ On the other hand, the interest of employers in graduate practice has been rather high. According to the H-LSAF, they used to utilise this program and often gave preference to the graduate practice over the one-shot contribution for creating a permanent job¹⁷ offered to them. In spite of certain suspicion that graduate practice can diminish the interest to create permanent jobs the program has increased employment effect. In 2005, more than one out of four jobseekers got a job after finishing the graduate practice (see Table No. 1).

¹⁵ Správa o poskytnutej štátnej pomoci.... 2006: 11)

¹⁶ Rimavská Sobota and Kežmarok have many Roma inhabitants therefore the reluctance to make Roma youth undertake practice can have impact, too.

¹⁷ Stimuli for employers enabling graduates to undertake practice were cancelled in 2005 due the suspicion that paying to employers for costless work of graduates undertaking practice could diminish the necessity to employ people regularly.

TABLE No. 1 Effects of the tools of the Active Labour Market Policy in 2005

Program	Number of job-seekers who took part in the program in 2004	Number of job-seekers who took part in the ALMP tool in 2005	Effectiveness of the program (placed on labour market in numbers and in %)	Average contracted contribution for 1 created WP, or placed person in the program
§ 46 Education and pro-labour market preparation	21,277	35,689	(12.264) 34.4%	7,389
§ 51 school-leaver praxis	14,462	24,838	(6.485) 26.1%	13,460
§ 52 Activation works	243,426	165,332	3,735 (as AV coordinators) 2.26%	6,029
§ 49 Contribution for self-employment	5,618	9,908	100.0%	60,669
§ 50 Contribution for employing disadvantaged job-seeker	1,801	3,087	3,444 100%	74,167
§ 56 Foundation of sheltered workshop or workplace	127	362	304	151,376
§ 57 Contribution for self-employment for jobseeker with health disability	107	271	100%	155,701
§ 59 Employment assistant	15	51	25	156.490

The source: Information about the implementation of National projects... March 2006, p. 24

1.1.3.2 Territorial mobility

The long-term migration of economically active population had been a characteristic feature of the rural areas also in the past and has been documented by all the censuses since the 18th century. Daily or weekly commuting was prevalent under the communist regime when the public transport was subsidised and commuting workpeople got discount communication tickets. The deregulation of the transport fare in the end of the 1990s brought about the decrease of daily commuting and the increase of unemployment.

“Transport contributions” – subsidies to pay for commuting to work - are to promote cross-regional and cross-border mobility and increase the chance of inhabitants of disadvantaged regions to get employment. This tool had been firstly tested in the local pilot programs,¹⁸ and in January 2006 it superseded the rarely utilised contribution for moving to the location of work. The regular subsidy is stipulated for a former long-term unemployed (more than 7 months in jobseeker registers). The maximum length of its drawing is 12 months. It is paid out by means of reimbursement of the travel tickets cost. The measure is funded by the ESF.

¹⁸ The pilot programme “Reimbursement of part of travel expenses for job-seekers in the border regions April 2005 – 2006” supported commuting of those who worked in Hungary, Austria and Czech Republic. (Report on contemporary state of socio-economic level in the regions of Slovakia and on prepared measures for elimination of social and economic disparities in the regions to the end of the current election period. Government of the SR Session September 28, 2005)

In spite of the considerably complex administration of paying of this contribution, the number of former unemployed who get it increased rapidly: from 7 contributions in January 2006 to 3,392 contributions in June 2006. According to the LSAF Headquarters, the lowest amount of transport contributions was paid out in the districts with the highest rate of long-term and overall unemployment such as Rimavská Sobota and Brezno. The low exploitation of this measure by the disadvantaged jobseekers from the depressed regions could point to the fact that, on the one hand, the shorter commuting distance does not suffice for getting access to the labour market in such regions, as jobs are scarce in the closer surrounding. On the other hand, after long unemployment and seclusion, they are not capable to search for work on their own in distant areas and commute there. (Správa k príspevku 2006)

These findings help to understand why the decline of long-term unemployment has been, in spite of various ALMP innovations, far from being as marked as the decline of overall registered unemployment. According to the H-LSAF registers, in comparison to 2004, the overall number of registered jobseekers dropped down by 16.8 percentage points in 2005. The decrease in the category of jobseekers registered longer than 12 months was, however, only 9.5%.¹⁹

The measures promoting territorial mobility pursue the improvement of the individual access to more or less distant labour market and daily commuting of the individuals capable of work. Besides their positive effects, they can have also side effects. They can influence the prospects of those who work in the “deserted” localities rather negatively (for instance, by commuting workers’ shopping and paying for services in the location of their work place).

1.1.4 Social services contributing to social inclusion

The NRP announces many daring intentions such as services provided within the natural family, development of low-threshold services, or further implementation of field-type social services. It is not clear, however, how these plans will be backed and what do some of the listed services mean, and who will cover the costs. Purpose, scope and conditions of access to social services have not been fixed legislatively up till now. There is more than two year *delay* in passing the new *Social Service Act* (actually one of the few not fulfilled commitments of the previous government). Urgency of its approval is extremely high since the Act is to define the position of new types of social services (for instance, the low threshold hostels, and social housing are not legally defined), to set the interconnection of social services and health care and –last but not least - to regulate their financing.

The next mentioned legislative task is to prepare an Act on social and legal protection of older citizens and citizens with health disability. Its objective is “to preserve, renew or develop abilities of natural persons and their families to live an independent life, to promote their families’ social mainstreaming on the conditions of their active participation in this process”. This ambition sounds lofty. Yet, there are reasons for misgivings that the “active participation” would, under the conditions of poorly funded service sector, mean primarily the pecuniary obligations of clients to cover the part of the service costs. For the present, legally unclear conditions and confusing perspectives have caused that the strategic documents seem to be in the clash between human right approach and commodity approach to social services.

Because of generally lower incomes of clients (either actual or potential) of social services, the promotion of access to social services is preconditioned not only by passing the new legal regulation in the area but also by higher financial transfers into sector under-funded up till now, and by the restriction of commodity approach to social services.

¹⁹ (Realizácia... 2006, p. 43)

The necessity to increase funding for social services from the state budget is not mentioned in the NRP Implementation Report, however. On the other hand, it is suggested that the social services will be “an important area of support during the new programming period of 2007-2013. Numerous types of social services will be backed by the means of selected subsidies to municipalities or non-governmental entities”.

Inserting social services development plans into the National Strategic Reference Framework seems to help to ensure their viability. The important novelty is the development of the monitoring and evaluation systems for social services domain. Recognition of the necessity of systematic monitoring is probably the most distinctive feature of these documents in comparison to the NAP inclusion 2004-2006.

1.1.4.1 Social services and shift to the non-cash forms of material need assistance

Social services acquire further importance due to the seriously limited opportunity for employment of „unprivileged and marginal groups of citizens” on the Slovakian labour market. The NRP emphasises the necessity to support the inclusion of “multi-unprivileged and marginal groups of citizens distant to the labour market by means of *intensification and implementation of new forms of assistance and support* targeted at them. By implementing the activities and measures, the Slovak Republic will continue to support integrating, not segregating... consistent anti-discriminatory policy”. (NRP 2005: 18)

All the strategic documents avow the continuation of the state subsidies for the program of community social work in municipalities²⁰ (its description is in the second chapter of this report). The program’s importance and the significance of its adequate financial backing have already been high and they will increase further after the year 2008. The demand for the community social work will proliferate after the transfer of the competencies in the domain of social assistance in material need that is expected to take place since January 2009 (The Manifesto of the SR Government 2006-2010). The competence transfer will mean a simultaneous shift to prevalingly non-cash form of the material need assistance.²¹

This change will face municipalities with complex and demanding tasks of providing the constitutionally warranted basic living conditions²². The development of social services and facilities is therefore crucial for many municipalities, especially for small villages, not to speak how risky the shift could be for people dependent on benefit if they lacked enough information. Therefore, to be managed safely, the shift will require substantial extension of the community social work in the areas with high unemployment.

However, the strategic documents inform very poorly about approaching the shift in the material need assistance provision. Neither NRP nor National Strategy Report on SP/SI deals with *personal, financial, and technical resources municipalities would need to ensure these new tasks*. Surprisingly enough, it seems that the gravity of consequences of this change has not been yet considered sufficiently.²³

²⁰ Its description is in the second chapter of this report.

²¹ According to the Act No. 599/2003 Coll. paragraph 19 part 4, after the two years of (cash) material benefit taking, one’s entitlement to the cash benefit ceased to exist (except the health care contribution, activation and protection benefit) and his or her basic life conditions will be secured by the municipality. A municipality will be financially responsible for the provision of activation and housing benefit; however, after 2 year assistance in material need entitlement health and protection benefit will be provided by municipality but financed from the state budget. The effect of this paragraph was postponed to 2009.

²² The Act No. 599/2003 Coll. on Assistance in Material Need (§ 19 part 2) sets down that the material need benefit in its material form is “one hot meal daily, necessary dressing and shelter”. Such operative definition of basic living conditions is far from the “life in dignity” that is warranted by the Constitution of the SR (§ 19 part 1).

²³ It is obvious that providing shelter is much more budgetary demanding than payment of the present cash benefits, which usually do not suffice to cover the costs of modest housing (electricity, heating, rent).

Last but not least, fiscal sustainability is the crucial objective of the domains of the governance including social protection. Reforms in the pension system, health care, and social protection in general have been governed by this aim.

