



Monitoring report on housing policies and Roma inclusion post-employment

HOPE

Promoting Non-discrimination in Social Housing and Post-employment for Roma



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Contents

Acknowledgments	5
1. Introduction	6
2. Roma inclusion post-employment: overview and summary	7
3. Project intervention within Roma inclusion post-employment component ..	9
3.1 First assessment: Results of the questionnaires round applied in companies ...	9
Attitudes considering the workplace	11
Organisational commitment	12
Stress at workplace	14
Autonomy at workplace	15
Attitude with work, time off, independence (work protestant ethics).....	16
Job active searching	17
Managers and HR Specialists Attitudes	18
3.2 Intervention within the partner companies	22
3.3 Assessment after intervention: The results of the second round of	
questionnaires	27
3.4 Challenges and limitations	32
Coronavirus pandemic	32
Limitations:	34
3.5 Summary of main findings	34
3.6 Conclusions and Recommendations	36
4. Housing.....	42
4.1 Methodology	42
4.2 General assessment of the housing situation in the localities	43
4.3 Assessing priority criteria for accessing social housing	45
Eligibility criteria	45
Priority criteria	48
Positive examples in criteria listing	53
4.4 Analysis of the training workshops with experts from local public authorities	54
Rural-Urban differences	54
Difficulties of formalising informal housing	57
The need for social housing	58
Housing Discrimination	58
Solutions brought by the participants	60
Institutional relations regarding social housing access regulation	61

4.5 Non-governmental organisations training workshops assessment	62
Property deeds issue	63
Evictions or eviction risk resulting from development projects	64
Social Housing Access criteria	65
Deterioration and poor maintenance of social housing	66
Wages versus living costs	66
Authorities' disregard or ill-will	67
Solutions	68
Land for young people or attribution of empty buildings.....	70
4.6 Recommendations on the improvement of the national and local legal frame- work	70
Annex - LPA questionnaire table.....	73

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1.

Introduction

This monitoring report is the outcome of the partnership, activities and results of HOPE project – Promoting non-discrimination in social housing and post-employment for Roma, implemented by the Resource Center for Roma Communities Foundation and HEKS/EPER Romania Foundation.

The project was implemented during September 2019 – April 2021 and financed by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme 2014-2020.

The project included two components, employment and housing, in view of supporting Roma at their workplace, facilitating efforts to better inform Roma of their rights and for accessing social housing, promoting anti-discrimination legislation and social inclusion policies both in social housing and at the workplace.

Activities specific to these two components were carried out within the project, including training programmes, counselling and consulting, and project results value the experiences of the organizations in the field, but also of the experts in the two areas of the project, materialised in a few guides useful for local public authorities, employers-companies, NGOs from the same fields of activity.

The project results contribute to presenting the situation of Roma communities, from housing and employment perspectives, being relevant and useful both for local approach, providing descriptions and detailing some local processes, and for a wider approach at national level, providing perspectives of some tendencies in the two approached matters, both at regional or micro-regional level.

The project offered a favourable framework to value the involved experts' knowledge and abilities, but also of the partner institutions / organisations, for the drawn up monitoring report to be a useful and important resource in the process of making national and local public policies in the two matters of interest, in defining financing programmes and establishing priorities of intervention.

2.

Roma inclusion post-employment: overview and summary

The forecasts for the coming years show that the workforce will be increasingly diversified in terms of gender, ethnicity, age, etc., mainly due to the integration measures of Roma people and people with disabilities, aging population, the increase of retirement age, measures to diminish the level of segregation, from the gender perspective, as well as in terms of fields of activity and professions¹.

In this context, companies must develop policies that help them integrate and benefit from this diversified workforce, getting performance. Diversity refers to all aspects in which employees differ from each other. These include a number of visible personal characteristics such as gender, age, ethnicity and also less visible personal characteristics such as skills, needs, work style².

A survey conducted by Deloitte indicates that companies supporting diversity and inclusion in all aspects of their business have a better performance than their competitors. Deloitte survey, [“Unleashing the power of inclusion”](#), revealed that the number of executives considering inclusion a priority increased by 32% from 2014 up to 2017. The results of the study relate inclusion as a critical component of the organisational culture, with a major impact on the retention rate within companies³.

The importance of post-employment inclusion of Roma and other vulnerable groups emerged as a priority based on direct experience in the field of Roma employment, from previous projects. These experiences indicate a lack of post-employment inclusion measures for vulnerable employees leading to company leaving by many employees, shortly after successful mediation for a workplace.

In order to address this issue, as more data was needed about the dynamics of relationships between employees and management within companies, this project started with a survey involving 10 companies/units. Two questionnaires were applied in companies from Bihor and Cluj Counties, gathering data by interviewing directly at job two target groups: middle management employees and human resources experts on one hand, and employees (Roma and non-Roma), on the other hand. The results of this first survey drawn up by

1 *Managementul diversitatii in organizatii. Beneficii pentru angajati si companii. Masuri de implementare*, Centrul Parteneriat pentru Egalitate, 2007, page 4

2 *Ibidem*, pag. 4-7

3 *Unleashing the power of inclusion*, Deloitte, 2017

Adrian Hatos based on the questionnaires were the basis for developing a training program for middle management employees and human resources experts in the companies, as well as applied procedures and documents fostering the inclusion of vulnerable employees, based on the drafted guide “Guide on post-employment Roma inclusion” (Căprar Elena, Kiss Julien-Ferencz, August 2020). A second survey conducted in December 2020 assessed the intervention and the changes that happened in the participating companies between the first and the second survey..

The findings of the first phase of data collection indicate that the most Roma employees interviewed have a high continuance commitment to the workplace, but a lower affective commitment than employees of other ethnic groups, meaning that they stay in the job because they estimate that they would not get the same benefits elsewhere rather than because of the content of the work. This is probably related to limited employment opportunities and a lower level of education. At the same time, interviews with middle management and human resource experts in the companies showed that they mainly consider monetary incentives as the solution for workers’ retention and satisfaction, while workers appreciate factors such as flexible work schedules, management’s respect and appreciation and help from the company when in need. It also became clear that very few companies actively try to increase the intrinsic motivation, inclusion in teams and long-term perspectives of vulnerable employees. Discrimination was rated relatively low by both employees and middle management. However, a more in depth analysis of the answers pointed to the existence of common stereotypes towards Roma people among middle management and HR experts.

The developed guide and training program for middle management and HR persons took up these issues and adapted them to the individual needs of each company on the basis of their survey results. Training modules included non-financial motivation, communication, work and time organisation, coaching, sustained for HR and middle management. Moreover, the project supported the companies to introduce procedures and documents contributing to Roma and other vulnerable employees’ inclusion, e.g. mentor induction procedure, recruitment and induction processes, stay interview, etc.

The feedback of the training participants showed that the vast majority regards the trainings as useful for their work and well applicable in practice.

When interpreting the results of the second round of data collection in December 2020, it needs to be taken into account that the situation at the workplace in many companies has dramatically changed due to the Covid pandemic and the sanitary measures. It is no surprise that workplace satisfaction has decreased under these circumstances. At the same time, the findings indicate that discrimination at the job, which had low incidence already in the first survey, according to employees’ responses, got lower again after intervention, and that perception of middle management and HR experts regarding lowering personnel fluctuation changed by decreasing the percentages of financial aspects and valuation of the non-financial ones or by even outlining the fact they no longer had this problem.

3.

Project intervention within Roma inclusion post-employment component

The phases of the project within the component of Roma inclusion at workplace were as follows:

1. The first assessment by means of questionnaires applied in companies from Bihor and Cluj counties. Data gathering was achieved by direct interviewing at job in two target groups: middle management employees and human resources experts on one hand, and employees (Roma and non-Roma), on the other hand. The final sample comprised 216 employees, respectively 74 middle management employees and human resources experts from 10 companies/units from Bihor and Cluj Counties. The results were revealed in the first report: “Operating Personnel Labour, Training, Attitude and Motivation in Companies from North-Western Romania. Report on the personnel retention rate, the possible reasons for a low retention rate of Roma employees, the interactions between co-workers and with management inside the companies” (Adrian Hatos, March 2020). The data in this report were the basis of intervention planning within the cooperating companies.
2. Intervention: drawing up a “Guide on post-employment Roma inclusion” (Căprar Elena, Kiss Julien-Ferencz, August 2020), a training programme for middle management employees and human resources experts in the companies, based on the drafted guide and support/assistance activities granted to companies in implementing measures of the guide;
3. Subsequent assessment of intervention and comparing the results of main characteristics measuring, before and after intervention. In this second phase, 213 employees’ surveys were filled in, respectively 71 middle management employees and human resources experts’ surveys. The results were presented in the updated report: “North-Western Romania Operating Personnel Labour, Training, Attitude and Motivation Variations as of February 2020 – December 2020. Updated report on the personnel retention rate, the possible reasons for a low retention rate of Roma employees, the interactions between co-workers and with management inside the companies” (Adrian Hatos, February 2021).

3.1 First assessment: Results of the questionnaires round applied in companies

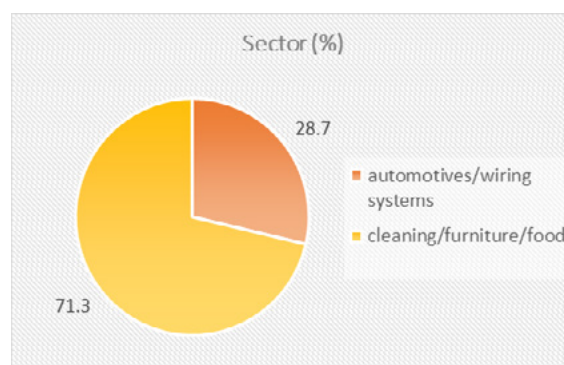
Companies of two counties, Bihor and Cluj, participated to this project running business in: automotive, furniture, plastic items, sportive equipment parts manufacturing, sanitation,

restaurants and food delivery. Roma, Romanian and Hungarian ethnics are employed in these companies. Roma employees were found also at operating level, as workers, and as executives, as team leaders.

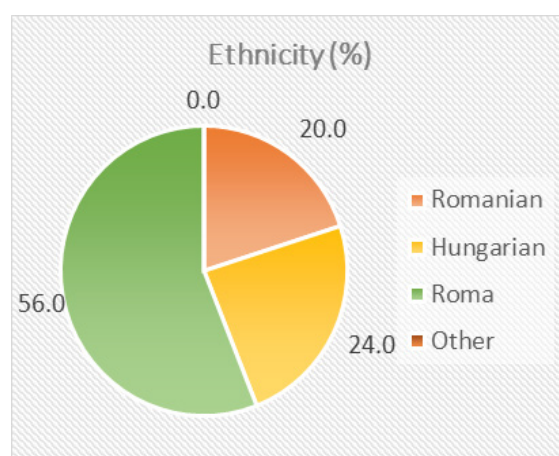
Employees' questionnaire was dimensioned as bellow:

- a) Attitudes towards the workplace
- b) Satisfaction with the workplace
- c) Organisational commitment
- d) Stress at workplace
- e) Work protestant ethics (independence, time off and hard work appreciation)
- f) Autonomy at the workplace
- g) Active search of another job.

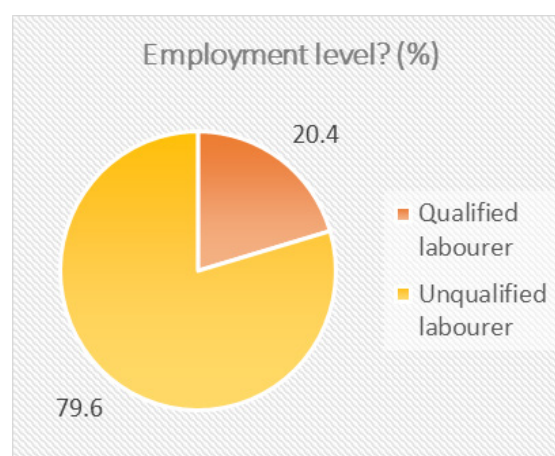
The employees in the survey were unskilled workers (79.6%), self-identified as Roma (56%), aged between 20-49 years old (79%), 48% of them educated up maximum year 8. Almost a third of the subjects were employed in the 4 companies in wiring business in companies sample and the rest of over 71% are employed in sanitation companies, public food or furniture manufacturing business. (Adrian Hatos, Report of March 2020)



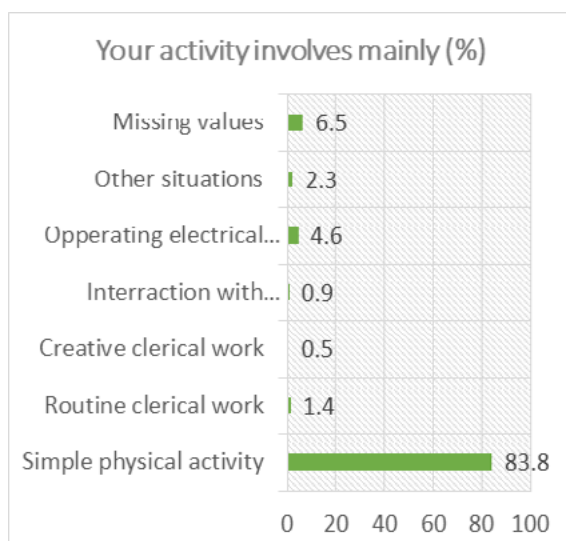
1. Fig. – companies'sector



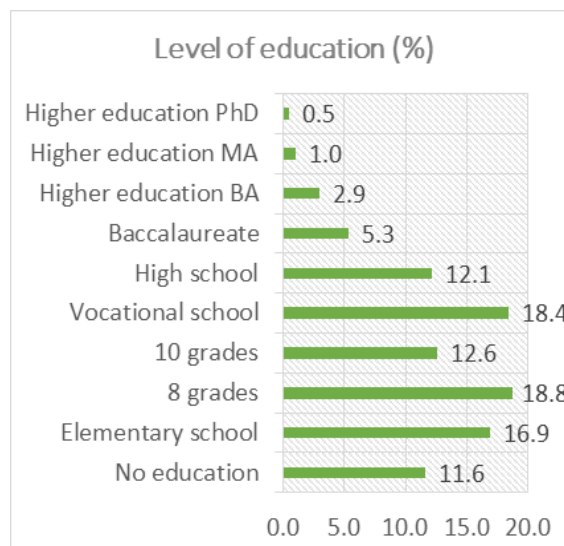
2. Fig. Report 1 – ethnicity



3. Fig. Report 1 – employment level



4. Fig. – type of activity



5. Fig. Level of education

Attitudes considering the workplace

In compliance with the first report, the great majority of the employees had favourable opinions about the job. The percentage of those with negative explicit opinions is approximately 10%.

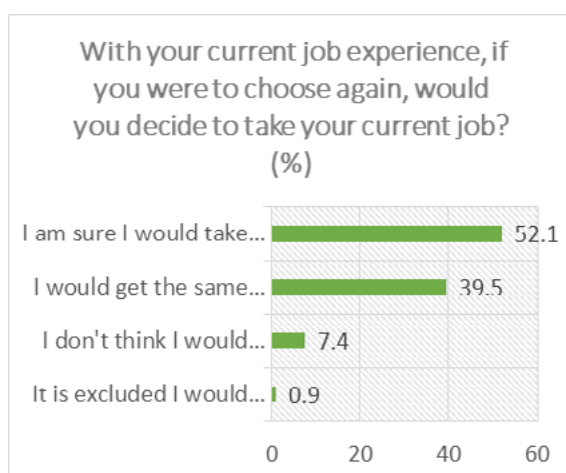
The most important aspects in a workplace quality assessment are:

- The possibility of some days off for solving some family problems
- Respect coming from management
- Paid leaves
- Meal tickets apart the salary
- Help from the company in difficult situations.

On contrary, are seen as less important:

- The flexible programme
- Career advancement
- Lunch breaks

No important differences were recorded as regarding workplace general assessment from ethnicity or type of activity point of view.



6. Fig. Attitude considering the workplace

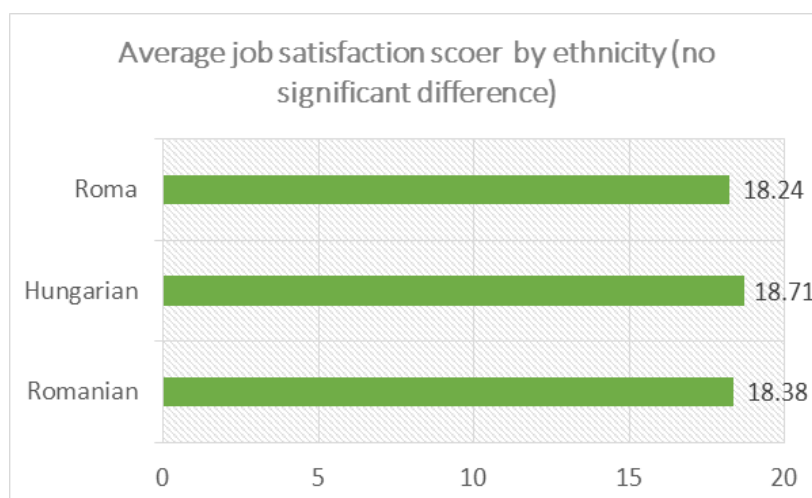


1. Fig. Scale of satisfaction with the workplace

Employees' level of satisfaction with the workplace was assessed according to following dimensions:

- a) Relation with co-workers
- b) Co-workers in general
- c) The workplace in general
- d) The work carried out at the workplace
- e) The method of being paid for the work performed
- f) Relations with line managers
- g) Opportunities to advance (Adrian Hatos, Report March 2020)

Following factoring analysis conducted, no important differences were registered at average level of participants' satisfaction depending on their ethnicity.



8. Fig. Average satisfaction per ethnicity

Organisational commitment

The study also included **the organisational commitment** at workplace dimension, as to establish if it may be a factor with impact on the level of personnel retention and growth, especially for persons in vulnerable environments. The organisational commitment represents the employee-workplace connection.

The affective organisational commitment – it is an affective orientation the employee has with the company. This type of employees works in the company due to feeling comfortable at the workplace and wanting it. They adopt company's ideas and purposes as their own.

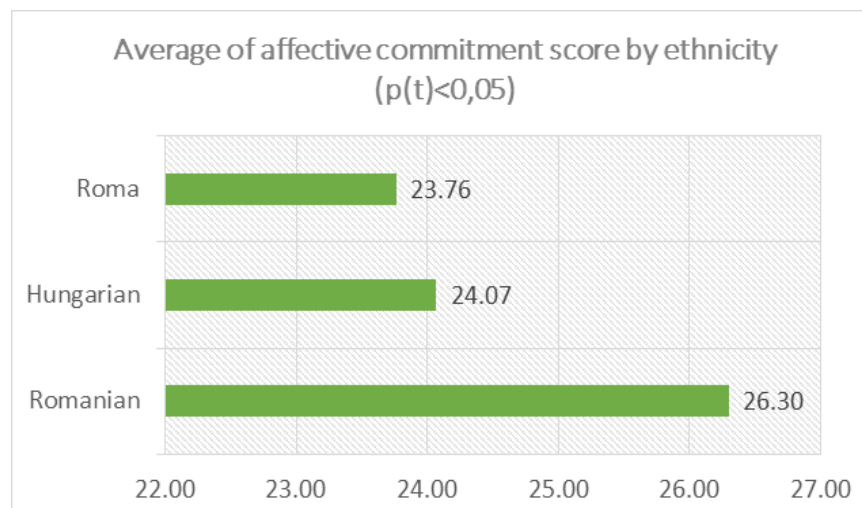
The continuance / constant organisational commitment – the employees are keeping their jobs due to benefits the company offers them and they feel attracted to; it is about a group of recognised, company fulfilled interests. The employees keep their jobs within the entity as they are not sure the next employer offers them the same benefits. This type of commitment is based on costs / benefits.

Normative organisational commitment – it is understood by means of social norms-based commitment. The employee has a loyalty feeling about the organisation based on understanding the individual obligation in relation with the organisation, according to personal

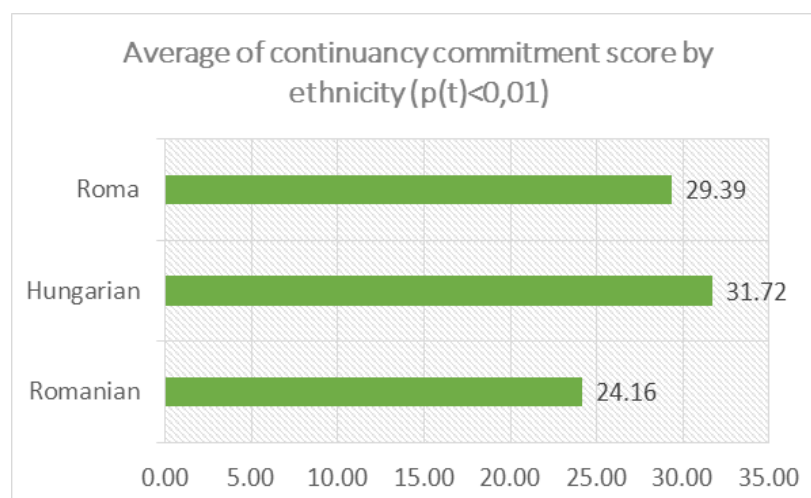
values set. (*Organizational commitment, relationship commitment and their association with attachment style and locus of control*, Brian McMahon, Georgia Institute of Technology, May 2007)

The results obtained within the project reveal that Roma employees had a low affective commitment, meaning that they are not committed with the workplace. In exchange, Roma had a continuance commitment as concerning benefits from the company which is better than Romanians'. Roma continuance commitment may be explained as they have a very low employment options on labour market, consequently they are not willing to leave their current job. The normative commitment, adhesion to norms, conventions, procedures has similar values in Roma and Romanians cases, as significantly higher than Hungarians'.

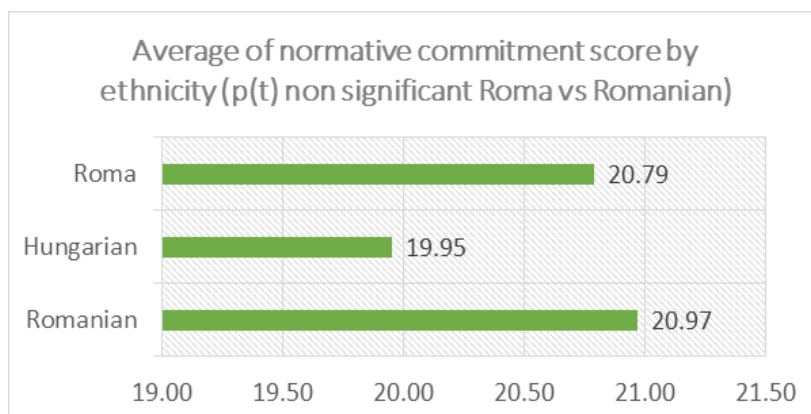
According the graphic of figure 9, Roma have the lowest affective commitment, and the intervention in companies concerned also increasing this type of commitment for Roma employees. Considering the results, we may subsequently present which were the methods and interventions for this commitment enhancement, the level of retention and implicitly Roma employees' inclusion at workplaces.



9. Fig – average affective commitment on ethnicity



10. Fig – average continuance commitment per ethnicity



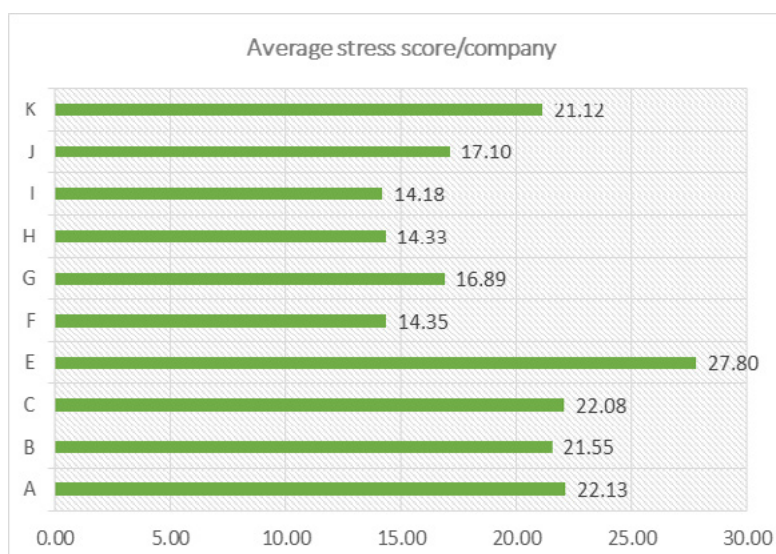
11. Fig – normative average commitment on ethnicity

Stress at workplace

Stress at workplace was another analysed factor, the “general stress” scale being made of the following items:

- I do not have enough time to finish all I have to do at my job.
- My work volume is too much for my job.
- I do not have enough space to run my work
- I have enough support as to do my work.
- I have difficulties in obtaining the resources I need to do my work.
- There are co-workers who are badly treated by supervisors than the others due to ethnicity
- There are co-workers who are badly treated by colleagues than the others due to ethnicity
- At my job are groups/cliques of same ethnic people
- I am often worried about children or other family members left at home while I am at work
- I have to leave very early from home to arrive on time at my job (Adrian Hatos, Report March 2020)

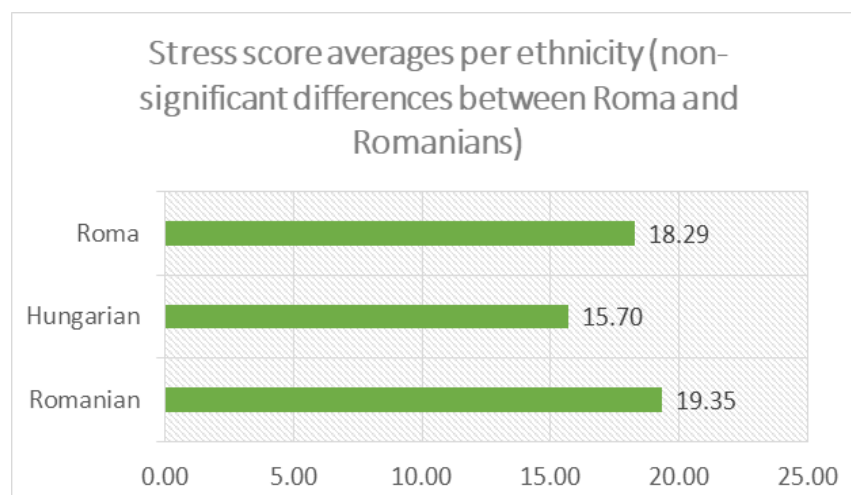
No significant differences were registered in the way the employee feel stress at the workplace depending on ethnicity. Roma employees are stressed at the workplace as comparing with the Hungarians, but less stressed than Romanians.



12. Fig. Stress level /company

Significant differences were in stress level felt by employees depending on the industry. As for example, in our project, the employees in company E (furniture manufacturing) felt greater stress as in other fields of activity.

During the interviews with the employees, many said they appreciate their current job as the work is not hard, the conditions are good and the responsibilities are not significant. Many of them emphasized that their decision to remain in the company is due to the low stress level and that they prefer to stay under these conditions having lower wages than leaving to a more stressing working environment if the wage difference is not significant. Only if the salary is much higher, they would rather change the job. (*Guide on post-employment Roma inclusion*)



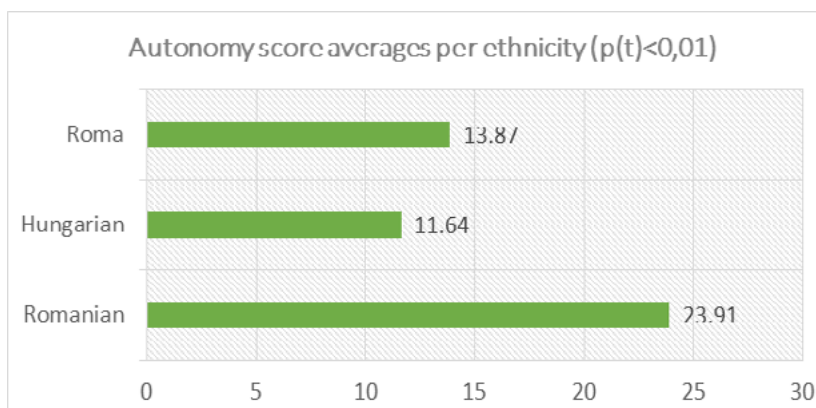
13. Fig stress level on ethnicity

Autonomy at workplace

Autonomy at workplace is usually connected to the possibilities of making critical decisions concerning working process, stimulating self-respect and having positive impact upon the employees.

The Romanian employees feel a greater autonomy at their job than the Roma and Hungarian minorities.

This is partially due to the standard-automatic processes which they have to carry out within the companies of our survey, but Roma feel a lower level of autonomy also due to the internalisation of their low status (due to low education and literacy) in relation with decisions. (*Guide on post-employment Roma inclusion*)



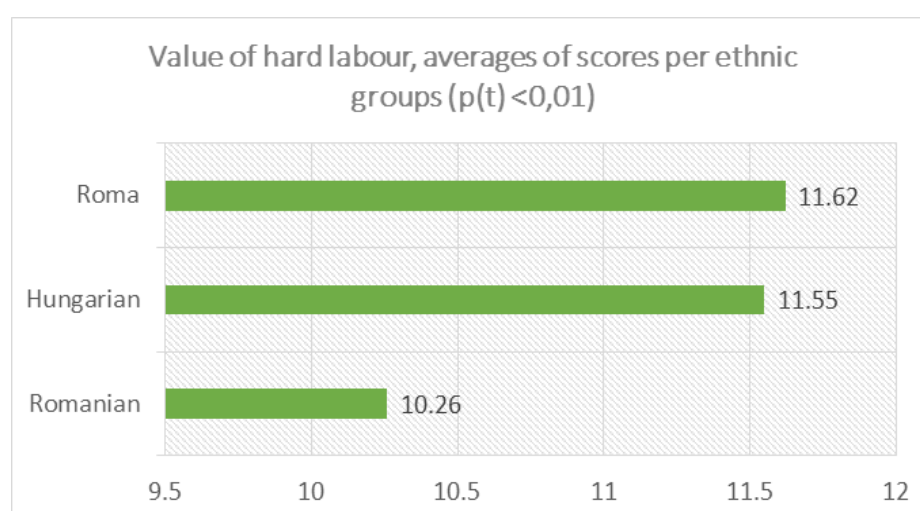
14. Fig. Average scores of autonomy per ethnicity

Attitude with work, time off, independence (work protestant ethics)

As considering independence at job, a lower level is usually correlated with neutral attitudes with entrepreneurship and most probably liking to be employed. Higher level of independence indicates more probably a desire for more decision and action liberty.

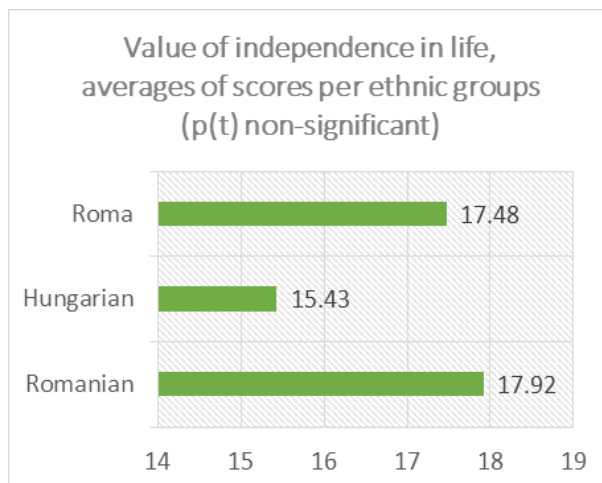
As considering time off appreciation to the detriment of work, the score is little above average, meaning that, even if the employees are likely to want more time off, are also willing enough to invest more time in work as to obtain material benefits. Scores mean for time off assessing does not vary significantly with ethnicity and field of activity.