1. 2. Feeding Out

Slovak strategic documents are based on the three clauses: 1. Employment is the form and the result of social inclusion; 2. Economic growth and increase of employment²⁴ go hand in hand, and 3. Protection and flexibility are rather contradictory phenomena. Being based on these three clauses makes one capable of perceiving various measures to facilitate economy (including removal of social commitments and social protection cuts) as a hopeful stimulation to social inclusion processes.²⁵

The NRP Implementation Report gives a comprehensive list of “pro-social-inclusion” measures such as audit of the hindrances in doing business, ambition to simplify regulative and administration burden of firms, etc. that are believed “to increase the motivation of employers to employ labour force and motivation for self-employment”.

New Act No.124/2006 Coll. On Occupational Safety and Health Protection that came into effect on July 1, 2006, was already created in a way to diminish an excessive administrative burden of employers and self-employers (enterprisers). Also the Act No. 125/2006 Coll. On Labour Inspection and amended and supplemented Act No. 82/2005 Coll. On Illegal Work and Illegal Employment were refined to diminish the administrative burden.

The emphasis the Implementation Report puts on liberation of employers from various sorts of burdens seems to be hardly compatible with commitments of corporate social responsibility. Though the original NRP lists corporate social responsibility among the other things that “should be encouraged” (NRP 2005: 41), it does not give any details about the means of CRS encouraging or about what the definition of CRS should be. Implementation Report does not mention the corporate responsibility at all.

The Chapter Microeconomic Policy informs about preparation of the Regulatory Impact Assessment system, the aim of which is “to prevent the preparation of such legal regulations that would put useless or excessive burdens on firms and could cut down their competitive capacity”. Because already prepared “Proposal of the standard methodology for processing and assessing financial, economic and environmental impacts, employment impacts and business environment” has not included assessments of social impacts, the Ministry of LSAF has been now preparing the stand-alone clause titled “Standard methodology for processing and assessing of the Clause of Impacts on Inhabitants’ and Households Budget” (Správa.... 2006: 34). The commitment to this sort of assessment has also been the part of the Manifesto of the Government.²⁶

²⁴ Conjunction „and” expresses the pivotal belief of the majority of economic and social policy reform documents in the coupling of the economic growth and the job creation. Doing concessions and favours to the business interests can be justified by the good faith that the temporary putting of the people’s interests on the second track would bring them fruits of prosperity in foreseeable future.

²⁵ The author of this report does not share such a perspective.

²⁶ The information source from the inside of the Ministry has proved our assumption that the commitment to work out social impact assessment methodology has already been made by the previous government. Our assumption was based on the fact that the version of the Implementation Report that was submitted to the inter-departmental commenting mentioned that the inhabitants impact assessment methodology was already prepared. The wording was changed to „is under preparation“on the basis of the comment of the present Ministry of LSAF. The source proved that a foreign expert had already prepared the methodology but, because of its „inapplicability“, the work has to be done again.

The omission of the information about the prepared methodology of assessing the impacts of the new legislature on inhabitants' and households' budget in the National Report on the Strategies for SP/SI is worth the attention. This omission can suggest that the interdepartmental cooperation is not very good and, which is even worse, that the preparation of the assessment clause is far from being the central issue at the Ministry of LSAF. Therefore, during the recent NRSSPSI consultation process, Slovak Anti-Poverty Network²⁷ requested the information about the preparation of the methodology and committing to the principle of stakeholders' participation in making the assessment. It will be important to observe how the MLSAF will treat this request and how it will inform about the preparation of the clause in the final version of the NRSSPSI.

1.2.1. Territorial cohesion via employment programs

The majority of the ALMPs are *regionally sensitive*. The subsidies for job creations are subordinate to the rule that requires differentiation of the amount of provided support according to the unemployment rate in the area of claimant location. Higher contributions are offered in the areas (districts) with above average unemployment. Simultaneously, they are focused first of all on long-term unemployed (or at least for 4 months), and on other disadvantaged categories of jobseekers. The start-up grants are now offered in the same form of a lump-sum contribution for starting self-employment or creating working place/employing a disadvantaged jobseeker. Since November 1 2006, there is 10% increase of the contribution. Its amount is regionally differentiated. Since the last amendment of the ALMP rules for subsidising job creation, the commitment to sustain a newly created job is now three year period.

Table No. 1 suggests that the ALMP tools that offer direct support for job creation are significantly more successful²⁸ than the indirect investment (i.e. employability). This success can be also caused by the precondition that the support grantees, either self-employers or employers, have to sustain in business for two years minimum. Provided they failed, they are required to return the full grant to the LSAF Office. However, the extension of the start-up grants has been possible thanks to the ESF's responsiveness to the situation and to the fact that the reimbursement principle was already abandoned in 2004. Thanks to the similar change of financing rules,²⁹ the employment of people with health disabilities also increased in 2005.

²⁷ The e-mail information of the author

²⁸ This success can be also the effect of the precondition that grant awarded jobseekers/employers has to be in business for two years (since the latest amendment the period's length is three years) minimum. Provided they fail, they are required to return the money to the LSAF Office.

²⁹ It seems that overall drain of resources makes it impossible to start projects that are financed on the reimbursement principle. Programs for employing of the people with health problems have actually commenced only after the change of the financing rule.

1.2.2. Territorial cohesion and the state support programs

At present, provision of the state assistance has been delivered in the five main forms; each of which is further divided into several categories that often overlap and (in preferable case) reinforce one another. Some categories combine the state assistance with the assistance of drawing from the European funds³⁰. These categories are:

- Development of infrastructure³¹
- Social-economic programs (a broad and versatile category comprising industrial parks, supporting access of children to education – see part 1.1.2 and social inclusion programs for marginalized groups – see Chapter 2)
- Active Labour Market Policy including professional mobility (see 1.1.3.1)
- Foreign investments
- Improvement of social-economic situation in the rural areas and backward regions (Správa o stave... 2006)

Provision of state assistance investment stimuli has to promote the economic growth in the country in general, and not only or especially in the disadvantaged regions. Though, there is the commitment that the state stimuli will “mainly be oriented on support of education, and only exceptionally on the direct support of jobs” (NRP 2005: 15), the present structure of the state support, actually due to the commitments made in past, gives a considerably different picture of the state support distribution: for instance, the support of education made up only 1.75% of all the state support in 2005³².

The Report of the Ministry of Finance shows that the state assistance increased by 12.03% in comparison to the year 2004 and its overall amount was SKK 10,272 million in 2005. The structure of the state assistance was much more in favour of direct and indirect assistance to industrial branches (51.9% of state assistance) than to regions (37.9%). The so called “horizontal assistance” had the least percentage (7.21%) of the overall state assistance in 2005. The horizontal assistance covers also research and development, SME, culture and protection of cultural heritage, commerce and export, education (1.75% of the overall state assistance), and the horizontal support of employment (1.5%).

The assistance delivered to the disadvantaged regions (SKK 3,893 million) covers both the direct individual assistance aimed at “rationalisation and the modernisation of the production process or its extension” (75.7% of regional assistance) and the tax relief for entrepreneurs in the disadvantaged regions, including regional foreign capital investors (24.3% of regional assistance). The report stresses the importance of regional state assistance for increasing number of jobs in the regions. However, it does not include any information that would allow comparing the effectiveness of this assistance scheme, and that of the ALMP³³.

The report informs about the state assistance to the “horizontally” applied ALMP measures: in 2005 the state assistance was SKK 153.96 million to employment programs and SKK 179.28 million to education programs; of which 170 millions went to Peugeot Citroen Automobiles Slovakia (ibid: 11). For the sake of comparison, education courses approved in 2006 got SKK 585 million of the ESF funding altogether (Správa o pokroku... 2006: 18).

³⁰ The information on co-financing is not always clear, however.

³¹ The infrastructure program of Social Development Fund (SDF) is subsumed here. SDF is debated in the Chapter 2.

³² http://www.finance.gov.sk/Documents/1_Adresar_redaktorov/Webmaster/Mat2006/1_PKJ147MF015%20569_2006_83/Predklad_sprava.rtf

³³ ibid, p. 9

Recently amended rules of the provision of foreign investment stimuli³⁴ have substantially increased the transparency of the process as well as the incentives for investment in disadvantaged regions. New rules set out the required investment and expected education structure of jobs to be created by the investments. These rules deserve closer attention as they seem to be the outcome of the clash of two principles: support of knowledge economy and revitalisation of disadvantaged regions.

In order to promote more high-tech and knowledge economy investments, the sophisticated production that creates jobs with higher education requirements can get the state support at relatively low direct investments (SKK 40 million). The state support of less sophisticated production such as building of in-store facilities or assembling of montage lines that employ mainly the less qualified labour force is preconditioned by five times higher direct investment (SKK 200 million at least). Such a differentiation of the state support expresses the commitment to strengthen the competitiveness of the Slovak economy. It also shows that it is difficult to pursue the two commitments simultaneously. The unemployed in disadvantaged regions have been much less qualified. The objective to diminish regional disparities and the objective to promote knowledge economy seem to collide. Theoretically, it is possible to think about the high-tech investments into the most backward regions. Such investments would receive the most generous state support. However, they will fail due to the shortage of professionals and other high-skilled labour force that had quitted such regions long before.