The employees appreciate to a greater extent hard work and it is considered as a wellbeing factor. According to the data in the survey, the Romanian employees appreciate to a lower extent hard work by comparing with Roma and Hungarian persons. *(Guide on post-employment Roma inclusion)*

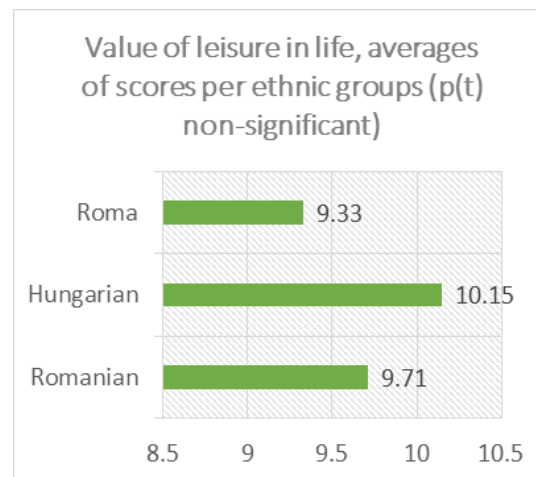


15. Fig. Hard work appreciation per ethnicity

Assessing the more open attitude towards hard work of Roma employees in face to face conversations, we may emphasize that they are probably led by the idea to earn more. This may be interpreted as a positive attitude towards work and desire to earn more. Taking into account the lack of perspectives due to the low literacy and education level, this may be obtained only by hard working (more working hours, if possible) at the actual workplace. This may be an indication that Roma employees are sometimes analysed by stereotypes – as for example that they do not really want to work. The results show their will to work and earn money for a better life and that they, given the conditions of lack of opportunities, are willing to do more than other ethnic groups under real circumstances. *(Guide on post-employment Roma inclusion)*



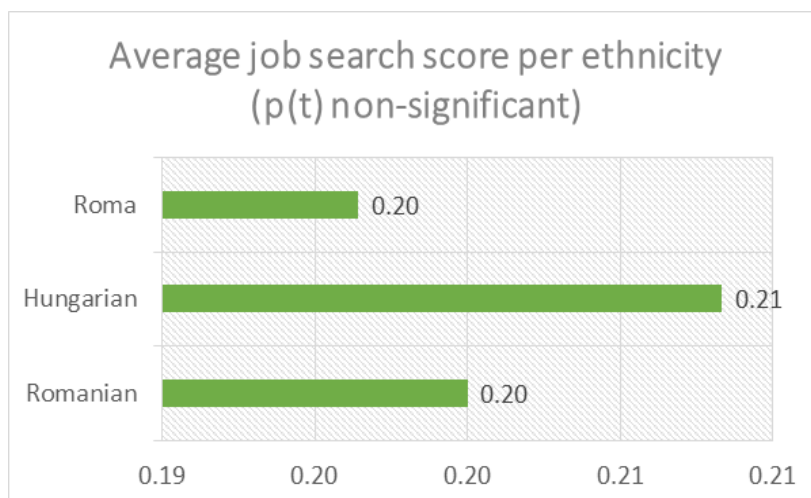
16. Fig Assessing independence per ethnicity



17. Fig Value of leisure per ethnicity

Job active searching

A high level of affective and continuance commitment lowers the probability of job searching. The affective commitment has a stronger impact, each additional point on affective commitment scale leading to 19% decrease of the relative risk of job searching. In exchange, each additional point on stress scale leads to the increase of job searching probability with 10.2%, as related to the contrary event. (Adrian Hatos, Report March 2020)



18. Fig - Job active searching

Variables	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Affective_commitment	-,208	,049	18,002	1	,000	,812
Continuance_commitment	-,120	,044	7,545	1	,006	,887
Stress	,097	,040	5,826	1	,016	1,102
Constant	3,358	1,785	3,539	1	,060	28,731

Table 1. Variables leading to job leaving

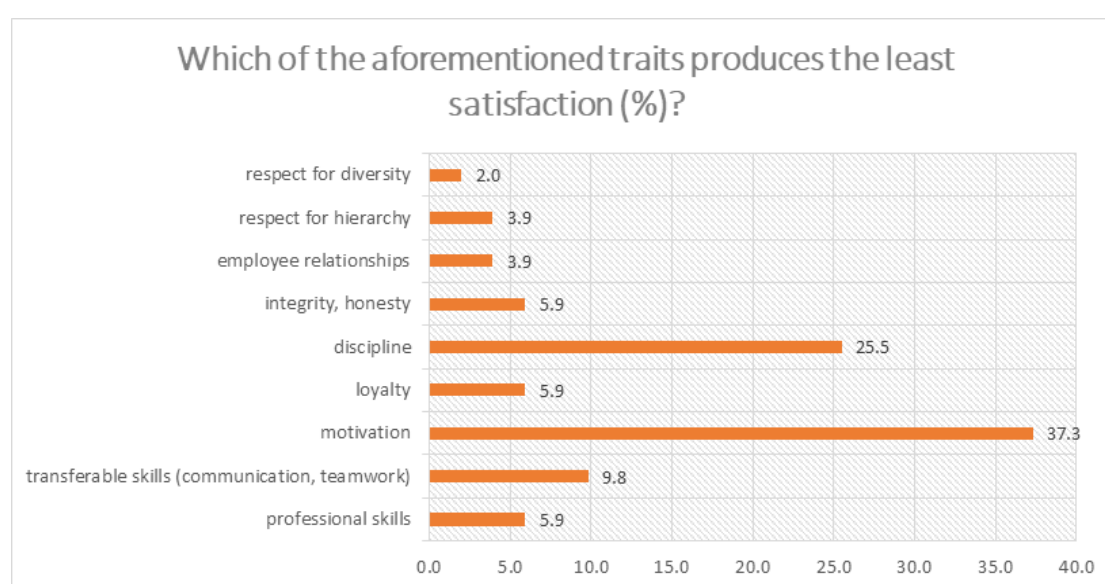
Managers and HR Specialists Attitudes

Middle management and human resources officers were also interviewed in the project, separately of operating personnel. We considered the efficiency of the intervention is given by data gathering from the two parties involved: employees and employers (represented by middle management and Human Resources line). 91% of the respondents were middle management employees and 9% was Human resources staff (N=74).

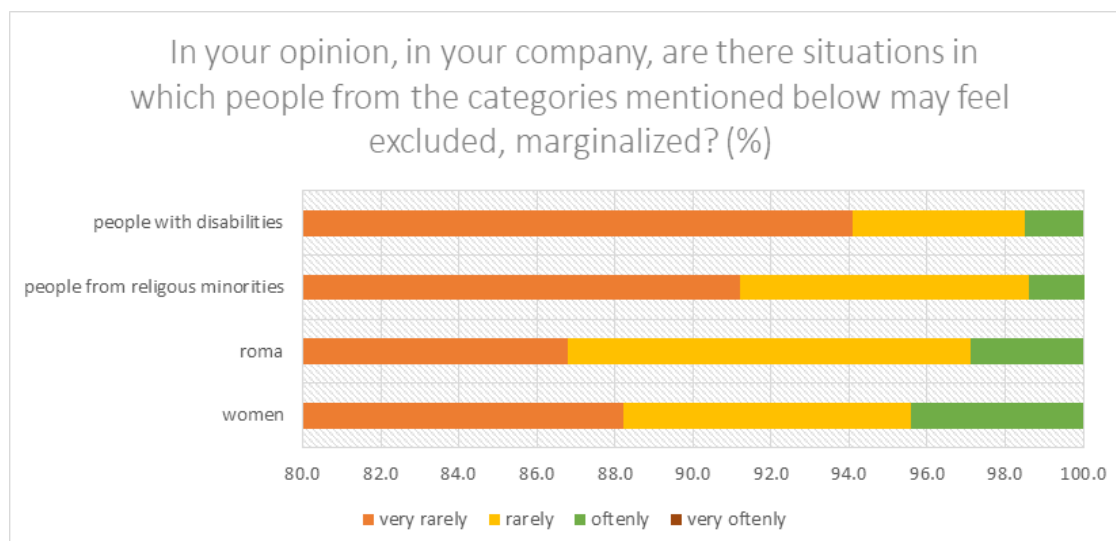
Of their answers, the most relevant for the project, guide drawing up and intervention planning, were those concerning the methods of employees' motivation, of fluctuation decreasing, the reason the employees leave the companies, the most efficient way to achieve induction and other aspects which displeases them regarding the operating personnel:



19. Fig Reasons for which the employees leave the companies

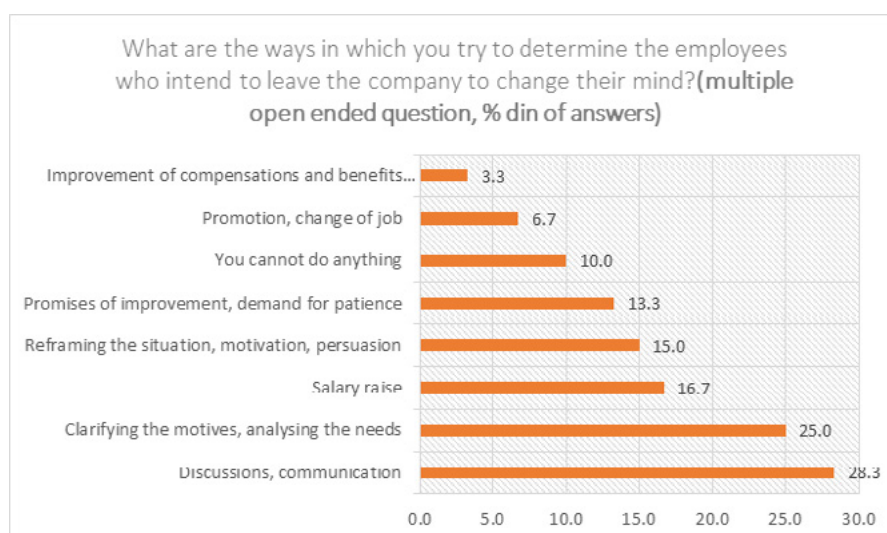


20. Fig. what displeases them the most in relation with the employees

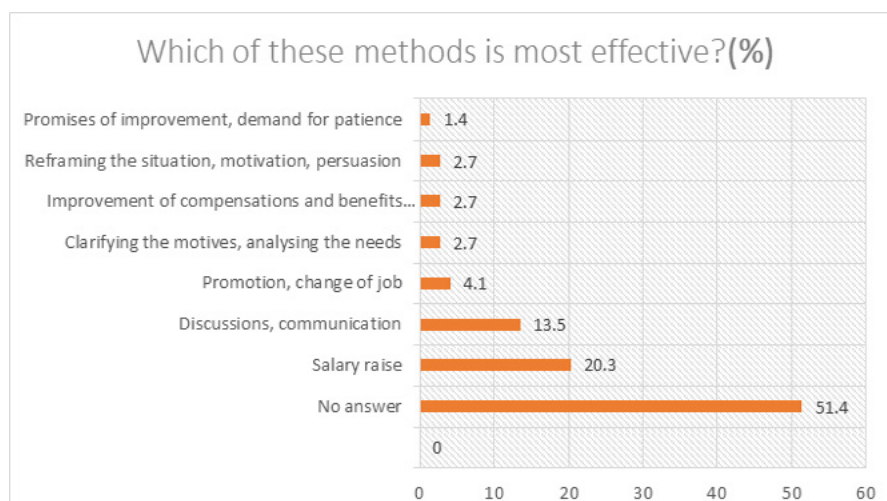


21. Fig If there are situations when the vulnerable employees felt marginalised

The middle management and human resources employees consider the level of discrimination to be very low: 86% indicating “very rarely”. However, of the vulnerable categories, Roma employees are the most discriminated, if we sum up the percentages of “rarely” and “often” marginalised or excluded persons.

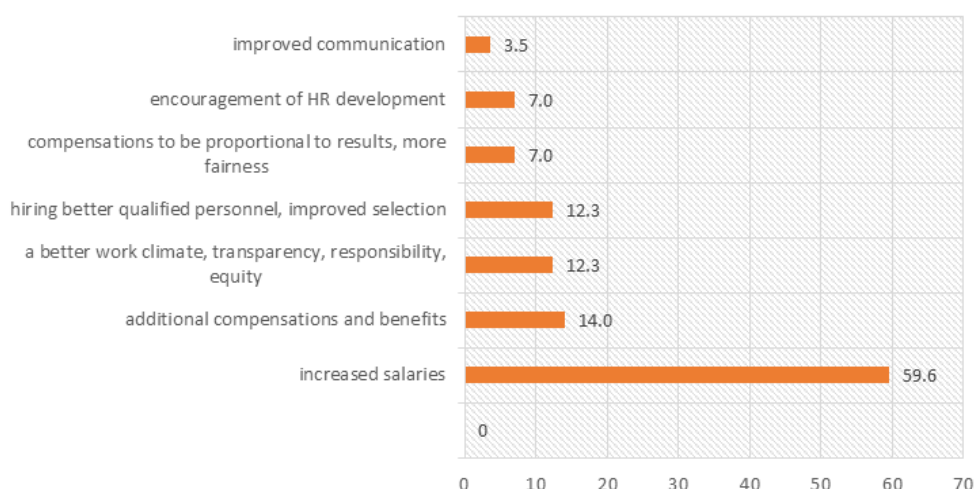


22. Fig. Methods to persuade employees remain



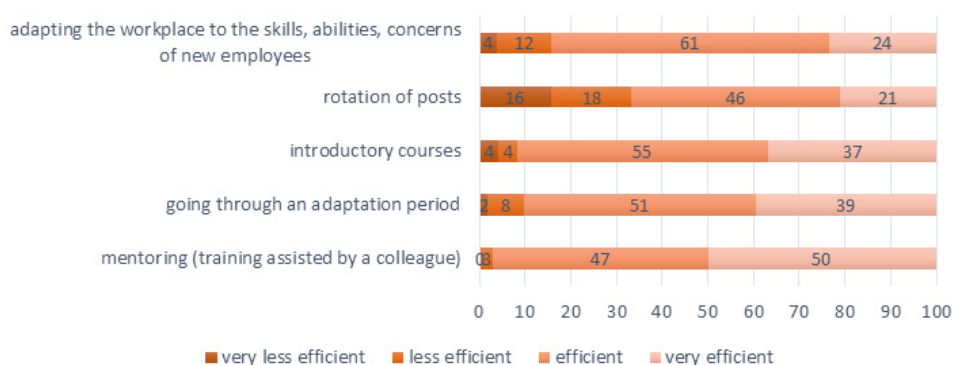
23. Fig. Stimulation methods

What should be done, in your opinion, for staff turnover to be significantly reduced in your company?
(%)



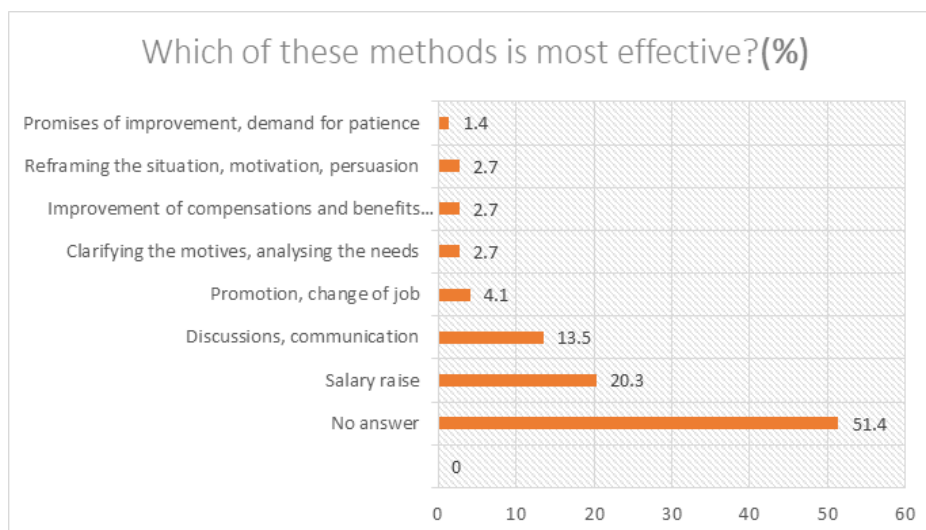
24. Personnel fluctuation lowering

How effective are the following ways of introducing / inducing new employees into the work teams of your company? (%)

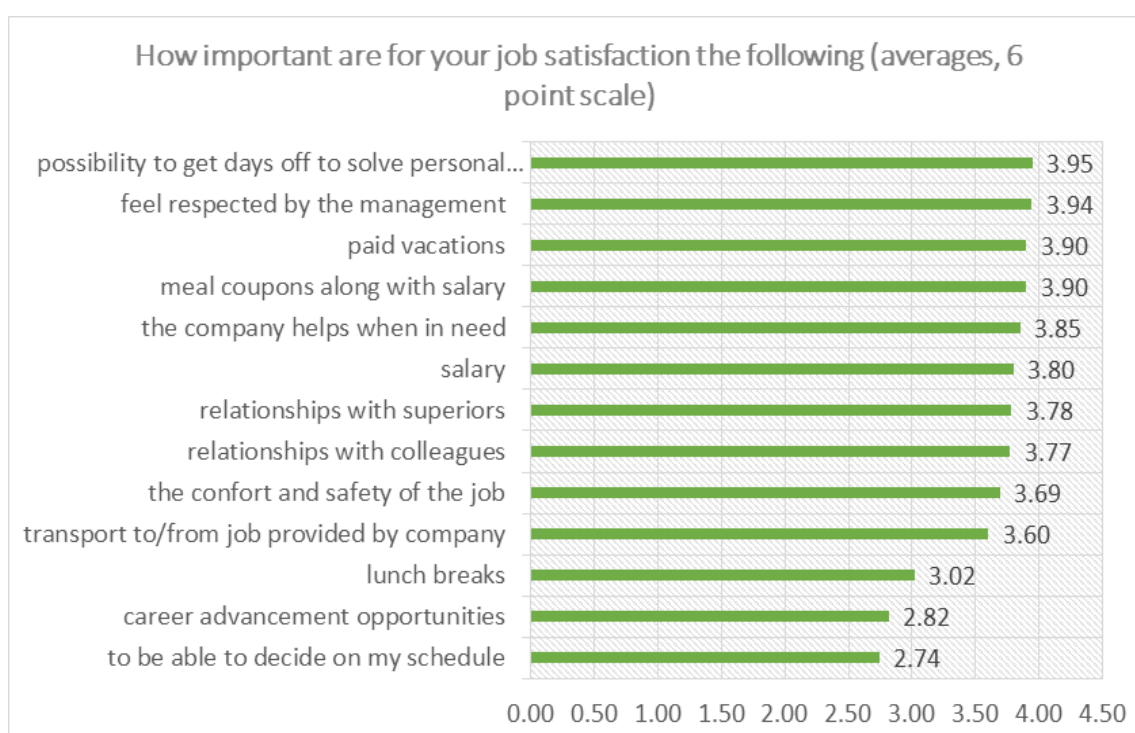


25. Methods for new employees induction at workplace

A radical contradiction may be observed at this aspect between employees and managers. While managers are convinced the fundamental aspect of employees' motivation is salary level, the interviewed workers assign greater importance to the possibility of having days off, management's respect, paid leaves etc. In statements ranking concerning the sources of satisfaction of work, with unskilled workers the salary level is only on the 6th rank. No exclusion or marginalisation reasons at work were mentioned.