1.3 Analysis of Integrated Guidelines

1.3.1 Promoting lifecycle approach to work

Harmonising family and working life

The strategic documents recognise the necessity to diminish barriers in employing persons who care for children, especially parents with children, and among them mainly women³⁵. They give a general promise to increase the support of young families, and promote harmonization of working and family life. At least, the Employment Act was recently amended and the “parents after the parental leave” were put on the list of disadvantaged groups that are the target of the support programs. The amended Act opens the possibility to cover the travel, education, and childcare expenses of jobseekers that cared for children before they enter the program.

There are also announcements of promotion of the access to family services and quality of public services. However, the Implementation Report does not offer concrete information about how, and from which resources, such family friendly service system is going to be built, when and how it is going to be financed. The considerations finish as a rule by the reference to the Act on Social Services that is to be passed in 2007 or in the new programming period and the OP “Employment and social inclusion” where support of social services, flexible forms of work, etc. is included.

The Implementation Report and the National Report on the Strategies list also the new strategic documents passed by the Government (such as “Proposal of the measures for reconciliation family and work life with the prospects to 2010”) and documents that need to be worked out (such as Strategies for life-long learning, etc.)

³⁴ [http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/E27D69DDF7F18D51C125710000447F1E/\\$FILE/Zdroj.html](http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/E27D69DDF7F18D51C125710000447F1E/$FILE/Zdroj.html) October 2005

³⁵ The Slovak Republic has one of the lowest employment rates in the category of women with children under 6 of age of the EU-25

The documents also name the pilot and research projects funded from ESF that had to contribute to the gender research, gender audit and diminishing of gender stereotypes. However, the information is too brief to give the possibility to assess the practical effect of these programs.

Prolongation of work life

The prolongation of working age, so called active ageing, is the next crucial objective besides the objective to reconcile family and work life. Since 2004, the important “soft” form of the prolongation of working age has been giving pensioners the opportunity to be employed while drawing full pension without any reduction. Such a measure enables seniors to improve their income/material situation markedly.³⁶

1.3.2. Ensuring inclusive labour market

1.3.2.1 Segmentation of labour market and activation work

Goals like promoting flexibility with employment security and reducing labour market segmentation seem to be far from topical in Slovakia. Instead of raising the segmentation as a problem at least discursively, the segmentation of labour market has just been under practical construction with more or less firm contours.

Activation works³⁷ is the short name for National Program V “the *Activation of the Unemployed and the Unemployed with Low Motivation Dependent on Material Need Assistance*” that was disputed in the previous periods. The program has been implemented by the Headquarters of LSAF massively. It is targeted at the activation of long-term unemployed nationwide. Its title embodies the politically incorrect (ethnically-tinged) opinion that long-term unemployment is the result of low work motivation, that is, laziness. The ESF funding did not bar stereotype of blaming the poor from being embedded in its title.³⁸

The *activation works* belong to the ALMP intended to increase *employability* of jobseekers. In the time of their launching, they stood for the first step to the standard employment (NAP/incl. 2004: 15). The table No. 1 suggests that the activation works are the most extensive and the most inexpensive ALMP program. In 2005, 4,864 agencies (municipalities, NGOs, etc.) created 137,446 positions for activation works. The agreed contribution was SKK 828 millions 674 thousands. 165,332 jobseekers³⁹ were employed at these newly created places in 2005. The fact that the number of jobseekers was higher than the number of activation places suggests the presence of rotation principle. As a rule, the access to activation works is not always warranted and is not possible during all the year long. In 2005, three labour offices managed to engage more than 40% of all jobseekers in activation works (Revúca 49.23%, Rožňava 45%, and Rimavská Sobota 40.3%) while in Bratislava and Pezinok less than 5% were

³⁶ The Implementation Report, similarly to NRSSPSI treats the pension reform and its short-term and long-term outcomes in a rather simplified way. It might be useful to remind that since the pension system reform, not only the second (private insurance) pillar but also the first PAYG pension pillar is based on the meritocracy principle: social (minimum) old-age pension was cancelled and the state does not pay old-age pension insurance for jobseekers (contrary to health care insurance). Not only long-term unemployed but also those who work for the minimum wage will receive the pension under the subsistence minimum if the rules are not amended. The special initiative of the Social Insurance Company and the LSAF Headquarters since August 1, 2006 has been addressing the pensioners of 62 years of age with the form for assessing entitlement for material need benefit. The pensioner-friendly initiative is considered to be an administrative burden by the new Minister of LSAF.

³⁷ Activation works are small public works and activities organised usually by municipalities, NGOs and other subjects. The participation in education and labour market preparation organised by the agency contracted by the HLSAF also counts as activation works. The activation works take 10 hours per week. The activation benefit is currently SKK 1,900 (circa € 56) monthly.

³⁸ The project was getting the ESF funding for 18 months till July 2005

³⁹ 82.16% of participants were material need benefit takers, 42.6% were women. 73.3% were long-term unemployed.

activated (Bratislava 2.1%). It is clear that activation works depend on the structure of jobseekers and earning opportunities in a given region. This segment of labour market is then unevenly dispersed in the respective regions.

Two and a half years of this program suggest that the activation works are not linked to the labour market. Activation works have minimal employment effect (see the Table No.1). The program does not create the actual jobs except those of the supervisors of activated unemployed. In spite of the original purpose to offer the first step on one's way to a regular job, there are no clear "crossings" with the labour market. The places for supervisors seem to be the only contribution of this program.

Therefore, the activation works in Slovakia seem to operate, to a certain extent, as a close system or an independent labour market segment. They are frequently the only earning option in some areas and participation in them is absolutely necessary. In spite of a modest reward, the activation works are much demanded. The situation occurs that talented girls have to leave school at the age of 16 due to the pressure of their parents take part in activation works program, the only available source of income in their nearest area (Magdolénová 2005).

However, as it has already been said, the opportunity to take part in this labour segment is far from being unrestricted. Participation in activation works is limited by the offer of the available activation works. Many village municipalities are capable to create only few places for activation works. Citizen in material need cannot claim their participation in activation works. That means that whatever high their motivation is it does not suffice to take part in activation works or participate in them for longer time.

In spite of the fact that the system of activation works is not flexible enough to embrace all who seek an earning opportunity, it turned out that it represents an unexpected threat for the standard labour market. According to the Report of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the SR for Roma Communities, "an unintended negative consequence of the activation works is - closing down low qualified permanent jobs in municipality services like maintenance of public space, road-sweeping and gardening and their substituting by activation works⁴⁰. The change of standard jobs for places in which the unemployed can rotate seems to have several advantages both for the municipalities and the unemployed. The municipality saves municipal finances (activation works are still reimbursed by the state budget) and it portions out working opportunities among local unemployed more evenly. The short-term advantage of this solution (draining the jobs from standard labour market and changing them into rotating/alternate place for activation works system), however, appeases the poverty problem only temporarily. However, the present appeasement demobilizes the attempts to think about, for instance, problems the long-term unemployed will have with their old-age pension entitlements, and to look for the more fundamental handling of the lack of jobs problem.

Though the danger of old age poverty is a threatening prospects of the long-term unemployed, the scope of citizens without any pension insurance has narrowed recently: since August 1 2006, the group of insured by the state has been extended by persons who receive cash contribution for caring, and by persons who care properly for a child in long-lasting unfavourable health conditions. The state pension insurance contributions are extended up to 18 years of age of a child (up till now it was to 7 years of age.) The state also pays the pension insurance for natural persons who care for a child up to its 6 years of age. This amendment demonstrates the state appreciation of families' care for their vulnerable members.

⁴⁰ Správa o stave riešenia záležitostí rómskych komunít.. 2005

1.3.2.2 Poverty eradication

The NRP Implementation Report devotes attention to the eradication of poverty indirectly, by the description of the employment measures and social assistance programs for most vulnerable groups. It describes the programs of the Social Development Fund aimed at increasing employability of the marginalised groups by means of local partnerships of social inclusion, and the community micro-projects. The word poverty appears in the Implementation Report only twice, (as “absolute poverty”) and once it is confusingly identified with the number of material need benefit takers (p. 54). Such usage provokes the question if such identification signalises the recognition that the assistance in material need does not provide any protection, and those who are provided with this assistance are continuously faced with absolute poverty⁴¹.

1.3.3. Promote flexibility combined with employment security

As we have already suggested, the flexibility and employment security are in a rather dubious relation in Slovakia. Social inclusion that is approached as labour market participation or preparation for labour market participation is actually a significant theme in the NRP Implementation Report. It is more difficult to assess the position of social protection. By putting the emphasis on the removal of the demotivating protection the former government approached security and flexibility as the counterparts. The wide-range reform crusade was launched against all restrictions, burdens, and loads that limited free development of market and business. Besides many other dispatched “hindrances” such as the progressive taxation, the labour legislature was reformed to make labour force as flexible as possible. As the outcome, the level of employee protection in Slovakia is considered to be one of the EU-25’ lowest.⁴² The implemented dichotomised perspective on security and flexibility make it difficult to focus on the Goal 21 “to promote flexibility combined with employment security.”

The Implementation Report does not explicitly dissociate from the NRP emphasis on the necessity to avoid “further increase of the level of public redistribution of sources in economy” (NRP 2005: 3). However, the defiance to redistribution seems to collide with the adherence to social inclusion and social cohesion objectives. It is not clear if the mainstreaming of the social inclusion policy goes without reassessing such a position as this one.