26. Fig. Efficiency of stimulation methods, managers and HR's perspectives



27. Fig. Satisfaction at work, employees' perspective

The results that had drawn our attention after the first application were those about:

- Satisfaction with the workplace
- Types of organisational commitments for each ethnicity
- The method how employer, by means of middle management and Human resources personnel, motivate the employees

The project team considered, relying on the applied questionnaire results, according to the aforementioned data, from conversations and expertise, that the persons of vulnerable groups feel more included and are more likely to remain within the company when they are motivated to be part of the team. As a consequence, we have included in the intervention two aspects:

1. Trainings about non-financial motivation, communication, work and time organisation, coaching, sustained for HR and middle management;
2. Applied actions / documents / procedures leading to Roma and other vulnerable employees' inclusion: e.g. mentor induction procedure, stay interview, exit interview.

The vulnerable categories we included were, besides Roma people, women, young or disabled persons. In all companies, the management had a fair attitude and employees' total acceptance, encouraging inclusion behaviours.

Companies and employees were very interested by the non-financial motivation aspects as detailed in a workshop.

3.2 Intervention within the partner companies

Following the data obtained from the participating companies, HEKS team drafted:

1. A guide on post-employment Roma inclusion
2. Trainings for human resources and middle management personnel with the following topics: financial and non-financial motivation, communication and discipline, team communication and work, work and time organisation at job
3. Support / assistance activities granted to the companies as to implement some measures from this guide

The Guide included a general presentation of the results and recommendations of the study as regarding the method of increasing satisfaction at job and the communication between employer and employees, leading to Roma and other vulnerable employees' inclusion at work, respectively an increased retention rate from the perspective of employers. In each company from both counties, HEKS team delivered a session of presentation of the results for the top management and the specific and customised way of action for each company. Following data analysis and statements integration, the following actions to be implemented resulted:

Nr	Line of intervention	Strengths
1.	Interview guide for employing vulnerable persons	Identifying motivation, strengths and opportunities for professional development
2.	Employment kit	Includes the basic documents for the induction time, including an assessment chart of the induction period
3.	Profile of persons employed from vulnerable environments	Important psychosocial characteristics specific to persons from vulnerable environments
4.	Mentor profile for employees from vulnerable environments	Aiming to offer employees both a professional and close human model for their professional training.
5.	Stay interview	Finding the reasons for which the Roma employees stayed at this job.
6.	Exit interview	Reasons / causes of employees' leaving
7.	Career plan for vulnerable group of persons	Horizontal career development (to the right)

8.	Measures of non-financial motivation: discounts negotiations for employees, company / profession's day	Some measures of non-financial motivation: - Gives daily feedback as considering employees' performance. - Employee's merits public recognition - Communicate to the public clients' positive feedbacks. - Special tariffs negotiation for employees with different suppliers (electrical power suppliers, confectioneries, pizzerias, etc). The employees want first of all to know how much you care about them, not about your knowledge!
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Management and Human resources representatives were actively involved in the elaboration of documents for each company. The input received for each company was enlightening when finding similarities and differences as regarding method of approach, work and integration of Roma ethnicity and vulnerable groups' persons.

As for developing working abilities with vulnerable groups and persons from marginalized Roma communities, trainings within the project were much applied, with practical exercises and participants' active involving according to the developed topic. The feedback received from the participants was positive.

The objectives were knowledge and motivation abilities updating and developing through:

- Myths about motivation
- Intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation
- What "Carrot & Stick" motivation means; debate: it brings or not benefits
- Motivation by offering "autonomy" – desire to lead our own lives
- Motivation by improving "craftsmanship" – desire to become better
- Motivation by offering a "purpose" – desire to feel that we are part of something great
- Ideas with immediate application within teams & methods of following the progress
- Team communication and teamwork
- Discipline at job
- Time management

All training sessions were supplemented by practical exercises and applications in current applicants' activity.

Training materials

The instructors have conceived and put at trainees' disposal the following educational materials:

- Practical exercises and role play which added and sustained the theoretical examples presented
- Power point presentations
- Case studies

Instruction method

Trainees' instruction consisted in the initial and final testing of knowledge about communication:

- Presentation sessions;
- Practical application sessions of techniques and methods presented;
- Group work and intervention cases.

The group work methods were employed as to develop participants' motivation, communication and organisation.

Feedback of professional training sessions

Based on:

- Participants' expectations as identified at the beginning of the course and the final feedback offered by them at the end
- Positive participants' evolution from the presentations delivered as exercise
- Due to participants' positive opinion as concerning course knowledge utility and applicability makes us appreciate that the training session proved beneficial and necessary as to improve knowledge, and to apply communication techniques.

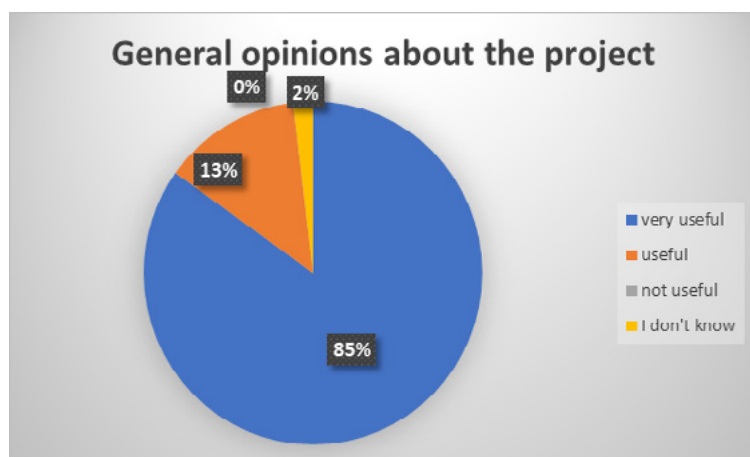
Participants' interest as concerning specific knowledge delivered during this training phase, as well as their opinions in the final assessment, entitle us to consider that continual professional training reflects their interest in continuous improvement of their professional competences.

The items to improve which can be applied by the participants after the trainings:

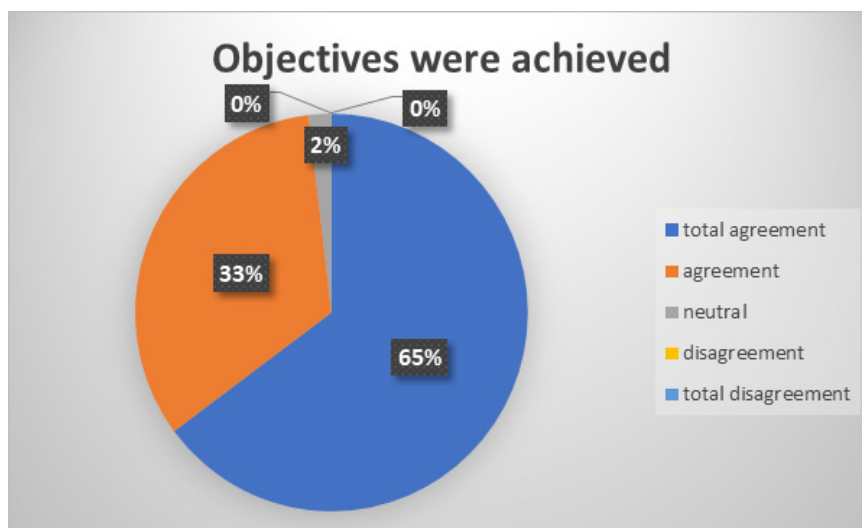
- Continuous application of non-financial motivation
- Acting in line with motivation principles
- Implementing specific motivation principles.

In order for the programme to completely reach its objectives, it would be beneficial for the participants to be involved in vulnerable groups' employees' development and motivation process, by means of specific instruments for communication activities (people types and the method we relate to them in communication, giving and receiving feedback, empathy and active listening) and to be encouraged use it.

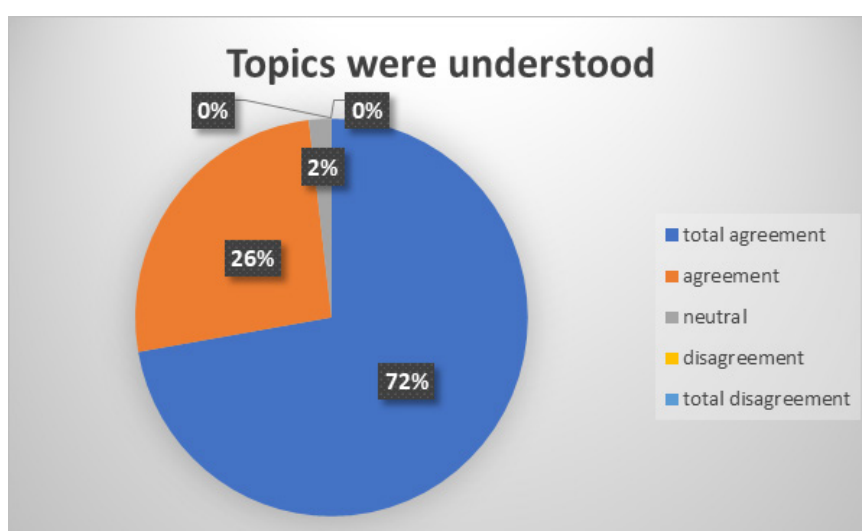
The graphic representation of participants' feedback, based on 54 questionnaires completed by training participants from four companies, at the end of the last training session, is presented below .



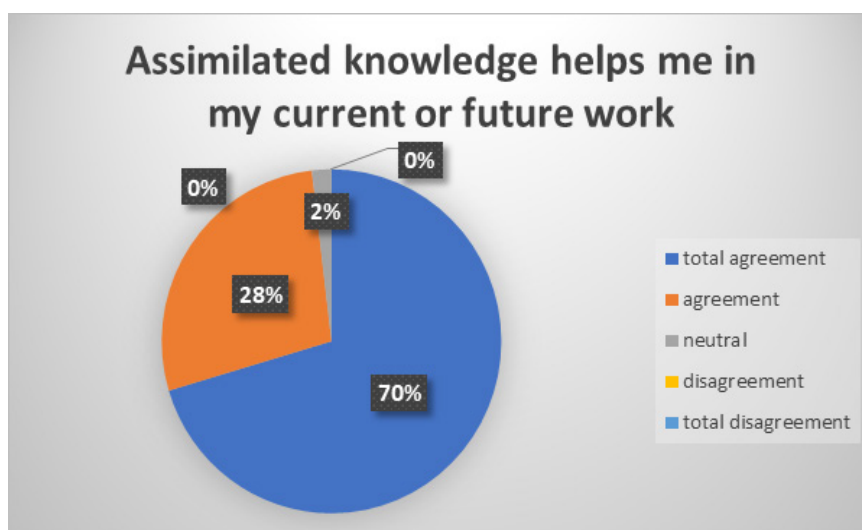
28. Fig General opinions about the project



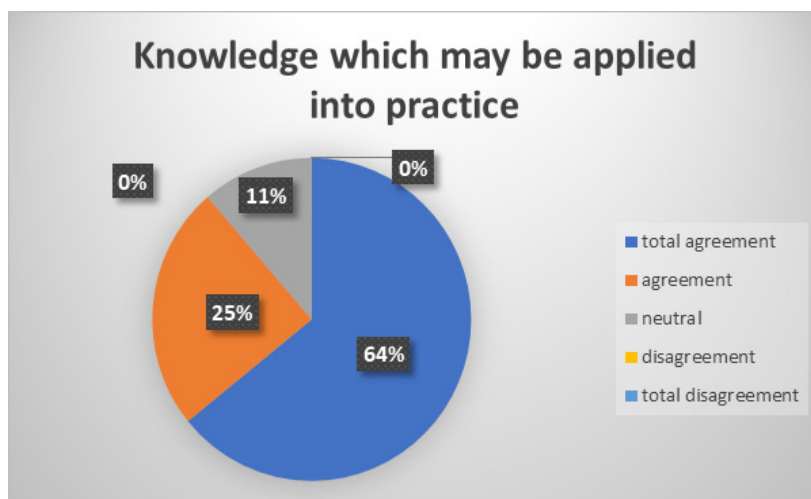
29. Fig. The level of reaching course objectives



30. Fig. The level of understanding the topics



31. Fig. Knowledge assimilation



32. Fig. Knowledge which may be applied

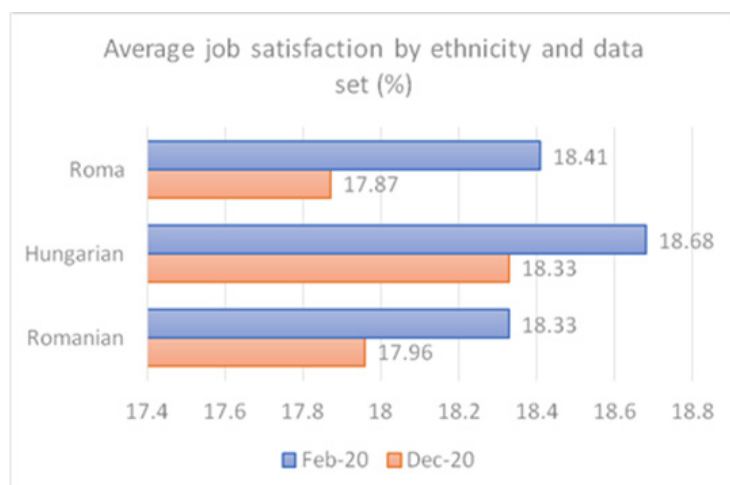
The intervention consisted in customised action plans for each company and actual measures applied hereby. The topics and actions implemented were:

Actions	
I. Non-financial motivation	Drawing up internal procedures for non-financial motivation application
	Defining regular programmes of non-financial motivation (topics, method of organisation etc.)
	Ensuring the resources for non-financial motivation programmes
	Implementing the non-financial motivation/communication and teamwork programmes – for vulnerable groups
II. Before employment	Recruitment interview guide for vulnerable groups – for departments' heads
	Establishing the content for <i>Employment kit – for HR</i>
	Drawing up Employee's manual
	Establishing employee's profile
	Establishing profile for mentors
III. During employment	Establishing the contents and methods of application of Stay Interview
	Organisational commitment consolidation by communication, at company level, on labour market dynamics and structure
	Implementing a continual communication programme by stimulating cooperation between Roma ethnics and other employees
	Drawing up the career plan for vulnerable employees (horizontal career development)
	Implementing a regular assessment system of the method of non-financial motivation implementation
IV. Leaving company	Establishing the content of Exit interview form
V. Continual improvement	Defining a set of relevant performance indicators for non-financial motivation
	Defining the standards to be reached for each indicator
	Creating a system for data recording and processing
	Databases creating and results recording

3.3 Assessment after intervention: The results of the second round of questionnaires

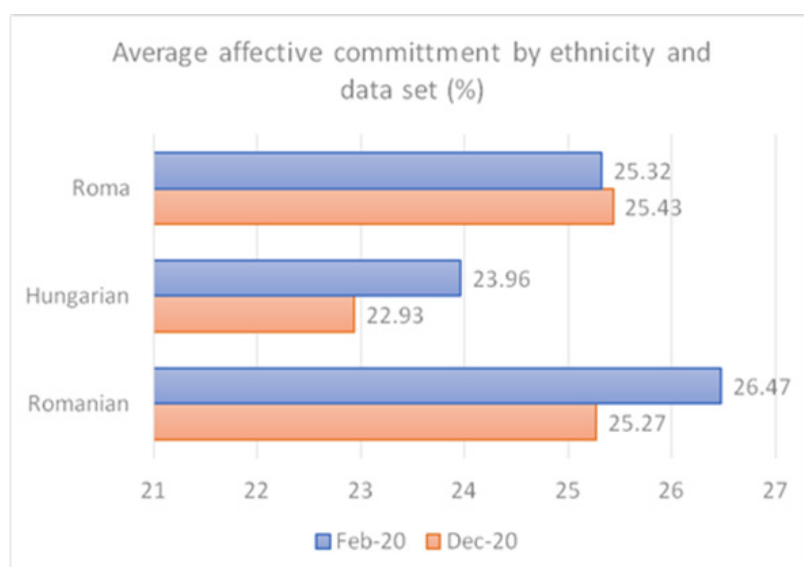
Following the second round of questionnaires applied, the following were identified:

- The level of work satisfaction is different between the two applications, meaning decrease for all ethnic categories. We consider that an impact in this respect had also the pandemic and all changes of the method of activity running at the workplace.

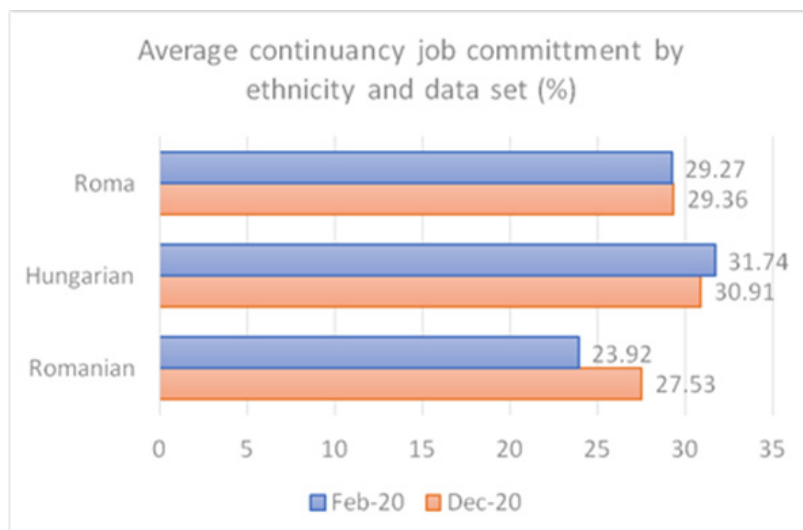


33. Fig. Average level of satisfaction per ethnicity

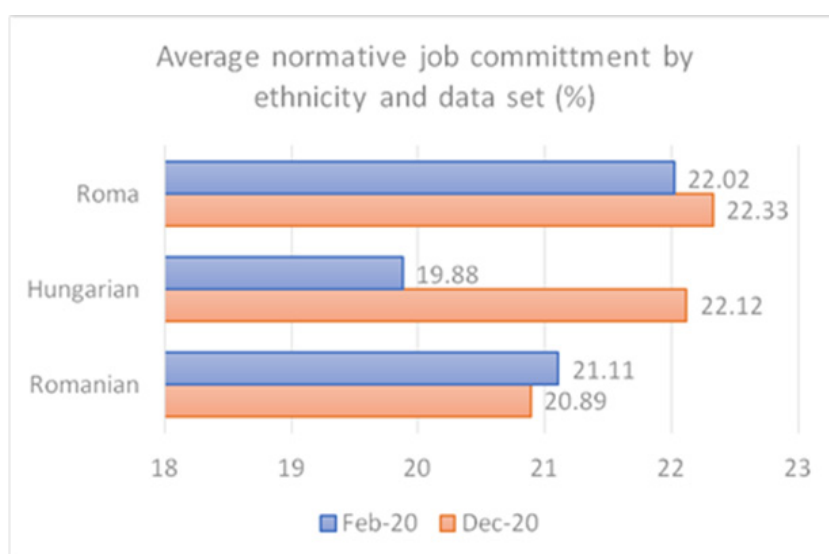
- The level of affective commitment of those employees who declared themselves as Roma slightly increased, while it decreased for the other ethnic groups according to the data in the diagram below and of the intervention in this respect.



34. Fig. Average affective commitment per ethnicity. Comparative analysis between the two applications, after intervention

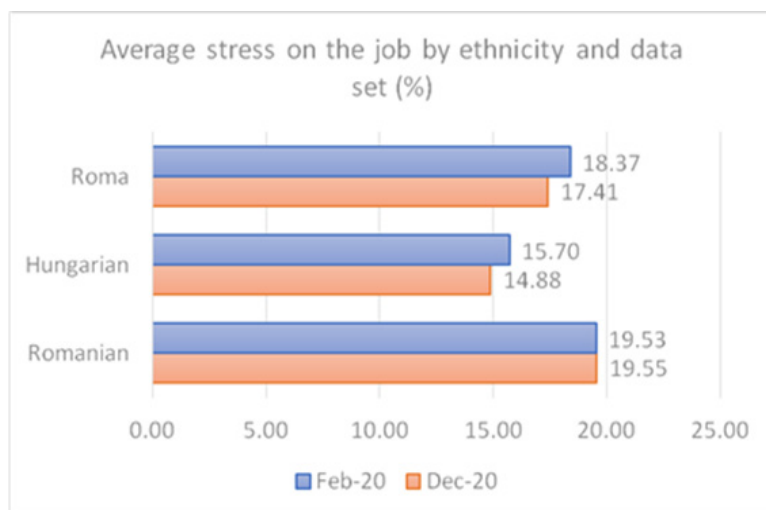


35. Fig Average continuance commitment per ethnicity



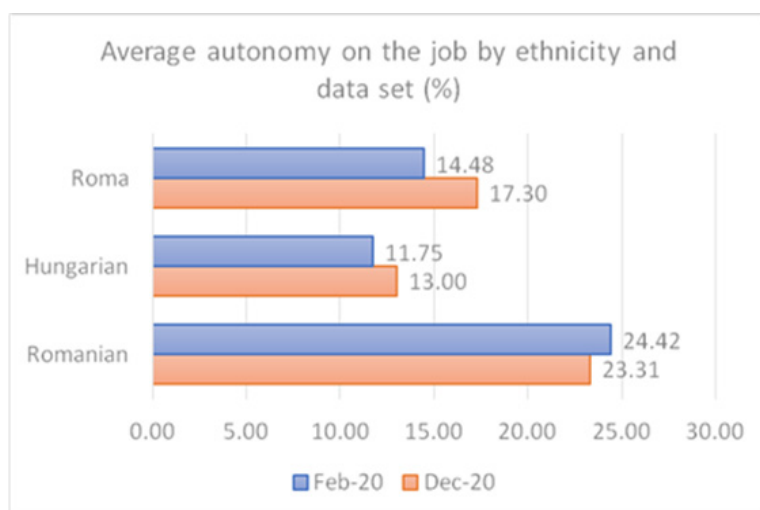
36. Fig. Average normative commitment per ethnicity

- The stress level has changed between the two rounds of the survey. Roma employee's stress level decreased between the two applications. The stress factor had impact on job leaving decision, that is, if its value increased so did the probability of job leaving.



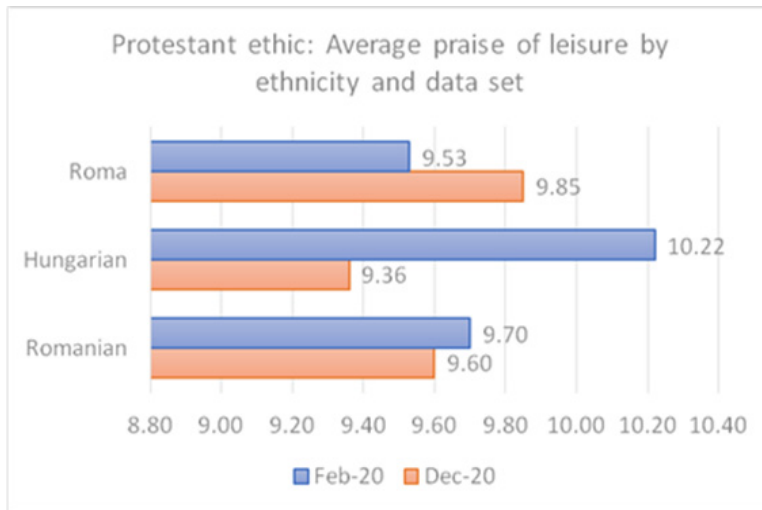
37. Fig Stress average score per ethnicity

- The autonomy level impacts the methods the employees consider their work important for the company. In the diagram below a significant increase of autonomy at the job (self-assessment) is noted for Roma employees.



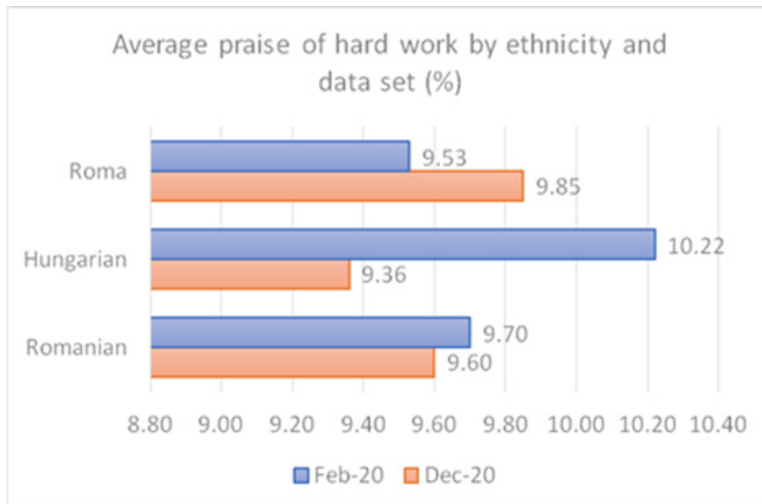
38. Fig. Autonomy average level at job per ethnicity

- Another significant change between the two applications is given by the protestant ethics of work, the praise of leisure dimension. Roma ethnicity employees came to appreciate it more after intervention.



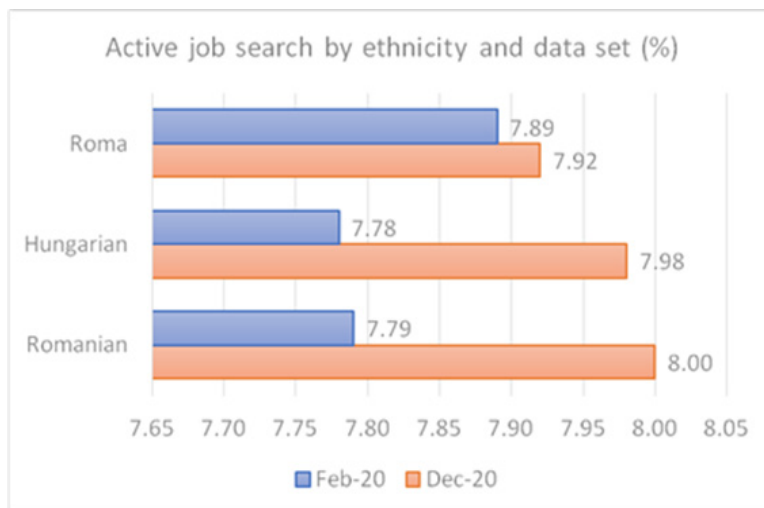
39. Fig Average score of time off appreciation per ethnicity

- At the same time hard work was appreciated at Roma ethnicity persons. We consider that by work valuation the method they relate to work importance changed, they feel valued and appreciated within the companies.



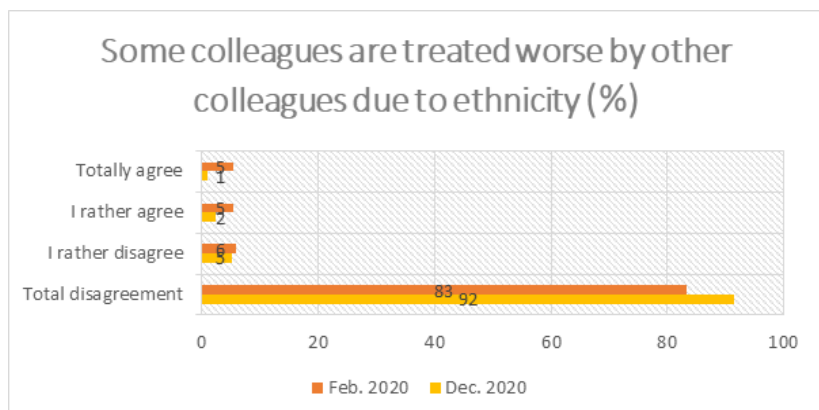
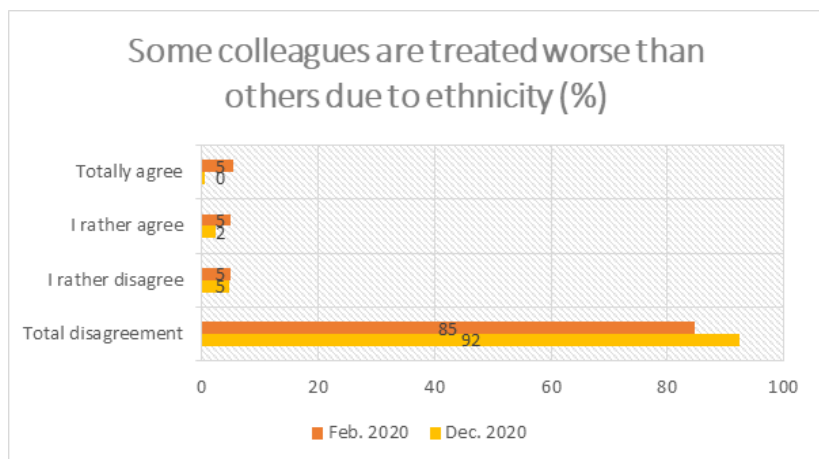
40. Fig Average score of hard work appreciation per ethnicity

- Job active searching changed between the two applications, increasing especially in Romanians and Hungarians cases. It also increased for Roma persons but insignificantly as comparing with the other ethnic categories.



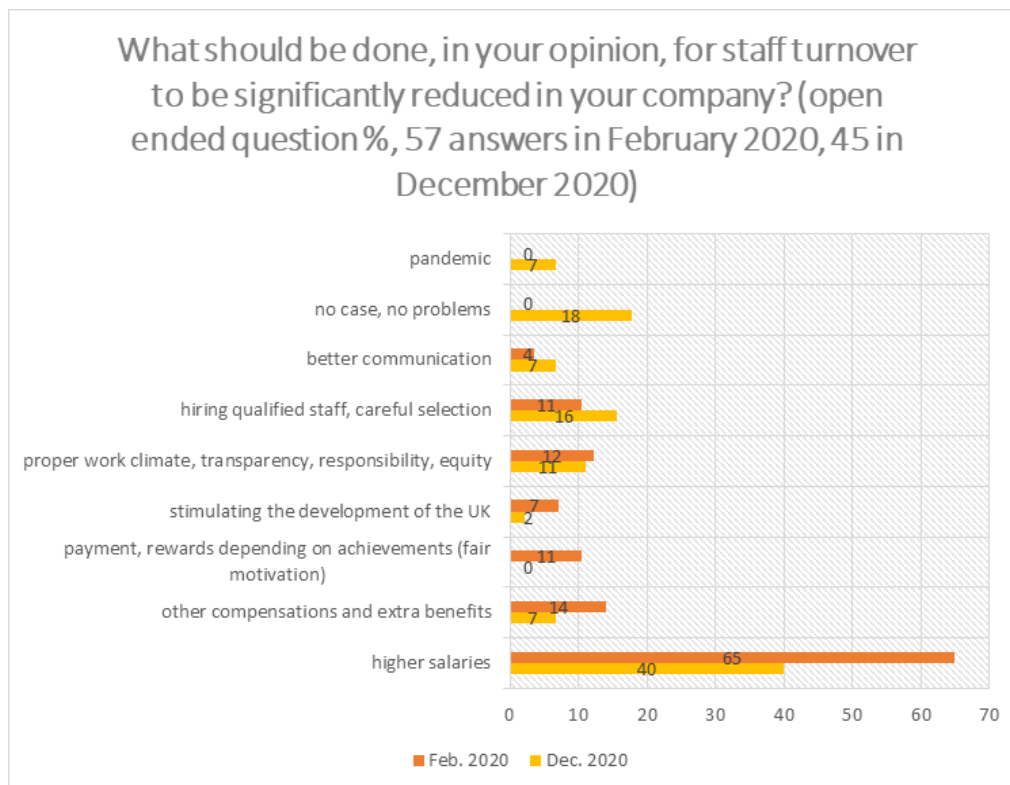
41. Fig Average score of job active searching per ethnicity

- Discrimination at job, which had low incidence already in the first round of questionnaires, according to employees' responses, got lower again after intervention, up to the second round of questionnaires;



42. Fig. Discrimination (employees' perspective)

- In the following graphic, we can note perception changes of the middle management and HR regarding the lowering of personnel fluctuation: The percentage of those mentioning financial aspects decreased, while the non-financial ones were more valued, and some respondents even outlined the fact they no longer had this problem (18%).