On the other hand, the Implementation Report pledges the commitment of the substantial importance: launching the evaluation of the present measures for social protection such as reassessment of the minimum subsistence construction, parameters of the benefit in material need and further contributions to this benefit, the emphasis on non-cash character of the benefit, and the like. The commitment has been included in the present Manifesto of the Government. It responds to the negligence of subsistence minimum research under the previous government tenure.

⁴¹ As we have pointed many times, the officials of the Ministry of LSAF have begun to use the term of absolute poverty without a public discussion on it with non-ministry experts.

⁴² More information was given in the previous report. See also BARANCOVÁ, H. 2006

Chapter Two: Integration of Roma Minority in Slovakia

2.1 Short Outline of Situation of Migrants and Ethnic Minorities

According to the 2001 Population and Housing Census, citizens of Hungarian (9.7%), Roma (1.7%), Ruthenian (0.4%), Ukrainian (0.2%), Czech (0.7%), German (0.1%), Polish (0.06%), Croatian (0.02%), Moravian (0.05%) and Bulgarian (0.02%) origin live in Slovakia. The largest minorities are Hungarian and Roma. Besides these minorities, there are foreigners and refugees living in the Slovak Republic. Majority of the Slovak Roma and migrants face the difficult living conditions and various kinds of discrimination. Their situation significantly differs from that of the majority. On the other hand, there are not any statistical data, living conditions surveys, or sociological research that would prove at least slightly significant statistical differences in employment, access to services, or subjective experience of material and social deprivation⁴³.

2.1.1 Situation of migrants and refugees

According to the Report on Human Rights Practices,⁴⁴ the established system for providing protection for the refugees in Slovakia is more or less restricted to the protection against the return of the persons to a country where they feared persecution. The government of the SR grants a refugee status or asylum only exceptionally. In 2004, the UNHCR criticized the current asylum process for accepting a low number of asylum applicants. In 2005, according to National Migration Office's statistics, 11 persons were granted asylum out of a total of 3,235 cases, and 2,663 cases were terminated during the 2005.

The government also provides temporary protection for the individuals who may not be qualified as refugees. The law⁴⁵ provides for temporary protection, classified as "tolerated residence", which is granted if asylum is denied and the individual is not eligible for deportation to a country of his or her origin due to administrative problems or fear for the person's safety.

Slovakia - National Report 2005 suggests that, in 2005, the important development was that the document "*Elaboration of the Concept of Migration Policies of the Slovak Republic with Implications for Ministry of Education*" was passed by the Government. The document is noteworthy because it is for the first time when a governmental document analyses the possibility of the integration of migrants and asylum seekers into the education system of Slovakia (Slovakia National Report 2005).

At present, the children of asylum seekers have the opportunity to enrol for a course of Slovak language. In 2003, the project of the education of the children of the foreign nationals was elaborated; however, the project was not experimentally verified for financial reasons immediately but only with a two year delay. Foreigners with the permanent residence status in SR (immigrants) have the same rights in respect to health services as Slovak citizens.

⁴³ It is possible that Ruthenians and Ukrainians who live mainly in the disadvantaged poor regions of Eastern Slovakia would face the poverty and exclusion much more frequently than Slovaks or Hungarians. However, their small numbers do not allow statistically valid comparison.

⁴⁴ <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61674.htm>

⁴⁵ Slovakia, Act on Asylum No. 480/2002 Coll.

2.2 General Background Information on Situation of Roma Minority

Before 1989, the Roma were not accepted as an ethnic minority in Slovakia. Under the Communist regime, the focus was on improving the Roma's material and education conditions, and their integration into the national economy and the mainstream way of life. The numerous and comprehensive "Roma enhancing" policies were pursued without their, at least partial, involving in the policy-making⁴⁶. In the end of the 1980s, owing to the massive housing programs the majority of the Roma lived mixed with the majority population and only the minority (some thousands) lived in hut settlements. The Roma males were almost 100% employed. Then, their poverty at that time seemed to result from their poor past (contrary to the majority of the Slovaks or the Hungarians, they did not own any estate or a piece of land) and from the fact that they had numerous families usually with only one provider⁴⁷.

In the beginning of the 1990s the targeted policy (state subsidised communal housing program, etc.) was cancelled. Former conditioning of family allowance by children's regular school attendance or maternal leave benefit by the attendance of medical examinations during pregnancy turned to be taken as contradicted human rights and cancelled accordingly. The intellectuals harshly criticised the assimilation tendencies under the Communist Party regime. Foreign and domestic endowment systems targeted mostly on promoting the cultural and political identity of the Roma while "indelicate" material conditions of their life fell on the second track. However, already in the midst of the 1990s, it was clear that Roma became the victims of the economic and political transformation on a mass scale.

The "Roma issue" has been subject of numerous political resolutions and programs in the recent period. Between 1999 and 2005, the Government of the SR passed seventy-one documents that deal with the "Roma issues".⁴⁸ *The Strategy of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Solving the Problems of Roma National Minority* (Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 821/1999) is considered to be the cardinal one. The Strategy emphasises the necessity of a multidimensional approach to tackling the Roma poverty and requires multiplied and interconnected measures, including the mobilisation of the Roma themselves: "The Government will support the interconnection among the housing policy, generation of employment opportunities, environment protection, sustaining of the cultural heritage, resource mobilization, and increasing of the maximum efficiency of their usage with the personal assistance of the Roma community members on the construction of their own settlement (The Strategy 1999: 7)

Broad consensus of the experts and the Roma activists on the necessity of the multidimensional approach has not sufficed to transform the Strategy into the real policies. *The National Action Plan of the Slovak Republic Regarding the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005 – 2015* has been the one closest to the Strategy as well as to the NAP/incl. 2004 in the objective of "helping the most vulnerable". It could be said that neither of better known strategic documents has not surpassed and overtopped the

⁴⁶ In the end of the 1960s, the Roma succeeded to found their Union in Czechoslovakia. However, it was cancelled and forbidden in the beginning of the 1970s alike many other bottom up initiatives that had emerged during the "Prague Spring" period. The Roma might significantly influence the regional programs for them only in the case they became the members of the Communist Party (that had its organisational cells in every firm, school, at each type of work place and municipality (including a street party organisation for pensioners, etc., besides having its regional governing structures).

⁴⁷ In general, the households with women on maternal leave were significantly more in a risk of poverty – every fourth child under two years of age was in a risk of poverty in the 1980s. Poverty and the number of children correlated significantly. ANALÝZA struktury chudého obyvateľstva v Československu v roce 1988. VÚPSV, Bratislava, 1992

⁴⁸ Their list is published on the web site of the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the SR for Roma Communities. The Government passed 2 resolutions in 1999, 3 resolutions in 2000, 14 resolutions in 2001, 21 resolutions in 2002, 12 resolutions in 2003, 14 resolutions in 2004p, and 8 resolutions in 2005.

Strategy (1999) and unfortunately, has not actually managed to pursue the proposed multidimensional approach.

Since its approval, the Government has never allotted a sufficient amount of the resources for comprehensive regeneration of at least one exemplary Roma settlement. In spite of various attempts that will be introduced in the next parts of this paper, most of the implemented policies has been one-dimensional, partial and has no regard for the multiplied deprivation of the Roma households and settlements. Cuts in the social welfare (2002, 2004) have been further worsening the living conditions of the Roma and in the Roma communities have been getting worse⁴⁹.

2.2.1 Problems of Identification

The lack of resoluteness in tackling the Roma poverty has often been justified by problematical identification of the target group. The legal arrangement of the national and ethnic rights⁵⁰ leads to the withdrawal of the objectivist determination of ethnicity in research and statistics. General restraint from ethnicity investigating has some unexpected consequences for the research and the human rights observance institutions. Even the human rights institutions admit that they are incapable to determinate if the observed inequalities, for instance the labour market access, stem from the reason of the ethnic or racial origin⁵¹. Due to these reasons as well due to the fact that not a small part of the Roma live mixed among the majority population, the supporting programs for poor the Roma children and the Roma neighbourhoods are dedicated to those who come or live in “socially disadvantaged environment”.

According to estimations, from 380,000 to 320,000 Roma live in Slovakia. Out of them, approximately 60% live integrated and spread out among the majority population. The Roma communities are spread across Slovakia unevenly: their highest concentration is in the eastern and the southern districts of Slovakia, where approximately two thirds of Roma population live. The high concentration of the Roma communities is in the Košice and Prešov regions, where the Roma represent 26.5% (Košice) and 32.8% (Prešov) of all inhabitants. The Roma children (0-15 years) represent about 34% of the children from the Košice and Prešov regions⁵².

In 2003, 1,575 locations of various types were documented⁵³ as inhabited by the Roma population. In 776 villages and towns, the Roma communities live integrated and spread among the majority. The other Roma communities live according to the location of their settlement as follows:

- 177 communities live in village or town concentration (a “Roma” street or neighbourhood);
- 338 communities live on the edge of a town or a village

⁴⁹ Správa o stave riešenia záležitostí rómskych komunit v jednotlivých regiónoch Slovenska 2005

⁵⁰ As it is well known, the majority of the Roma do not declare Roma ethnicity in the Census. The item 3 of the article 12 of the Constitution „everybody has the right to decide freely about his or her ethnicity“ promotes precautionous interpretation of the Act No. 428/2002 Coll. On Protection of Personal Data, § 8 of which banishes the processing of the special categories of personal data that reveal a racial or an ethnic origin, political opinions, religion belief, etc., and this provision is not valid only in the case of informed consent of a person in question.

⁵¹ National Report 2005 Slovakia. The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia

⁵² The Sociographic Mapping of Roma settlements 2003, Children Rights in Roma Communities. Research Report. Slovak national Centre for Human Rights 2005

⁵³ The most precise information about the living place and habitation conditions of the Roma population is based on the data from the Sociographic Mapping of the Roma population that was done in 2003. It was based on the expert interviewing and was done in 1,087 towns and villages (38.4% of all) of Slovakia, where – according to the Census 2001 – at least 7 persons claim the Roma ethnicity. The Sociographic Mapping Data were elaborated into the typology of the Roma communities according to the level of disadvantaged that is officially used and becomes the basis of all recent Strategies and Action Plans. (Správa o stave riešenia záležitostí rómskych komunit v jednotlivých regiónoch Slovenska 2005, 3-4)

- 284 communities are spatially distant from a town or a village and separated by a natural (a stream) or an artificial (railroad) barrier from a majority settlement.

The official typology based on the sociographic mapping distinguishes between separated and segregated Roma settlements. The segregated settlements are the settlements located at the edge or outside the majority town or village, where the dwellings are without water duct and more than 20% of the dwellings are undocumented.⁵⁴ By this typology, 149 Roma communities are classified as segregated. The Comprehensive Development Program for Roma Settlements has made the segregated communities the target of the pilot social inclusion policy programs.⁵⁵

The areas with higher occurrence of the Roma population, and, first of all, those with the Roma population living segregated (which is mostly in rural, formerly agricultural areas⁵⁶), have constantly worse demographic indicators: lower life expectancy and higher mortality, including the infant mortality. The present age structure of the Roma population resembles the age structure of the majority in the 1950s, when the proportion of the children under 15 years of age was above 30% and the proportion of the population of 50 years of age and above was lower also due to shorter life expectancy. In 2004, the children under 15 years of age represented 17.1% of Slovakian population and up to 39.4% of the inhabitants of the Roma households were of the same age according to the recent representative UNDP survey.⁵⁷ This survey indicates that the proportion of the children correlates with the level of separation of the community: there were 35.2% of the children in the mixed neighbourhood, 38.6% in the separated neighbourhood, and even 43.6% of the children in the segregated Roma settlements, which are faced by multiple disadvantages in the communities.

2.3. Employment

Under the communist regime the continuous efforts to skill the Roma and integrate them into the working class or peasants seemed to yield positive effects. In 1980s, the economic activity of the Roma men (84.5%) did not differ from that of the total male population (85.2%). The economic activity of the Roma women was lower (45.4%) comparing to that of the total female population (76.6%). It was probably due to more children in the Roma families and traditional gender division of household labour that made women staying home and caring for children.

The economic depression in Slovakia in the 1990s and the decline of some industrial branches (mining, metallurgy, and building industry) and agriculture reduced the demand for manual labour. Many manual jobs in the municipal services like public space and roads maintenance were permanently lost due to technological innovations. As most Roma used to work manually, this development hit them harshly.

⁵⁴ Undocumented dwellings are self-constructed, without a building permit and without the ownership titles to the land being settled. These simple buildings built mostly of wood, daub, metal or their combinations do not meet technical and hygienic standards and are overcrowded. 46 segregated settlements with 4,460 official residents lack any infrastructure, including an asphalt road. Out of them, 12 settlements do not even have an access to electricity.

⁵⁵ Comprehensive Development Program for Roma Settlements (2003) has become the foundation of all „helping the most vulnerable“ programs that have been run in the recent years in more or less limited way. These programs have been more or less deviating from the comprehensive development principle that requires implementing of the outlined measures (from housing and infrastructure to social field workers and teacher’s assistants) simultaneously to reach synergetic effect and sustainability...

⁵⁶ The decline of agricultural production was 43 % during 1990 – 2000, I have mentioned in the first semester report that it was the largest decline in agriculture in V-4 countries. For instance, in Poland the decline of agricultural production was only 12 %.

⁵⁷ The Survey was held in April – June 2005 and covered 720 Roma households on the basis of the quota sampling based on the typology of the Sociographic mapping. The survey also covered the comparative sample of the majority households that live in proximity of the Roma households under study. UNDP 2006, p. 10

The irreversible decline of manual labour is the main cause of the fact that the part of long-term unemployed Roma people do not have a real chance to get a job: "their dependence on the social assistance of the state is even life-long perspective for them." (Správa o stave riešenia... 2005: 20)

In 2004, the estimated unemployment rate of the Roma minority was 79.8% while the national average was 18.1%. At the same time, the long-term unemployment of the Roma minority was 62.8% (national average was 11.4%). A risk of unemployment of the Roma people was 4.2-times higher than the national average and the risk of long-term unemployment was even 5.2-times higher⁵⁸.

Besides the declining demand for manual labour, many other factors have been limiting the Roma's chance to enter the labour market. Major part of the Roma lives in the regions with extremely high number of jobseekers per one vacancy⁵⁹ where, as a rule, only the most qualified young Non-Roma males get a job. The ALMP programs promoting self-employment and private enterprising activities are not sensitive to those living in the poor neighbourhood because there is not the demand for their services since the purchasing power of the inhabitants in such a neighbourhood is almost zero. Moreover, though it is difficult to prove, there are still considerable ethnic prejudices and also discrimination on the labour market and its victims are not protected sufficiently⁶⁰.

The long-term living of the Roma households on benefits worsened the environment in their neighbourhood and the erosion of their capability to keep commitments such as sending children to school and caring for their school achievement or paying rental fee have further strengthened the anti-Roma stereotypes. Several restrictions of social welfare since the end of the 1990s⁶¹ were done with the implicit consideration that the Roma were spoiled by benefits and unwilling to work. The prejudices against the Roma served as the justification of the reform cuts. Public stereotypes of "lazy Roma" made it easier to represent the unemployment in Slovakia as the problem of the lack of work motivation on the side of the unemployed.

The unemployed Roma were stirred up "to start to seek for a job" by repeated reform cuts of the social assistance (2002, 2003, 2004). The benefit cuts could be more or less systematically supplemented by the ALMP reform. There have been two main National Programs focused explicitly or implicitly on the Roma unemployment. Both have been funded from the European Social Fund, though not at the same period. The National Program V "the *Activation of the Unemployed and the Unemployed with Low Motivation Dependent on Material Need Assistance*" which is implemented by the Headquarters of LSAF on a mass scale is discussed in the part 1.1.3 of this report. The National Project VI *Increasing the employability of disabled groups and groups under the threat of social exclusion by means of partnership for social inclusion* is implicitly targeted at the Roma communities and the other disadvantaged groups in the most disadvantaged regions. The project has been implemented by the Social Development Fund with the objective to increase employability of the most disadvantaged groups by developing of the local social inclusion partnerships and by supporting of the community micro-projects.

⁵⁸ Správa o stave riešenia... 2005

⁵⁹ For instance, in January 2004, in the district of Bratislava, there were less than 5 jobseekers per 1 vacancy, in the district of Trenčín 6.3 and in Galanta district 8.7, while in the south and east districts such as Rimavská Sobota there were 379 jobseekers, in Revúca 254, in Kežmarok 204 and in Veľký Krtíš 186 jobseekers per one vacancy. (Kusá – Kvapilová 2004: Between JIM and NAP inclusion. No. VC/2004/0081)

⁶⁰ Správa o dodržiavaní ľudských práv... 2006

⁶¹ See their more detailed description in the first semester report 2006

2.3.1 Roma employment programs – segmented labour market?

The closed character of activation works has been already described in the Chapter One. I have suggested that though this program does not belong to the regionally sensitive ALMP measures, it seems to be tailored for the long term unemployed Roma and, in fact, it has often become their only earning destiny. Now I will examine the situation and employment effects of the second set of the projects. They are targeted specially at the disadvantaged Roma Communities and are organised and covered by the Social Development Fund.

The Social Development Fund (SDF) was described for the first time in the NAP inclusion 2004-2006 as the tool of reaching the objective “to help the most vulnerable”. It has been intended to provide both methodical and financial support to community development and anti-poverty policies in the most disadvantaged areas of the country. Except of the Competitiveness Strategy of the SR until 2010 (Slovak Lisbon Strategy), the SDF has been included in all strategic documents. It is, however, necessary to point out that the SDF has an autonomous place in the Employment & Inclusion chapter, which is not connected to the other chapters and priorities. Such a segmented position of the SDF is, however, a side effect of the SDF’s fundamental mission of strengthening the local solutions.

At present, the SDF is a public budgetary organisation of the Ministry of LSAF of the SR. The support from the European Social Fund is also very important and it will be the precondition of its activities in the next programming period. The NRSSP/SI considers the SDF as a good practice example. However, the recent financial backing of the SDF activities has been far less satisfactory.⁶²

The main projects of the SDF are a) development and maintaining of the local partnerships of social inclusion; b) community social work in municipalities, and c) community infrastructure projects.

The local partnerships of social inclusion (LPSI):

LPSI work in the most disadvantaged regions and consist of various key local subjects, civic institutions and experienced individuals. They can serve as a tool of tailored social assistance and support for the local initiatives. In 2006, the number of LPSI increased to *twenty-seven*; they are now active in 56 (of 83) districts. The Implementation Report is tight-lipped about the financial problems the program has suffered from during the first two years due to the unfitting institutional design. The SDP was backed by SKK 600 millions from the ESF for the period of 2004 – 2006.