43. Fig. Methods to lower personnel fluctuation

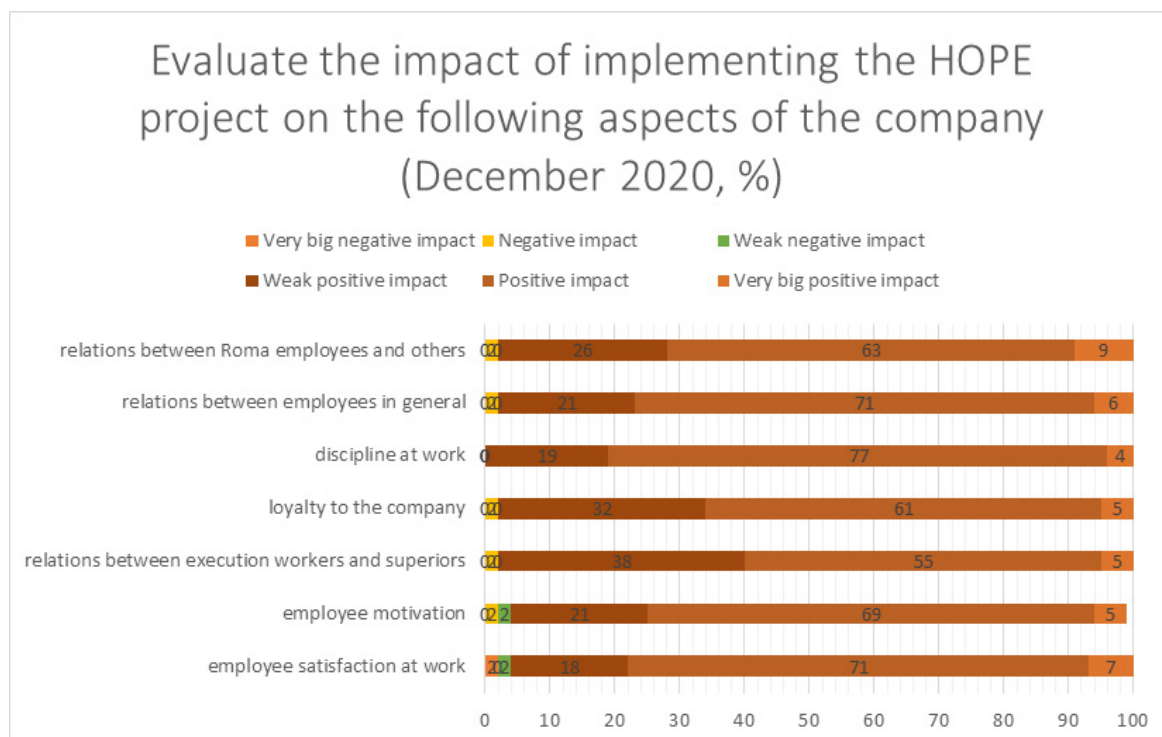
In a workshop held with partner companies' representatives, they mentioned the changes noted in their companies after project intervention and activities appreciation:

- Developing managerial communication, motivation, teamwork and organisation abilities of middle management (shift managers);
- Procedures development for Roma ethnicity persons inclusion, for retention, exit interview, etc., for companies as from human resources point of view

3.4 Challenges and limitations

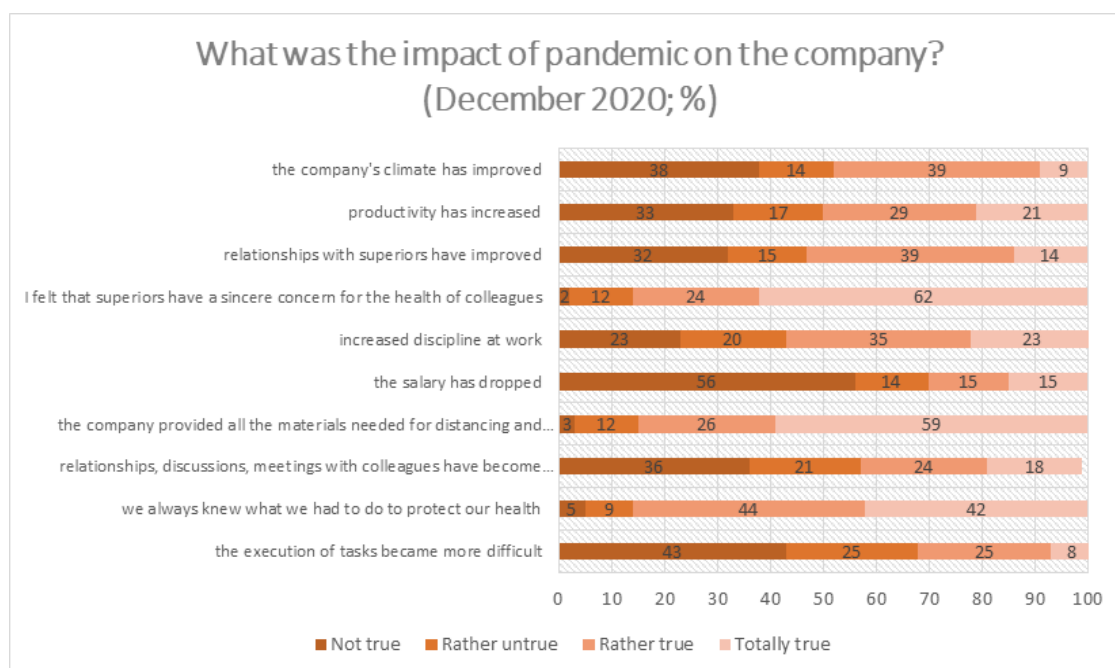
Coronavirus pandemic

We consider the results obtained within the project, namely, Roma employees' retention and inclusion level increase were positively weighted as the tendency to actively search for a job decreased, they valued a job with all benefits received during the state of emergency. At the same time, they received as new rules all the sanitary measures which are set up for employees' safety. The infections cases in different companies confirmed that employees and employers need each other, for the former to have an income and for the latter to have a business.



44. Assessing HOPE project impact within companies

The project has a positive impact on all pursued dimensions according to the answers received from the participants.



45. Fig. Effects of pandemic

The effects of pandemic on the method of companies' activities running were average and the activity continued under special conditions.

Limitations:

In using the data resulting from the application of the two rounds of questionnaires and the recommendations drafted based on them, several limitations should be considered for the drawn-up surveys:

- The questionnaires were applied in companies from Cluj and Bihor counties, with which HEKS/EPER Romania Foundation collaborated in a previous project, for the mediation and employment of Roma people.
- The two samples were differently structured for the two surveys (e.g., higher employees percentage in automotive wiring field and women, much higher percentage of persons aged 40-59 years old and lower percentage of those aged 20-29 years old for the second round of questionnaires, dramatic percentage decrease of those reporting interactions with more than 10 persons in a working day, change explained mostly probably due to the pandemic). Distribution on ethnicity and level of qualification are unchanged.
- Covid-19 pandemic unplanned intervention led to isolation and measures of restricted interactions just after the first round of questionnaires. Most of the significant differences to be noticed between the two measurements have as main reason working conditions changing occurring due to the pandemic. Consequently, any conclusion regarding the impact of intervention should be deducted with precaution starting from the data presented in this report. (Adrian Hatos, Updated report on February 2021).

3.5 Summary of main findings

After the first round of applied questionnaires, the following data extracted before pandemic should be outlined:

- Satisfaction with the workplace is high for Roma employees;
- The Roma are aware that, due to the limited education, they have no chances on the labour market and they are satisfied with the current job (which means a high level of cognitive objectiveness). They are not ecstatic but are pleased – the affective commitment being explained by (“we are happy with what we have if no options are around”). When it comes to satisfaction, Roma people have a rational attitude, the continuance commitment being high, namely, most of them do not assume the risk of leaving a safe / steady job.
- The level of discrimination declared by either the Roma people, the management or the colleagues is low. However, if looking closer we note indirect discriminating attitudes, and management’s mistrust in Roma employees’ possibility to adapt/change.
- Roma ethnics’ employees’ retention is rather explained due to lack of opportunities on the labour market. If the chances to get employed in another place are minimal, they would do all possible to stay with the current job.
- Roma people appreciate especially independence, time off, lack of restrictions which may be explained by the lack of formal education (the formal education prepares for organised / structured professional activities)

- At the same time they appreciate the help from the company (as not being accustomed with significant institutional support, any support is genuinely appreciated).
- Although the great majority does not leave a safe place and make rational decisions, those who decided to explore do it rather from an affective impulse.
- The stress level felt by Roma people is low, which contributes to a high retention.
- All Roma employees show a higher availability as considering the physical effort, aspect denied to some extent by the management – This may indicate the fact that Roma employees are analysed by stereo-types – as for example, the fact that they do not really want to work. The results show their will to work and earn money for a better life is normal, under the conditions of lack of opportunities are willing to do more under real circumstances.
- The most interesting finding after the first phase of data gathering is the fact that middle management consider money as the solution for workers' retention and satisfaction, but the workers totally appreciate other things – programme flexibility, management's appreciation, the possibility to talk about issues with management members.

After the second phase we may highlight the following aspects:

- A significantly lower percentage of interactions between workers is observed, rationally explained due to COVID-19 pandemic specific measures;
- As in the first phase a relatively general satisfaction with the workplace is noticed, approximately 90% of the employees reporting professional satisfactions.
- As considering the first phase, the level of affective commitment of those employees who declared themselves as Roma slightly increased. The normative and continuance commitment do not significantly change.
- The stress level has changed between the two rounds of the survey. Roma employee's stress level decreased between the two applications. The stress factor had impact on job leaving decision, that is, if its value increased so did the probability of job leaving.
- In this second phase Roma report stronger appreciation of hard working. We believe, the impact of pandemic and jobs instability / uncertainty made Roma appreciate hard working, as they are aware of the fact they have few chances on the labour market, are willing for a sustained effort (as they state). At the same time, their appreciation of time off has also increased.
- We can note perception changes of the middle management and HR regarding the lowering of personnel fluctuation: The percentage of those mentioning financial aspects decreased, while the non-financial ones were more valued, and some respondents even outlined the fact they no longer had this problem.

As such, the pandemic context and the intervention within the project brought more reasoning among Roma employees as considering job appreciation. This is noticeable with the results of second phase questionnaires applied within HOPE project.

3.6 Conclusions and Recommendations

The analysis and interpretation of the data leads to the following **conclusions**:

1. Conclusions and recommendations regarding employees needs and motivational factors:

Personnel retention revolves around the question: it is in company's interest to employ new people or to invest in the existing ones who have development potential?

Consequently, in order to avoid extended recruitment processes, high costs for the company and employing unskilled personnel, the accent shall be on employees' retention. The companies should listen in exchange to the employees needs and implement strategies making them feel appreciated and involved in order to hold them. These retention methods may have a significant and positive impact on personnel fluctuation rate.

In compliance with the study conducted within the project, the main reason for which people leave the company is not the salary level, as wrongly appreciated some of the managers. Roma employees, besides the material benefits would be more contented with the following:

- **A more flexible working hours** as to be able solve family and personal matters (which should not be mistaken with in compliance with working hours);
- **Respect and appreciation from management** – they are usually employed in manual work in difficult working environments which are usually not very appreciated in the society. Under these circumstances would mean a lot for them if their supervisors consider their jobs as relevant and important. This may bring also a significant change in affective commitment.
- **Help from the company** – Roma employees are not accustomed to get very much help, from the authorities in their communities or from their co-workers. Internalising the fact that they are on their own, as already mentioned in this material has a negative impact on approaching complex professional responsibilities. The collected data show their desire is to be helped in a significant way, first of all to be understood.

As the first round of data collection revealed, those critical aspects the Roma employees need are quite neglected by the managers, as the majority consider the reasons for which the employees leave are the income / salary. Certainly the salary raise are immediate compensations and may increase employees involvement but all on short-term. This is the reason why the project focused on a range of organisational measures, with the purpose of personnel retention rate increase, mainly in the companies participating in the survey and applicable to any entities with employees from vulnerable groups.

As considering **Roma employees' motivation** we can make connection with the the data collected within the project. The essential dimensions concerning motivation are:

- **Work satisfaction concerning motivation** – our data suggests that, even if the Roma employees say they are satisfied with most of the current conditions, they are most probably just comfortable with the current situation and are not satisfied. They usually have interiorised the idea that there are no better opportunities for them. What is quite interesting is the fact that their control locus is internal – they do not blame others for their

faith, they talk about the fact they had not had in the childhood conditions to obtain an adequate education. This may be interpreted as a rational approach of opportunities and faith under better conditions. That is the reason why, our recommendation is, contrary to some stereotypes, the Roma employees should be considered with a quite rational representation. Also, the lack of education is doubled by a helpless feeling which makes them function rather mechanically and without hope for better results. This may be changed. As data suggests they are motivated by a flexible approach, appreciation and also by others' help, more than by money.

- **Commitment and motivation** –the affective commitment (leading to an increased motivation and performance) is lower with Roma employees. This means they accept the job but they are not satisfied. This is due to the fact they have no many options for better jobs. Continuance commitment (meaning they analyse the opportunity to leave the company for a gain/loss perspective) supports the idea they have a rational approach. Data suggests the majority of Roma employees are not at risk losing their job because taking into account their education are aware of the fact that is quite difficult to obtain a better position. It may be worse if the organisational and social environment is not at least the same as at the current job. It is important the managers should know this, as if a real opportunity emerges, the employees would leave if they are captive in a company only due to the lack of better opportunities. And the normative commitment (concerning internalised norms regarding opportunity to regularly change the jobs) reveals the fact the majority of Roma employees would not be interest in frequently changing the job. Data suggests that the great majority of them spent approximately 4 years within the current company which is a quite long term. But again this is due to the internalised idea that exist no better opportunities.
- **Stress and motivation** – the majority of Roma employees prefer a lower stress level despite earnings increase. And the stress is strongly correlated with motivation. The Roma employees usually associate stress with a high level of formalism in rules and procedures which are difficult to understand and internalise due to the lack of formal education. It is recommended be approached in a semi-formal way considering the work issues and the rules and procedures be presented in a friendly way by a reliable person (for Roma employees) in the company.
- **Work ethics, autonomy and motivation** – the data revealed the fact the Roma employees appreciate independence / autonomy which is also associated with making more decision. So, there is a great desire to be involved in important decisions regarding their lives. In an environment where they feel having more or less opportunities or the capacity to take a decision, their motivation would significantly decrease. It is also interesting the fact that they appreciate spare time but they are open enough to work extra hours if this means supplementary earnings. The research sustains also the data present Roma employees as rational decision factors as contrary to the general stereotype of them being more irrational.

The methods mentioned in the guide and implemented in the trainings take into consideration how the human resources department and each coordinator / team leader can respond to needs and motivational factors in case of vulnerable employees (Roma, women, etc.) with whom they work with.

2. Conclusions and recommendations regarding recruitment and induction processes taking into account the needs of vulnerable employees:

Job satisfaction and retention start with a clear and transparent **recruitment process**. Human Resources Department supported by middle management should offer:

- Clear and transparent description of all job requirements (job description, procedures, rules) which shall be applied from day one by all employees. When talking to Roma employees, it is not recommended a formal approach as they are not accustomed with it and may have difficulties in processing all information. A formal and strict approach may generate high levels of anxiety which may lead to a decrease in self-efficiency beliefs.
- Benefits have to be communicated and employers should comply with them. Considering the fact that Roma employees are generally employed for jobs where minimum salary is predominant, the managers should explain them the contextual advantages offered by the company. As has already been mentioned, considering the lack of access to reliable information, the Roma employees are willing to frequently leave their workplace hoping for a better situation in another company.

All these determine not only a formal employment agreement by and between employee and employer, but a moral, psychological agreement, with greater impact on retention. On contrary, without such details, the cooperation between employer and employee may be on short-time. A warm, human approach is needed within the induction period, language and offered explanation adapting as to lower anxiety and increase trust.

During the **induction time** which may overlap with the probation period, each new employee should be taken over by an experienced, motivated employee who can monitor and assess him/her at the end of the probation period.

The study reveals that employees consider very useful induction after being employed in the company because they keep in mind and appreciate any help they receive, from whom they learn, teaches them, supports them and consider that person as **MENTOR**.

As for example, this affection is very important for the Roma employees as they are loyal to their line managers rather to company prestige which comes after collaboration. This is the reason why it is very important the mentor be free of these stereotypes and also be instructed for a better understanding of the cultural, social and educational characteristics of Roma population.

3. Conclusions and recommendations regarding discrimination and stereotypes

Our data indicate that very few incidents of discrimination were mentioned by Roma employees or by managers, however there seem to be strong preconceptions. These preconceptions are stereotypes which indirectly guide especially managers' representations in relation to Roma employees. First, it is important to be aware of these stereotypes in order to be able to address them through adequate policies. The most relevant are:

- The Roma employees cannot be fully integrated in the culture of the majority;
- The Roma employees are not interested by professional development;

- The Roma employees are not trustworthy as considering increasing their professional responsibilities.

Before critical policies making, we have to prepare the system to put them in application and by this we refer to a first step in clarifying management and human resource perspectives as considering the aforementioned stereotypes.

We recognise that these stereotypes are generalised in Romanian society, but during our interviews with Roma employees resulted some basic factors impacting their perspectives / decisions and professional behaviour, which are useful also to raise the awareness of middle management and human resource persons:

- Lack of literacy and low level of education. This is a key factor with major impact on Roma employees' professional approach. Considering the lack and low literacy level, Roma communities are characterised by oral culture and communication. The oral communication is usually characterised by a strong distortion. Some of the Roma employees are strongly impacted by these distortions. Our experience from the previous project revealed various situations the Roma employees gave up a good job offer only because they had heard that another company has better conditions without checking it. Due to the lack of access to trustful information their decisions are altered.
- Managers should be aware that this can also be approached by gaining employees' trust also by means of a normal, friendly relation. Managers should earn employees' trust as to influence them make rational professional decisions.
- Roma employees' interest in professional development is significantly undermined from the beginning by the level of education. They are aware of this situation and of the fact that professional development and advancement is related to a higher level of education. This is the reason for most of them having preconceptions that a higher professional level cannot be achieved in their situation.
- As considering trust invested in Roma employees in relation with extending their professional responsibilities, it is important that the employee understands them from the beginning. Usually, when Roma employees face complex professional challenges and consider they cannot manage them, there is a tendency to abandon.

The recommendations under point 4. below respond to these stereotypes by introducing respective communication strategies and by strengthening the commitment of companies to apply actions to better integrate Roma employees into teams, foster their professional development and handing and extending their responsibilities. Companies were also recommended to integrate non-discrimination clauses into their HR policies where this was not the case yet.

4. Conclusions and recommendations regarding the implementation of practical actions in companies

This project followed the approach to address limiting factors and dynamics for vulnerable employees by intervening on the level of the employing companies.

The insights of the conclusions drawn from the study resulted in **concrete training sessions and interventions** with participated companies, which consisted of customised action plans for each company and actual measures applied. The following actions proved to be effective to improve the interactions within the companies, to address stereotypes and to increase job satisfaction and retention of vulnerable employees:

Actions	
I. Non-financial motivation	Drawing up internal procedures for non-financial motivation application
	Defining regular programmes of non-financial motivation (topics, method of organisation etc.)
	Ensuring the resources for non-financial motivation programmes
	Implementing the non-financial motivation/communication and teamwork programmes – for vulnerable groups
II. Before employment	Recruitment interview guide for vulnerable groups – for departments' heads
	Establishing the content for <i>Employment kit – for HR</i>
	Drawing up Employee's manual
	Establishing employee's profile
	Establishing profile for mentors
III. During employment	Establishing the contents and methods of application of Stay Interview
	Organisational commitment consolidation by communication, at company level, on labour market dynamics and structure
	Implementing a continual communication programme by stimulating cooperation between Roma ethnics and other employees
	Drawing up the career plan for vulnerable employees (horizontal career development)
	Implementing a regular assessment system of the method of non-financial motivation implementation
IV. Leaving company	Establishing the content of Exit interview form
V. Continual improvement	Defining a set of relevant performance indicators for non-financial motivation
	Defining the standards to be reached for each indicator
	Creating a system for data recording and processing
	Databases creating and results recording

The organisational efforts the level of retention involves, as to ensure the employees do not intend leaving the company, suppose in the first instance a **very good cooperation between the human resources department and the managers at all levels**, as to identify the causes the employees are determined to leave. After their identification, the reasons may be transferred in **human resources policies** with immediate application at company level.

5. Scaling the good practices to other employers and vulnerable employees

The guide on postemployment Roma inclusion and the and training/support modules for companies are designed to be made available to other interested companies. This process has already started in the framework of another project of HEKS/EPER on labour market

inclusion of socially disadvantaged young adults, whereby additional companies can benefit from this approach.

The experience gained within HOPE project shows that the combination of an initial assessment in the companies (through the application of a slightly adapted model of the questionnaire developed as part of this project) with customized training modules and consultancy on organisational processes is an effective model of intervention. Although companies can apply the guide also on their own, the element of training and consultancy opens opportunities for sensitization and awareness raising of the responsible HR and management persons, which we regard as crucial for effective and sustainable changes in the respective companies.

As part of a future project intervention, the “package” for companies could be further refined and specified according to different types of companies. Moreover, it would be interesting to assess the medium to long term effects of these interventions in selected companies, especially in a context that is not so much influenced by the Covid-pandemic anymore.

6. General recommendations for future challenges

The fields of activity of the companies where the project had been conducted suppose physical work, manual operations, and repetitive simple operations, some without a previous laborious qualification. Roma employees met in such workplaces have a low professional training level as considering the new requirements. For a limited time span they will still have jobs, but the opportunity of using automation for small, routine tasks is increasingly available for the employers.

We consider that on short time all employees have to develop also other skills as for example, technology use of some simple equipments but on long term increasing education level, developing some transversal competences allowing them adapt to new jobs or technologies.

4.

Housing

This report aims, based on the analyses conducted and data collected within HOPE project, to suggest a series of recommendations for a more fair and non-discriminating listing of access criteria to social housing at local level, as well as improving the legal and institutional system as to ensure the fundamental right to proper housing.

In this respect, three guides were also drawn up within the project:

- The obligation to not discriminate through housing policies. Guide for public local authorities as to provide non-discriminating access criteria and for performing their duties concerning social housing
- Why access social housing and how? Guide on completing a social housing application file for civil society representatives, experts in charge with Roma inclusion, persons interested in accessing social housing
- Guide on preventing forced evictions, addressed to local public authorities' representatives, civil society and experts in charge with Roma inclusion

Their role is to support both local authorities and civil society in observing the discrepancies between local access and priority criteria to social housing on one hand, and the Housing Law and the other social legislation on the other hand. Secondly, the role of the guides is to promote locally the right to adequate housing as a fundamental human right, as such incompatible with the common practice of forced evictions.

4.1 Methodology

As for this report the following type of collected data was analysed within HOPE project:

- The cover letters submitted by the public local authorities considering their willingness to attend the project, letters including their answers to a mandatory questionnaire filled in as part of the application¹;
- The decisions of local councils in 15 of the localities included in the project;
- The interventions of the public local authorities' representatives that participated in the training workshops held within the project;
- The NGOs representatives' interventions partaking workshops held within the project to prevent evictions;

1 See the Appendix for APL questionnaire answers pooling.

The letters of intent submitted by LPAs (public local authorities) included quantitative data concerning the number/percentage of Roma population in that place, informal housing and housing conditions (connection to utilities, housing infrastructure). The questionnaire did not include questions about the number of State/social housing units under local authority administration, so these pieces of information were filled in to some extent from three sources: additional information requested from the LPAs within HOPE project, data comprised in the “Report on forced evictions in Romania” drawn up between 2018-2019 by The Block for Housing (Blocul pentru Locuire) and from a research on social housing in Bucharest, conducted by the Centre for Legal Resources.

Of the 35 localities included in the project, based on assessing their specific needs for support, 16 were submitted general recommendations considering the steps for regulating informal local settlements, 17 were submitted general recommendation on changing the priority criteria for social housing applicants and other two places, which reported not having priority criteria (Făgăraş and Iernut), received general recommendations on drafting such criteria.

4.2 General assessment of the housing situation in the localities

This section includes some data on the housing situation in the localities included in the project, structured based on the answers in the questionnaire submitted as part of the application. As to complete them, we also included recent available data related to the local supply of social housing units.

The questionnaire aimed to reveal housing difficulties the Romani communities face at local level, as according to the data at national level, the Romani population is disproportionately affected by living in improper conditions.

Out of the 35 places included in the project, two of them, Moineşti and Giurgiu did not send the answers to the questionnaire. The 33 LPAs answering the questionnaire estimate the Roma population at local level ranging from 1.08% (in Vaslui) up to 35% (in Băneasa). Thirty-one of the LPAs report that in the locality are Roma households not connected to utilities (sewerage, water, gas, electrical power system). Also, according to the answers of 19 LPAs, the great majority of Roma people have no financial resources to pay utilities. As related to infrastructure access, 21 of the local authorities, i.e. almost two thirds of them, state that paved roads do not extend to all Roma households, in line with the official data according to which multiple Roma communities are excluded from the access to urban infrastructure.

Thirty one of the administrative units inform that there are Roma who have no property deeds for the houses and the corresponding land, in other words they live there informally, and their number is estimated by LPAs from 20 (e.g., in Câmpulung, Cugir) up to 1,000 (e.g., in Făgăraş, Luduş, Satu Mare). However, only 23 of the LPAs consider that informal housing is a major problem in the community.

In relation to the measures taken by LPAs in order to answer the need for local housing, 14 of them, meaning less than half, stated that the local administration applied for housing projects financing in the last 3 years, although the question on the questionnaire does not allow distinguishing between different types of housing for which financing may be applied

for at central level (social, youth, Roma, evictees), and also no distinction between construction and rehabilitation projects.

In relation to the housing stock in the localities included in the project, 15 out of 35 notified not having a public housing stock, whether we talk about housing from the old housing stock (also called convenient), social or youth units (ANL). Other 20 localities manage such stock, and a few available data is to be provided below concerning their number and type, as collected from several sources: from the reports submitted by LPAs within HOPE project, from The block for Housing's research on forced eviction and from a study of the Centre for Legal Resources.

No.	Locality	Number of social housing / social destination	Number of applications 2018-2020	Number of allotments 2018-2020	Data source	HCL (local council decision) priority criteria assessed
1	Vaslui	150	41	19	HOPE	86/2014
2	Slobozia	34	-	1	HOPE	-
3	Satu Mare	290 social 101 needed	629 ²	101	HOPE	161/2020
4	Marghita	64	34	7	HOPE	15/2016
5	Reghin	32	111	4	HOPE	51/2014
6	Odorheiu Secuiesc	383	229	60	HOPE	66/2018
7	Cugir	149	43	10	HOPE	-
8	Moinești	168	-	-	BpL ³	116/2015
9	Giurgiu	236				286/2016
10	Bistrița	343	-	-	BpL	138/2012
11	Călărași	444	-	-	BpL	25/2019
12	Focșani	114				277/2017
13	Beiuș	-	-	-		214/2018
14	Carei	-	-	-		52/2013
15	Fetești	-	-	-		31/2012
16	District 2 Bucharest	258	-	-	CRJ ⁴	162/2016
17	District 6 Bucharest	0	-	-	CRJ	218/2019
18	Câmpulung	-	-	-		-
19	Iernut	-	-	-		Nu au HCL
20	Făgăraș	-	-	-		Nu au HCL

As may be observed in the table, in case of the 7 localities which had submitted the additional data we requested, high discrepancies occur between the high number of social

2 The data requested is separated per years, and the number of applications summed up for the three years (2018: 148, 2019: 211, 2020: 270). We do not know how many of them are yearly update files or new ones.

3 Blocul pentru Locuire, 2019, Report on forced evictions in Romania which occurred during 2008-2017 <https://bloculpentrulocuire.ro/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Raport-Cercetare-Evacuari-2008-2017.pdf>

4 <http://www.crj.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Studiu-de-caz-Bucuresti-website.pdf>

housing applications and the number of units attributed. In the absence of additional studies on the conditions of local housing, the (in-)adequacy of the social housing stock may be assessed only on the basis of the number of applications. However, it is very likely that the number of applications does not reflect the extent of social housing need, as many persons/families who are vulnerable or overburdened with housing costs do not submit files due to the various bureaucratic impediments.

Further on, Cugir, Fetești and Făgăraș reported, according to Hope data, BpL research respectively, “0” social housing. However, from additional data, all three have State housing stock which rent them with social destination. We do not know the number of units of this stock in Fetești and Făgăraș, or the number of those in the former public housing stock from other places in the project or if distinctions are made between them by all APLs in their reports on social housing. The need for this clarification is grounded on the example from Odorheiu Secuiesc which has in force two city council decisions, namely HCL 66/2018 on the priority criteria for new social housing awarding, and HCL 7/2021 respectively on the criteria for public housing stock, as taken over from S.C. Urbana S.A., rented with social destination.

4.3 Assessing priority criteria for accessing social housing

Housing Act 114/1996 provides priority for certain population categories when accessing social housing. It also provides a number of four criteria to be considered when establishing applicants’ priority order: housing conditions, number of children, health status and the year of the applications. According to the law, the only restrictive criteria when applying for social housing is the income—that the monthly net income per family member should not exceed the average monthly income per total economy and property absence (the applicant should not have owned or transferred property).

The law provides indeed the possibility for the local authority to settle additional criteria for applicants’ prioritisation. Nevertheless, as this monitoring report reveals very eloquently, the local authorities often apply restrictive and priority criteria which are not only contrary to the Housing Act but may be considered furthermore as illegal and discriminating.

In the sections below, we present the criteria at work in 15 of the localities included in the project. In the other five localities included in the project, although they manage social housing or housing rented with social destination, we did not have access to the Local Council’s decisions that regulate the conditions to access them (Slobozia, Cugir, Câmpulung, Iernut, Făgăraș).

By comparing these criteria with the provisions of the Housing Act, they might seem arbitrary. However their analysis reveals a pattern, a logic based on merit rather than on social need, which the local authorities apply in their elaboration.

Eligibility criteria

Following the restrictive criteria analysis in the 15 localities, we may identify 6 types of criteria which are not complying with Housing Act, leading to the actual exclusion of most vulnerable persons. These are found in different combinations in 11 out of the 15 localities.

- permanent income proof,
- was not evicted from public housing due to own fault,
- had not abusively occupied nor occupies a house in public housing stock,
- has no debts with local revenue,
- has not refused a unit from the public housing stock,
- has permanent address in the UAT (administrative unit) for at least 6 months or 1 year.

The eligibility criteria **of proving permanent income** apply in Beiuș, Călărași, Giurgiu, Marghita, Moinești and Odorheiul Secuiesc. In Beiuș and Giurgiu, the council's decision offers as reason the possibility to "pay monthly rent and the corresponding housing costs". Moreover, Odorheiu Secuiesc even sets out, through HCL 66/2018, a minimum income level per family for accessing social housing: 700 Lei for one individual, 1,000 Lei for 2 members' family, 1,300 Lei for 3 members' family, and 1,600 Lei for 4 or more members' family.

The Permanent income criterion excludes from applying for social housing precisely the persons who, due to financial instability given by informal / occasional work, have probably the highest difficulties in ensuring on their own account a house from the private market. The impossibility to ensure a suitable, steady house, leads in return to the deepening of social exclusion, including on the labour market, and as concerning the children of these families, to their exclusion from access to education. In this respect, the data from 2017 in Monitorul Social show that almost 90% of the young people born in families where parents have primary education live in poverty.⁵ Consequently, conditioning access to social housing by the existence of an income deepens the vicious circle of social marginalisation transmitted from one generation to another among the poor families.

The eligibility criteria according to which the applicants (in some places also first grade family members living together) must **not have been evicted by one's own fault from a social housing unit**, applies in Călărași, Beiuș, Giurgiu, Marghita, Moinești, Vaslui, Satu Mare and District 6 of Bucharest.

The termination of the contract due to the tenant's fault refers to the situations where the tenant failed to comply with its legal provisions, such as the payment of utilities/rent and the violation of common rules concerning noise and good behaviour. However such evictions caused by falling behind with rent/utilities payment should be prevented by the local authorities based on the legislation regarding social marginalisation prevention, which is used by some of the LPA for the regulation, by means of local council decisions, of such emergency support. In contrast, a social issue that should be the object of specific social policies, sometimes turns into an exclusion criterion which cannot improve the precarious living conditions of families..

The applicants (and first grade family members living together) from Giurgiu, Marghita and Moinești have to comply with the condition of **not having abusively occupied or currently occupying a public housing unit**.

Occupancy due to necessity, named in legal terms "abusive", represents from the onsite experience of the housing justice organisations, a means of survival considering the lack of fi-

⁵ Monitorul Social-Social Journal, <https://monitorsocial.ro/indicator/scadem-usor-saracia-dar-crestem-mult-polarizarea-sociala/>

nancial accessibility of the private rent market, but also considering discrimination against Roma persons and / or big families. In addition to the fact that such surviving strategies are incriminated (sometimes by criminal charges for unlawful interference with possession), some localities sanction it also by excluding them from social housing. However if public housing services were to be provided in accordance to the local needs, families would not be forced to adopt “abusive” occupancy. Moreover, this condition leads to supplementary questions concerning housing waste in the cities. If such empty public buildings, which vulnerable families turn to, exist begs the question why are these not re/inserted in the housing circuit to cover the needs for social housing?

An eligibility criterion in Carei, Focșani and Marghita **is to not have debts with the local revenue**, while in Reghin, although it is not a restrictive criterion, this is provided as a priority criterion, the absence of debts with the local revenue being awarded 3 points.

Legislation in Romania does not stipulate the conditioning of public services, i.e. social housing, on the beneficiary’s lack of debts. Moreover, the Administrative Code considers the principle of equality as one of the core principles of public administration, according to which “(b) the beneficiaries of public activities and of public institutions have the right to be treated equally, in a non-discriminating manner” (art. 7).

Conditioning the access to social housing by the absence of debts with the local revenue is a discriminating criterion first of all because it further deepens the vulnerability of precarious persons. If we consider fines accrual as connected with informal and/or occasional work, statistically they disproportionately affect Roma persons, who have less access to the formal labour market, due to structural discrimination and marginalisation. If to all these we add, as in the case of Focșani, the debts with public utilities suppliers, we realise that these provisions have the role to exclude from accessing a public service precisely the persons who, due to precariousness are entitled to complementary social protection measures by law. In fact, this is shown by activists from Roma organisations involved since 2017 in litigations against evictions in Focșani. According to them, HCL (Local Council Decision) 277/2017 imposed the criterion of absence of debts as a means to exclude the Roma tenants “as it was known, at the time the criteria was approved, that 90% of the Roma citizens whose situation allegedly was to be solved, are in debt with the local revenue”⁶.

In Călărași and Focșani eligibility for social housing is lost if the **applicant has refused in the past a unit from the public housing stock**. This is a problematic criterion, as it is not mentioned if the house should be in accordance with the space norm per family member, or whether it actually forces families in need to accept inadequate and under-sized housing. Only Bistrița explicitly provided the refusal of a house in compliance with national space norms, and sanctions it with 20 points.