The community social work (CSW)

CSW is a project focused primarily, but not exclusively, on the segregated Roma communities. CSW targets at the (Roma) settlements with the aim “to eradicate the causes of their social deprivation by means of permanent work of a community social worker, a social worker and an assistant of a community social worker.” Though the hopes pinned on the social works are more than daring here, the program is significant as the employment program. The program’s effectiveness was already monitored by the Ministry of LSAF in 2005 and “on the basis of the financial analysis, in 2006 the Ministry decided to extend the program to another 35 settlements the applications of which were not supported in 2005 because of the lack of resources.” (Správa... 2006: 24) At present, the community field social work program employs 245 community social workers, 411 assistants of community social workers, and 17 social work coordinators. The budget of the SDF for this program is SKK 363 millions for the period of 2005-2007. The project is funded from the state budget of the Slovak Republic. The amount is very

⁶² We have described the financial difficulties that have paralysed the SDF program of LPSI in our previous reports.

modest comparing to the amount of the state assistance provided for the other programmes (see the part 1.2.2 of this report).

Development of local infrastructure

The program started by the first call in August 2004. It has been funded from the state budget and *maximum amount* for the one project is SKK one million (!). This modest donation scheme is to support investment activities (education, working and social incubators, support of development of community services and social care for the marginalized groups). The precondition that the applications can only come from the areas of the local partnerships of social inclusion operation can promote “synergetic” effect of such a meagre investment. In 2004 84 projects in 3 regions, and in 2005 173 projects of local infrastructure were supported in total amounts of SKK 46 million, and SKK 115 million respectively. (NRSSPSI: NAP/incl. implementation report 2006).

Programs as the National Project Assistant or the Assistant of LMP Program, the Roma Assistant of Paediatrician and the Teacher’s Assistants offer (few) Roma the new jobs and the important status promotion in the Roma communities. They represent small steps that could have, as it is hoped, a motivating impact on the Roma communities. It can be said that the SDF, the initiative EQUAL and the micro-lending program of UNDP for Roma enterprisers have aimed at the promotion of the locally tailored employment projects that can, at least, partially improve the situation of the Roma. MLSAF believes in the SDF projects’ innovative potential and its use in the next ALMP amendment. Though it is too early to evaluate their effect, some critical assessments are apposite. It is necessary to remind that the SDF and the Nap/inclusion 2004-2006 part “Helping the most vulnerable” considerably drew from the already mentioned Comprehensive Development Program for Roma Settlements (2003). However, a very modest scale of funding did not enable to pursue multiple revitalising activities, at least in one Roma community and reach their synergetic effect. The fractional assistance is incapable to bring the outcome with stimulating effects.

Roma activists often criticise the fact that positions of community social workers, assistants to community workers in the Roma settlements or teacher’s assistants are often occupied by the Non-Roma. The position requires the Slovak and Roma language skills and completed comprehensive secondary education. Because the former precondition rules out the Roma, they are admitted to this work on the condition they will complete full secondary school education by 2010.

Roma activists and journalists are not satisfied with the lack of the public monitoring of the effectiveness of the projects funded within the scope of the EQUAL program and the Sector Operation Program for Human Resources (SOP L’Z). Close observers of the impact of the launched projects on the development of opportunities in the Roma communities are very critical. They speak about missing mutual co-ordination or exchange of information. The organisations refuse to offer the information under the pretext of “protecting the know-how” of the projects. This process neither activates the Roma community nor reflects the communities’ needs.⁶³

Many authors point at the lack of the public monitoring system that could assess the effectiveness of these projects. In such a context, the considerable attention given to the monitoring and evaluating system in the new strategic and programming documents should be welcome.

In the 2005, a number of Agencies for Supporting Employment (APZ) started their work aimed at creating jobs for the Roma people. Some of them are linked to a “second chance school” that offers the chance to finish lower secondary education (nine classes).

⁶³ Magdolénová 2006: 133

Magdolénová observes another new trend: attempts of the Roma women to get employed in social services⁶⁴. Increasing number of the Roma families take foster care for Roma children from children's homes as the employers of children homes or NG organizations with facilities for this purpose. The legislation, however, hampers widening of this form of employment since the position of a foster parent requires completed (higher) secondary education with school leaving examinations ("maturita") and the Roma have lower level of education as a rule.

2.4 Education and Training Issues

Low education levels of the Roma population are often considered the main factor of their unemployment and the major hindrance of their future prospects. Above the average proportion of children who grow up in disadvantageous conditions make the issue of their education essential. According to many experts, the education level of the Roma population has been worsening. There were also difficulties under the Communist regime. The 1970 Census found out that about 10% of the Roma children of 7 – 14 years of age (3,920) had never attended school. (Filas 1988: 198)

Non-mastering of the majority language ranks among the most essential barriers in the Roma education and inclusion. In the UNDP survey, the Slovak language was reported as the first language only by 31.7% of the Roma under study. The Hungarian language is the first language for next 13.7% and more than 50% of the Roma use the Roma language as their first language. The Slovak language has the weakest position in the segregated settlements where it is used as the first language only by 16.9% of respondents (Výskum 2006: 15).

As the Roma language is still not the teaching language in Slovakia, educationists consider the pre-school education to be important for the Roma children's doing well at school. Before 1991, 85-90% of the Roma children in Slovakia attended kindergartens but in the end of the 1990s their number fell rapidly down. The importance of kindergartens education is appreciated in the NRP that enlists the new subsidy program for the establishment of nursery schools in poor municipalities. The NRP grid informs about a not very successful pilot project.

One of the most pressing problems is that the children from segregated settlements and unfavourable social and economic conditions, the Roma pupils, are markedly over-represented in special elementary schools for children with learning or behavioural difficulties. There is evidence that placing of the Roma children to special schools has been made without reviewing and re-assessing child's development. The Act No. 29/1984 Coll. On System of Primary and Secondary Schools is implemented differently in various school districts, and there are mistakes and failures in an interpretation and applications of the legal norms that regulate education integration (National Report 2005).

The integration of the Roma children requires not only changing of the education content but also material provision and their organizational backing. Since 1999, six PHARE projects aimed at improving minority education and education-opportunities have been implemented. According to the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights (SNCHR), besides the language problem, there is a persisting problem of non-language segregation of the Roma children at schools. The SNCHR research has found out that school classes are organised according to the criteria such as school mark average or the first language of pupils with the final aim to isolate the Roma pupils from other schoolchildren⁶⁵. Another

⁶⁴ 151/04-I/33: Agentúra podporovaného zamestnávania Somotor, n.o <http://www.equalslovakia.sk/index.php?id=145>

⁶⁵ According to the Report of the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, school managers are often forced to undertake these measures by parents of the majority of schoolchildren who threaten by transfer of their children to other schools. (SPRÁVA... 2006)

segregation practices range from the separate dining facilities and segregation in classrooms, to the unjustified placement of the Roma pupils in special schools.

The National Institute for Education has already developed new diagnostic methods and tools to achieve greater objectivity in the process of evaluation of the Roma children in the early levels of special primary-level education and of their abilities during enrolling for school. The proposal is to set up so called transition classes with the aim to prepare the ill-diagnosed Roma children for the transfer from special schools to regular school facilities. Necessary cooperation or partnership of special basic schools and mainstream basic schools as well as the children parents⁶⁶ could be a sticking point of this sound project. Without development of a common interest that will go beyond a particular interest (every school struggles for the number of pupils because there are financed accordingly, therefore the special basic schools have eminent interest to preserve their pupils), the situation is not going to improve at all.

The Integration of the children from risky and marginalized groups into the standard school environment, especially the Roma children and pupils with health disability, is (should be) then the imperative challenge of the Slovak education system for the next years. The conception of integrated education of the Roma children and youth, including the development of secondary and university education, will be finished in 2007, and in order to improve the education integration of pupils with special education requirements “the conception of the integrated pedagogical counselling system and the regulation of subsidies for pupils from socially disadvantaged environment will be elaborated, too.

Seeing one’s better educated parents being jobless does not stimulate learning motivation, then can be a problem as well (students have the transport rate cut but the travelling is still very expensive for jobless families and there is not any regular support for travelling to school for secondary school children). In practice, the *motivation scholarship* is used for *covering of travel costs* of the students of secondary schools.

In spite of these reservations, it seems that some positive changes have been started. The NAP incl. Implementation Report lists eleven strategic materials and methodical directives that are to improve the access of the children from the disadvantaged surrounding to education. Undoubtedly, the fundamental document is the Concept of integrated education of the Roma children and teenagers, including the development of secondary and university education (2004). The commitment to start the education in the Roma language as early as possible can also be found in the Implementation Report.

“Instruction to increase the number of children educated in kindergartens” is linked to the call for submitting the application for the subvention for “opening a kindergarten in the poor villages with positive demographic development” (as a Priority 7 in the first Action Plan Education and Employment of the Competitiveness Strategy of the SR until the year 2010 (July 13 2005⁶⁷). The promising is also the program of the (Roma) teacher’s assistant as a regular profession in schools (though with several years delay comparing to the Czech Republic).

⁶⁶ The project „Integration of Roma children into regular schools“ run by the National Institute for Education has revealed that parents themselves sometime insist on placing their child into a special school. They have several reason for that: they are themselves special school graduates; they already have their older children there and want them to help with a younger child going to school; they like the partnership approach of school to children; a school is attended by many other Roma children and their child will have many friends there; children have good results in special school easily and are not forced to work hard. They also say that their children will not manage to get a job even they attend a “normal” school and that is why there is no reason to demand too much form a child. The greatest problem is seen, however, not in parents’ opinions but in the children’s irregular school attendance and the selection of children for so called transitive classes.

National Report. 2005, p. 17), also in: <http://www.rozhlady.pedagog.sk/cisla/pr3-2005.pdf>

⁶⁷ The alliance of establishing the kindergartens with the development of competitiveness is actually the rarity.

*Program of Teacher's Assistant*⁶⁸

In all three regions monitored by the Plenipotentiary for Roma communities Office, the Roma (especially the Roma women) have great interest in starting the work of a teacher's assistant and/or to study the education program Teacher's Assistant. As the Plenipotentiary Office Report states, many teacher's assistants had to accept part-time jobs instead previous full-time jobs (shortened time) due to various reasons, for instance, because of taking on the assistants for disabled children⁶⁹. The striking difficulty of the program was that getting this position was not preconditioned by having knowledge of the Roma language. Therefore, the meaning of this program sometimes vanishes in practice.

It is necessary to add that setting up the teacher's assistant position does not depend on reaching some number of pupils with the health disability in class but on the severity of a pupil's disability. In the case of socially disadvantaged children, the recommended number of pupils is 20 per 1 teacher's assistant. This ratio is not very facilitating if we take in regard that (because of the low birth rate) the bottom line for opening/setting up a class is 17 pupils now.

2.5 Housing and Related Issues

The lack of affordable housing is the problem facing the wide groups of younger people. The census 2001 revealed a significantly increased proportion of the flats inhabited by two or more households (Table No. 2). Young generation does not have resources to live independently from their parents. Though the spatial quality of housing did not worsen, meeting the housing needs of citizens living on the benefit is the painful and multilateral problem. Since 1989, the housing costs increased several times and have become unbearable for the job-less households. During the 1990s, no counselling was provided for the people who had problems with their rent payments.

Due to the increasing of rent indebtedness, many jobless Roma families left their town flats and returned to the village settlements where housing costs were minimal. This move resulted in the increased number of overcrowded Roma settlements.

Since the changes in the social benefit system (cancelling of the separate housing benefit and its transforming into the specially preconditioned benefit of material need benefit takers) in 2004, the problems with the rent payment have strengthened. Only about one third of the material benefit takers meets the eligibility criteria (regular rent payments, status of an apartment/home owner or tenant) for housing benefit. The UNDP Survey of the Roma Households shows that if 59.1% of the households in the sample under study take material need benefit and 65.8% of the households take activation benefit; only 15.8% of them take housing benefit. That means that the housing-benefit taking is under the

⁶⁸ SMERNICA MŠMV SR č. 19/2006-R June 15. 2006, does not speak about a Roma pupil but about (§2 c) a pupil with language and social barriers. Such a pupil is defined as a pupil from socially disadvantaged environment that 1) is in material need and lives in the segregated settlements, 2) lives in unsound household environment, including hygienic conditions and high number of household members per one dwelling and there is a lack of opportunity for doing his homework at home, 3) who does not speak the language of instruction, 4) is in material need and did not attend kindergarten and 5) is in material need and his parents have not finished 9 classes of compulsory education. www.minedu.sk/RP/2006/2006_19_R.doc

⁶⁹ According to the SMERNICA MŠMV SR č. 19/2006, the teacher's assistants to disabled and socially and language disadvantaged pupils are planned from the bottom on two separate lists (that are regional, however, the Ministry takes both types of lists in budgetary consideration as one category and according to „budgetary facilities” and the ranking of a teacher's assistant on the salary scale will set up the direction on personal costs per one pupil. Central government budgetary capacities are then decisive in setting down the number of teacher's assistants in the particular regions.

national average among the Roma households. If in 2005 35% of the material need' benefit takers take also housing benefit, in the Roma households under study, housing benefit was taken only by 26% of the material need benefit takers. (Výskum... 2005: 50).

It is necessary to add that the jobless households could not avoid debts connected to their rent payments without housing benefit taking. The basic material need benefit, though added by the activation benefit would suffice to cover rent payments only in the case of stopping eating. The benefit has inbuilt insolvency in itself, so to say. That means that the basic cash material need' benefit without the housing benefit does not provide for fundamental living conditions of the people in need.

Table No. 2 Average characteristics of housing of households by the SR Census and the UNDP Survey

Indicator	Census of the SR					The UNDP Roma Households Survey 2005			
	1960	1970	1980	1991	2001	Segregated settlement households	Separated settlement households	Mixed community households	All Roma households
Overall average area of the flat in m2	44.0	64.2	71.0	72.8	83.9	45.1	60.2	67.2	57.5
Number of rooms per one flat	2.7	2.2	2.6	2.9	3.2	2.6	2.6	3.3	2.9
Number of inhabitants per one room	2.5	1.8	1.4	1.1	1.0	2.2	2.0	1.5	1.8
Dwelling area per one inhabitant in m2	7.9	10.2	12.8	14.6	17.5	7.9	11.5	13.9	11.5
Proportion of flats with two and more census households	18.4	15.1	15.1	11.8	18.8	--	--	--	--

c) Statistical Office of the SR, UNDP 2006 + own calculation

The thorniest form of housing problems is in the Roma segregated settlements. Not only the Roma dwellings but also the overall environment and infrastructure of the settlements are in very bad condition (see Table No. 3). According to the UNDP Survey of Roma households, even 45.2% of all Roma households have the main source of water outside their dwelling. Approximately 17% of the respondents have to go more than 50 metres to get access to water. (Výskum 2006: 61) the qualitative level of dwelling in the Roma settlements is in most of the cases deeply under the standard level of housing of the majority. Most of dwellings in the Roma settlements do not meet technical and hygienic standards. As a custom, the majority of apartments are resided by several families.

Table No. 3 Proportion of dwellings in the Roma settlements that are connected to the engineering networks:

Duct	Sewerage	Gas	Electricity (including undocumented users)	Driveway with tarmacadam surface
39%	13%	15%	89%	80%

© Sociographic Mapping of Roma settlements 2003

The Slovakian Roma settlements are ill-famed long enough to stimulate the preparation of policy conceptions and proposals. The assessment of the NAP/inclusion 2004-2006 (Annex 2.2 of the NRSSPSI) describes the most important of them such as the program of the Ministry of Construction and regional Development (M-CRD) *Proposal of the support of the construction of lower-standard municipal tenancy apartments designed for citizens in material need and the construction of technical infrastructure in the Roma settlements* (2001) and *Long-term Conception of housing for marginalized groups of citizens and the model of its financing* (Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 63/2005).

The Resolution of the Government No 63/2005 charged the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development to secure a) the project documentation for the affordable residential housing in blocks of flats that could be used as prototype model for construction of houses in the settlements of socially excluded communities; b) the financial resources for settling the housing needs of the inhabitants of socially excluded communities in the framework of the approved construction development program for the given year, and (c) proposal of the way of using the structural funds of the EU for co-financing the activities connected to the housing development of the marginalized groups of inhabitants in cooperation with several ministries (finance, economy, agriculture, labour, social affairs and family, environment) and with the Deputy prime Minister for human rights and minorities during the preparatory work on the National Strategic Reference Framework 2007 – 2013.

The long-term concept of housing of the marginalized groups and the model of its financing was considered as an example of good practice of anti-racism and anti-discrimination proceeding in housing in 2005 (National Report 2005). However, it is necessary to monitor the implementation of this conception because the present housing programs might strengthen the segregation of the Roma population. Construction of communal apartments of the lower standard intended for the citizens in material need (Resolution of the Government No. 1154/2001) is covered from 80% by the state subvention and remaining 20% can be covered by non-financial investment, for instance by labour. According to the expert, majority of the flats built in the framework of this program is located in spatially segregated areas or directly in the segregated settlement. Living conditions of some Roma have been improved, but their segregated position has been continuing⁷⁰.

In my opinion, the main objections that have to be addressed to these programs, including the projects of the local infrastructure, are first their under-financing, and then the sluggish way of proceeding and monitoring.

For instance, referring to the fundamental *Comprehensive Development Program for Roma Settlements* (2003), the basic idea is to combine several resources and activities to get the synergetic effect. The Ministry of LSAF offered (in compliance with the Decree No 37/2004-II/1) financial resources for establishing of the centres of personal hygiene and laundry in two towns and eight villages in 2004. The supported villages and towns are located in the regions with the highest concentration of the segregated Roma settlements. In 2004 the finance was in overall amount of SKK 12 millions, hardly SKK 1.2 million per one hygienic centre. In 2005 another 8 villages were supported. The MLSAF contributed to the establishment of hygienic centres and laundries in (very) poor settlements (high unemployment, high proportion of old people). The municipalities were put in charge of their operation. At the turn of 2005/2006 the Ministry made “the first preliminary monitoring and assessment of the use of the *seven* hygienic centres that had already been working”. The monitoring showed that “the operation of the centres in four villages is on a good way. In one village, the centre is

⁷⁰ Mušinka argues that several programs that are targeted to the Roma with the aim to promote their social inclusion are the segregation practices by their side effects and isolate the Roma from the majority. He examines the Roma community centres, teacher's assistants and already mentioned housing. (Mušinka 2006: 253-26)

insufficiently “or not at all” used by the inhabitants of the segregated settlement and in two villages the overall using of the centre is low. “(Ibid)

The evaluation does not try to explain the insufficient using of the centres and it is limited to comments that “the villages and settlement need the time for accommodating to the centre”. The report does not mention the costs of the centres’ operation and the costs for using it. The municipalities received financial resources only for establishing of the centres but they got nothing to cover the costs of operation (water supply, electricity, heating, charring and maintenance). In small municipalities costs of operation stand for a high item in a municipality’s budget (or considerably high to serve for only one “problem” group). Therefore, they are forced to charge using of the hygienic centre. According to my information, the charge is SKK 20 per person to have a shower and SKK 50 per person to wash. Such a charge means that the overall costs for the usage of a family with five members that visits the centre twice a week to have a shower and once a week to wash will be SKK 1 thousand a month, which is more than 25% of the material need benefit for this category of household (SKK 3,890)⁷¹. This charging seems to put the Roma off from using hygienic centres built to improve their living conditions.

2.6 Health Care

The life expectancy of the Roma population is far more unfavourable than that of the majority. The life expectancy of the population of the Slovak Republic is 69.3 years for males and 77.6 for females. The most recent estimates of the life expectancy among the Roma population of the SR are 62.4 years for males and 72.1 years for females⁷². Children are a particularly risk group. The Roma infant mortality is roughly twice as high as the Slovakian average.

Not all Roma children have sufficient access to health care. The Monitoring of compulsory vaccination of children carried out approximately on August 30 2005⁷³ showed that 79 health districts (that is 6.2% of 1,278 paediatric districts) did not reach the 90% level of vaccination. In the Prešov region 27 paediatric districts did not reach the 90% level of vaccination. Paediatricians tackled the situation by vaccinating directly in the Roma settlements in cooperation with the municipality. In the Košice region 21 districts did not reach the 90% level of vaccination. The part of the problem was caused by “the Roma’s frequent migration.” (Monitoring 2005 p. 2) The Monitoring of the vaccination informs that in some cases the insufficient vaccination was the result of an under-financed local hospital and health centres. For instance, the department of clinical microbiology in Spišská Nová Ves (the Prešov region) did not investigate HBsAg continuously due to economic reasons. On the other hand, the vaccination of 7,560 persons, of them 7,500 children, against the virus hepatitis A “in the localities with the low hygienic standards” was done in 2005 thanks to the humanitarian gift of 10,000 dozes of vaccines the Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic.

The deterioration of parents’ care for their children’s health, insufficient hygiene (shortage of hot water), not buying the prescription medicine from a pharmacy (lack of finances for paying for the recipes could be the reason), not giving vitamin D to newborn children, the lack of resources for the travelling costs to the surgery seems to be the reason for a lower level of vaccination. “Transfer of the responsibility from the health care institutions to parents to secure the vaccination makes problems mainly for the families with a lower living standard that are unable – socially and economically – to secure the appropriate health care for their children” (Správa. 2006: 77)

⁷¹ http://www.employment.gov.sk/DIS/davky_hmotnej_nudzi/9_dhn_vyska.htm

⁷² The Institute of Preventive and Clinical Medicine Bratislava 2000

⁷³ The more recent data are from Monitoring of Compulsory Vaccination carried out approximately on August 30, 2005

In November 2004, 40 health assistants began their training, which was the part of the pilot project on the improvement of the access of the Roma to health care approved in 2003.

According to the Slovakia Report on human rights practices⁷⁴ in 2005, unlike in the previous years, there were no reports of coerced or forced sterilization of the Roma women. During the year, the provisions of a 2004 law went into effect, requiring that sterilizations be performed only at the request of the patient and only after 30 days had passed since the initial request. The law was prompted by the NGO charges in previous years that doctors performed coerced or forced sterilization on Roma women.

2.6.1 Access to legal services

Improvement of the access of people in need to legal services has been made thanks to the start of the functioning of the Centre of Legal Aid. The Centre offers free legal aid to people with a low income (less than 1.4 multiple of minimum subsistence) in three regional centres. The Centre was established by the Act No. 327/2005 Coll. on Provision of Legal Aid for People in Material Need and it is a state budgetary organization connected to the budgetary chapter of the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic. The Centre covers provision of legal aid for persons whose financial situation does not allow them to pay for the legal services with the aim to secure effective access to justice. However, the preliminary consultation is paid: the fee is SKK 150. Besides this, the low number of offices and their location in a region capital do not make the legal services accessible to the Roma from the segregated settlements.

The Office of the Public Defender of Rights⁷⁵ is one of the few (if not the only one) institutions that issue all materials and forms also in the Roma language. However, it is not clear how these forms could be distributed to the Roma settlements.

2.6.2 Access to Culture

The Roma minority, similarly to the other minorities, can claim for the support of periodical and non-periodical publication in the Roma language. According to the Second Report, in 2003, the Ministry of Culture supported the publication of periodical and non-periodical press of national minorities with the sum of SKK 35,760 thousand. Of this sum, publishing companies of the Hungarian minority received the sum of SKK 25,411 thousand. The assistance provided by the Ministry to Roma periodicals totalled SKK 2,100 thousand in 2003. The Ministry supports regularly many other Roma cultural activities, music and theatre included. Since 2006, there is the regular weekly program on the public broadcasting television in the Roma language.

2.7 Roma women

According to Magdolénová, the traditional gender division of labour is still frequent in the Roma families. The role of women is connected with child-bearing and care-providing. Young girls are prepared for this role from an early age. In the segregated communities, a woman is driving force in the family and an informal leader who decides on the finances, the choice of partners for children, and their education (Magdolénová 2006: 217). Such observations suggest that the mobilisation of the Roma communities should start from the mobilisation of the Roma women.

⁷⁴ <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61674.htm>

⁷⁵ www.vop.gov.sk

Education promotes position of women in the Roma communities. After the completion of elementary school, the Roma women rarely continue their education and getting trained in profession. Instead, they quickly enter relationship and soon, often as teenagers, happen to become mothers. In short, they belong to a group of under-qualified unemployed who could enter the labour market, but with big difficulties. In many cases traditions such as a husband not allowing his wife to work play a considerable role (ibid: 218). These women are therefore on social benefits without an opportunity to get out of the dependence.

According to A. Botošová, the Roma parents still make the decisions for their older or adult children. Strong family subordination and a high degree of segregation are decisive for maintaining archaic cultural models in the community, and thus preserving its isolation⁷⁶.

In spite of the tradition, poverty and isolation, new openings for the Roma women appeared in 2003 in the scope of the Assistant Roma Teachers project. In this project, the women with secondary school education were trained to work in schools on the condition that they complete a full secondary school education by the year 2010. However, because of the legislative change and the termination of funding, some dozens of the Roma women lost their jobs after one year of work. Thanks to the new programs launched in the framework of the Social Development Fund (community field work, community field worker assistant), some of them underwent new training and they have now been working in positions of community social workers, assistants to community workers, or field social workers in the disadvantaged areas populated by the Roma communities.

The willingness of the local community governments to cooperate with the Social Development Fund is the precondition for creating such working places. The next openings for the Roma women originate within the scope of the Ministry of Health's project improving the Access of the Roma to Healthcare. Since the year 2006, the Roma women can work as field assistants to doctors. All of these work opportunities have been created from the ESF resources with the state co-financing.

The Roma women have been getting work experience in the third sector, where they have been engaged in the many small projects aimed at improving of the living conditions and educating of the Roma children. This work experience is, however, limited by the length of the projects that usually last for only few months.

Possibly because of the massive unemployment among both Roma males and females, the Roma women unemployment and job opportunities are not focused on separately. Magdolénová reproaches that though the Slovak Republic has signed the Program of the Decade of Roma Inclusion and has developed the appropriate Action Plan; it has not comprised a specific reference to the Roma women and does not lay out any specific goals for improving their living conditions or their position on the labour market.

2.8. Best practices and innovative practices and strategies

The already mentioned *Comprehensive Development Program for Roma Settlements* (2003) built upon *The Strategy of the Government of the Slovak Republic for solving the problems of Roma national minority* (1999) is considered to be the viable program for the Roma communities. The program is based on the „single case“ strategy and has replaced former one-dimensional flat policies that backed only the one „key“ factor of the improvement of the Roma condition. It attempts a comprehensive revitalisation of the conditions of a selected settlement. Its proceeding will be gradual, case-by- case,

⁷⁶ Economic aspects of the conditions of Roma Women, BIVS Project No IP/C/FEMM/2005-09, p.138

preferring comprehensiveness of a change as the warrant of its sustainability to rapid but short-term improvement in one dimension of the Roma life. However, in spite of the seven year period since passing of the Strategy and the three year period since the Comprehensive Program was passed by the Government, it is still necessary to speak about it in the future tense. Existing projects covered by the Program or referring to it are far from being comprehensive. Under-funded programs of the construction of the hygienic and laundry centres in poor neighbourhoods of the jobless households that cannot afford this service, serve as a rather bad practice example.

Good message is that the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities, MLSAF, MCRD, and the other ministries managed to agree on the common action: tackling the problems of the marginalized Roma communities has been set as the horizontal objective, and is covered by various operational priorities of OP Employment and social inclusion in the framework of the programming period 2007 - 2013. For example, schools subsidies program (including the school meals program, which assists subsistence, a simple preservation) has been covered - with unintentional irony - by the priority Human Resources Development. Possibly, the next reports will bring about much better practice examples and innovative practices than I have reported here thanks to the EU funds drawing.