Beiuș and Odorheiu Secuiesc require as an eligibility criterion **domicile/residence in the locality for at least 6 months**. In Satu Mare the applicant must have had the domicile or residence in the municipality for at least 1 year. We do not have access to the reasoning behind this provision but the logic would be to limit migration to the city with the purpose

6 Căși Sociale ACUM, Eugen Ghiță, <https://casisocialeacum.ro/archives/4524/evacuari-si-criterii-de-atribuire-de-locuinte-sociale-in-focsani/>

of accessing social housing. Moreover, all 13 local administrations provide as restrictive criteria the residence on UAT (territorial administrative unit) although issuing a permanent identity document depends on having property rights or on a property owner's willingness to record at that address a person not owning property. At the same time it is not clear when submitting the file if the temporary ID is accepted, issued as such due to the lack of property.

According to the official data provided by the Ministry of Interior, "during 2010-2017 there were annually registered between 82,400 and 115,000 persons with provisional identity documents – i.e. persons with no address, house and moreover, with no one to register them to an address and who do not have personal or family resources to obtain permanent identity documents with an address."⁷

However, a positive example identified following the analysis of these eligibility criteria, is the exception adopted in Fetești according to which are excluded from social housing the **"applicant and the corresponding family members owning a share of up ¼ of a house"**. Indeed, the Housing law provides as a eliminatory criterion that the applicant should not own a house, which often translates at the local level into the exclusion of those owning even a small share from an inherited house. This provision does not take into account, especially in the case of big families that a share from a house cannot guarantee decent conditions or the minimum space needed per family member. Consequently, we consider a positive aspect adapting this criterion towards extending access to housing rather than limiting it.

Priority criteria

As mentioned above, the criteria stipulated by the Housing law set out the priority of certain categories of persons, according to 4 elements associated with social vulnerability (living conditions, health condition, number of children and application date). The decisions of the local authorities frequently reflect a failure to comply with the priority order provided by the law, by means of introducing supplementary discriminating ranking criteria.

Although the scoring criteria are not explicitly eliminatory, in fact, they function as exclusion criteria, considering the inadequacy of the social housing stock as reported to the local need expressed by the number of registered applications. That is why, at the same time with the steps taken to increase public pressure for extending the housing stock, the movement for housing justice in Romania, aims to change scoring criteria at local level, replacing a merit-based system of prioritising with one based on prioritising based on needs and social vulnerabilities.

Probably the most obviously discriminating ranking criterion, which was also the object of several decisions of the National Council for Combating Discrimination (in Cluj and District 2, Bucharest) is represented by the level of education. This is awarded special points in 8 of the 15 localities, notably in Călărași, Carei, Giurgiu, Marghita, Moinești, Vaslui, District 2 and 6 of Bucharest.

⁷ Report on forced evictions, BpL, 2019, p.40 <https://bloculpentrulocuire.ro/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Raport-Cercetare-Evacuari-2008-2017.pdf>

The criterion regarding the **education level** is discriminating in itself, but also by comparison to the points allotted to other social need criteria. For example, in Carei, persons with upper education receive 20 points while people with disabilities receive 2 points and for the number of children one point per child is granted. In Călărași, 10 points for upper studies, only 3 points for severe permanent disability. Moinești grants 60 points for doctoral studies but 10 points for permanent disability. In Giurgiu are granted 15 points for upper education but between 3 and 7 points for different levels of disability and one point per child. In District 2, an applicant with two bachelor's degrees or post-graduation studies receives 40 points while different degrees of disability are granted between 10 and 20 points. At the same time the lack of education is granted no points at all in District 6, Reghin, Moinești and Carei.

The discriminating character of this criterion is based on the data referring to the risk of social exclusion associated with the education level, as well as due to Roma population's unequal access to upper education.

In conformity with the data put at disposal by the Social Monitor for 2017, poverty is very low for people with upper education (7.1%), while the poverty risk and social exclusion affects 64.1% of those having graduated only primary education⁸. In addition, according to the data from the Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2015-2020, the percentage of upper educated Roma is 0.7% compared with 14.8% among Romanian ethnics. Consequently, education level is directly discriminating socially vulnerable persons and indirectly discriminating Roma people due to differentiated (i.e. unequal) access to upper education.

Beiuș, Vaslui, Reghin, Giurgiu and District 2 of Bucharest grant points in various ways for the applicant's status on the labour market. In Reghin and District 2 labour seniority is awarded points, in Vaslui the type of contract (on limited or unlimited period of time) and in Beiuș 5 points are granted for employee status as compared with 1 point for unemployed persons. In Giurgiu, having a "secure type of income (salary, pension)" is the best scoring criterion of all, namely 20 points, even more than for upper education. Corroborating the aforementioned data concerning the level of education and the poverty risk with the data about labour market occupancy, the report "Workforce in Romania. Occupancy and Unemployment" (2017)⁹ shows that the level of education is strongly correlated with labour market occupancy, as 42% of the poorly schooled are employed, compared with almost 88% of upper education graduates.

Moreover, this criterion is indirectly discriminating against Roma persons, as according to the data provided by the National Strategy for Roma inclusion, the occupancy rate among the Roma population is 36.3%, with more than 20% lower than in the general population (58.5%, p.6-7).

According to the same source, 10% of the Roma had an employment contract on an unlimited period of time and 52% stated that they had not found a job in the last two years (p.12), while "60% of the Roma households benefit from a monthly income which is lower than

8 Monitorul Social–Social Journal https://monitorsocial.ro/indicator/scadem-usor-saracia-dar-crestem-mult-polarizarea-sociala/?fbclid=IwAR3_a9z10-91u5xoCG3g0pTK8sC8voPUeqcCmcTemnn13a4FCZOsrXkolB4

9 Institutul Național de Statistică. 2017. Forța de muncă în România. Ocupare și Șomaj.-National Statistics Institute. 2017. Workforce in Romania. Occupancy and Unemployment.

the minimum wage” and “45% have occasional or temporary jobs (as compared with 5% Romanians)” (p.13).

Thus, an antiracist housing policy which also includes the criteria for accessing social housing, must take into account that poverty, as well as precarious housing conditions, as we will show later on, have a disproportionate impact on Roma persons. This is in fact reflected by data at the European level according to which in Romania the poverty risk among Roma is 70% as compared to 25% among the general population.¹⁰

The third priority criterion we shall discuss is related to defining **housing conditions**. In the spirit of the Housing law, the housing conditions should refer to adequate housing, and in this respect we have indicators established at the European level, such as the concept of severe housing deprivation, which includes the assessment of the degree of overcrowded housing and poor amenities (bad roof, lack of indoor bathroom/toilet, or of natural light)¹¹. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights provides seven key criteria in assessing adequate housing, namely: legal security of tenure; availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure; affordability; habitability; accessibility; location and cultural adequacy¹².

Despite all these guidelines, in 13 out of the 15 localities, the criterion on housing conditions is defined according to the status in that dwelling, tenant in a private house, living with friends or family respectively, with tenants being given priority. In addition to the status in the dwelling, most localities integrate a fair criterion related to space standards – square meter/inhabitant–(Beiuș, Călărași, Giurgiu, Marghita, Moinești, Odorheiul, Reghin, Vaslui Sector 6). However in some UATs (territorial administrative units) the housing conditions are defined exclusively in terms of tenant/living with family or friends (Carei, Focșani, District 2). In Moinești, points are granted for the amount of time spent living with rent on the private market, under a registered contract, namely from 2 points for less than a year and up to 12 points for four years. In this case, the local authority seems to reward the applicant for having succeeded in the long run to ensure his/her housing before applying for a social housing unit.

From the analysed criteria in the localities, only in Bistrița and Beiuș applicants receive scoring for the space norms and housing deprivation respectively (lack of amenities such as running water, sewerage, bathroom). In Fetești, “persons or families living in unsafe houses or buildings, persons having / not having rental contracts and are in the process of being evicted, persons having houses in areas of risks (floods) and request relocation” receive 20 points, thus recognizing insecurity of tenure. In Satu Mare, besides the categories of tenant in a private house or living with family or friends in a space (where the first receives a scoring of 5 points, and the second 3 points) two more categories are provided, namely, living in makeshift housing (4 points) or living in a shelter for homeless persons or women and children emergency centres (4 points). Thus Satu Mare gives a certain amount of priority to people living in inadequate conditions.

10 FRA, *Al doilea sondaj privind minoritățile și discriminarea în Uniunea Europeană, 2016 – Second survey on minorities and discrimination in the European Union, 2016*

11 Eurostat, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Severe_housing_deprivation_rate

12 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, *The Right to Adequate Housing Toolkit* <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/housing/toolkit/pages/righttoadequatehousingtoolkit.aspx>

We emphasize in this respect the need to define these criteria based on European and international indicators, in compliance with the alarming data at European and national level regarding housing conditions in Romania. In this respect, according to the last FEANTSA report, the overcrowding rate in Romania was of 46.3% among the general population (compared with the 15.5%—the European average) and 56.4% in poor households (compared with 26.3%—the European average)¹³. Furthermore, according to the FRA 2016 report, 68% of the Roma live in households without indoors running water, almost double compared with 38% of the general population. 79% live in dwellings without an indoor toilet, shower or bathroom as compared with 31% of the general population. Moreover, the percentage of Roma living in poor housing conditions is double compared with the general population (26% compared to 12.7%)¹⁴. Roma persons are disproportionately affected by inadequate housing conditions, therefore improper acknowledgement of inadequate housing conditions as a criterion for attributing social housing, results in their discrimination in accessing housing, as a fundamental right.

Marital status represents a priority criterion in 12 localities: Beiuș, Călărași, Focșani, Giurgiu, Marghita, Moinești, Odorheiu Secuiesc, Reghin, Vaslui, Satu Mare, Fetești, and District 2. Most of them grant higher scores to married persons even though the Housing law does not provide priority for such categories in accessing social housing. Consequently, in Focșani 10 points are granted for the married applicants and 8 points for single-parent families; in Călărași, married persons receive 10 points and single persons 9 points; in Beiuș, married persons or widows/widowers score 3 points and 1 point is given to the single or divorced persons; in Giurgiu, 10 points for the married ones and 6 points for single ones; in Marghita 10 points for married ones, 8 for single persons. In Odorheiu Secuiesc 7 points are given for the divorced or single persons with children while 10 points are given for widows/widowers; in Reghin, 2 points for married persons and 1 point for single ones; in Fetești, married persons have 10 points and single ones 5 points. In Satu Mare married persons receive 10 points while single persons (widow/widower, divorced, not married) receive 8 points. In Vaslui married persons with children receive 4 points, the single ones, widows/widowers or divorced persons receive 3 points, married without children 2 points and single, widowed or divorced without children 1 point.

Considering the detailing in the assessment of the marital status and that no social need assessment of the applicants can be inferred from these distinctions, the scores allotted seem more like a moral inquest into the formalisation of family relations, rather than reflecting the priority of the applicants' social needs .

In the case of Moinești, the points granted for marital status seem to reinforce the distinction between families with children and those without children, which may translate into a higher score for the number of children, without the necessity to include marital status. In the case of District 2 no distinction is made between the types of marital status, however points are granted for “(c) married aged over 35 for one of the spouses, unmarried or divorced persons, widowed persons”, but which does not reflect the priority of the social needs of the applicants.

13 FEANTSA, Fifth overview of housing exclusion in Europe 2020, p.96 https://www.feantsa.org/public/user/Resources/OHEE/2020/Fifth_Overview_of_Housing_Exclusion_in_Europe.pdf

14 FRA, Al doilea sondaj privind minoritățile și discriminarea în Uniunea Europeană, 2016, p.38-39

Another challenging criterion considering the access to social housing is the **priority granted to persons employed in public institutions**. In Marghita, these persons receive 15 points (as compared with 10 points received by employees in private companies and 2 points in other cases), and in District 6 civil servants receive 2 points. HCL 162/2016 in force in District 2 stipulates that “priority is given to young specialists working in public enterprises”. Civil servants and employees in public institutions are entitled to receive housing as defined by the Housing law “(1) housing unit destined for civil servants, employees of public or private entities, granted under the employment contract conditions, pursuant to the legal provisions”.

Similarly, in Călărași, **5 points are granted to the persons evicted due to failure to pay the mortgage**. These persons, pursuant to the Housing law are suitable for support housing which “is rented to some persons or to a family which was evicted by foreclosure procedures from private property houses following non-payment of contractual obligations provided in mortgage loan agreements and whose economic situation does not allow them to buy or rent a property under market conditions”.

By law, local authorities may create housing for employees and support housing stock to respond to the local specific needs rather than prioritise access for such categories of persons in attributing social housing which, pursuant to the law is to be granted with priority based on social vulnerability.

In Giurgiu, Marghita and Moinești are provided also “**force majeure, unpredicted, exceptional or excellence cases**”. The scoring of such situations is left to the selection committee and in Marghita up to 10 points and in Moinești up to 20 points may be granted. Although we consider a positive aspect to prioritise social emergency situations, granting points to excellence cases represents, in line with other previously analysed criteria, a personal merit consideration rather than social need. According to the local council decision in force in Giurgiu, respectively, HCL 286/2016 of Giurgiu “excellence cases are understood as the situation of applicants who had contributed to increasing the prestige of Giurgiu municipality or of the country by intellectual, cultural, sports, civic etc. performances”. This HCL does not mention the scoring range for such situations and granting points is at the discretion of the committee. In Satu Mare, among the special priority cases stipulated by HCL 161/2020 are “persons who contributed to the cultural, social and sportive development of the city (artists, writers, singers, actors, sportspersons etc.)”, although neither the scoring method or how this status is proved are mentioned.

Among the analysed priority criteria from the localities we had identified one which is not only contrary to the spirit of the Housing law but also to its stipulations. This is **granting points for an income above medium wage** in Giurgiu, Marghita and Moinești. HCL 286/2016 of Giurgiu grants 2 points for a salary over the medium salary, at a small difference, namely 4 points, from the salary under the minimum wage. In Marghita 5 points are granted for the salary over the medium salary pursuant to HCL 15/2016. Moreover, the score granted in Marghita for the number of children is conditioned for children over 7 years old, by their enrolment in school, which is illegal and discriminatory considering that the national legislation does not stipulate these conditions. In Moinești, “for an in-

come above the medium salary but not over 3,000 Lei” 5 points are granted through HCL 116/2015.

Subsequently, whereas in all localities which stipulate as criterion the income level, this is scored inversely proportional, in Satu Mare, the scoring is directly proportional with the level of monthly net income per family member. That is to say, the higher your income is, the more points you receive, most likely a method of the LPA to ensure that a person may cover the housing costs. However this is no less discriminating, considering that it does not prioritise social vulnerability. In addition, Satu Mare also applies a provision according to which those who are attributed a social housing unit “shall deposit a 500 Lei good tenure bond”, otherwise the attribution of the social housing unit may be withdrawn.

Positive examples in criteria listing

We would like to mention also some examples we consider positive in the elaboration of the priority criteria. Even if the LPAs do not assign adequate scoring in all situations (thus evaluated by comparing them to the scoring awarded to other criteria on the priority list), their consideration is to be appreciated, as the present analysis seeks to determine the extent to which the criteria reflects the applicants’ social needs.

In Focșani and Moinești **the single-parent family receives special scoring**, priority supported by the statistical data showing that among all types of households, those comprised of a single adult and dependent children are at the highest risk of poverty—namely 40.3% of them—as compared, for instance, to 15% of the households with two adults and a child¹⁵.

In Giurgiu, **the separated applicants with dependents in care** receive special scoring. This is a positive aspect because it shows awareness in considering particular difficulties in the process of social housing file submission. Married people are requested to file the supporting documents of both spouses, which can be difficult to obtain in situations of domestic conflict or separation. If the documents of one of the spouses cannot be obtained, usually LPAs request divorce papers, again a difficult and time consuming process, taking into account the lack of access to the justice system of poor or socially vulnerable persons. Thus, taking into account such impediments is a positive aspect, considering that the legal clarity of family relations often blocks the access of vulnerable people to social housing.

Another positive aspect, as mentioned above, is **awarding special scoring for the lack of utilities** in Beiuș, respectively for **living in makeshift housing or homeless emergency shelters** in Satu Mare. Although the score granted in Beiuș is rather low as compared to other criteria (1 point for the lack of running water, 1 point for the lack of access to sewerage , 1 point for the lack of toilet) it is important to mention that it exists, especially as it is the only one of the analysed localities where such essential elements of housing deprivation are taken into consideration.

In 9 of the 15 localities, **chronic disease** or the disease giving the right to an extra room (according to the Emergency Government Decree 40/1999) is granted special scoring. This criterion exists in Fetești, Bistrița, Călărași, Moinești, Odorheiul Secuiesc, Reghin, Vaslui,

15 Eurostat 2019 https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Children_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion#The_highest_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion

District 2 and 6 in Bucharest. It represents a welcome recognition of the need for social support, based on a poor health condition. Both National Health Strategy and the data from the European Commission (2017 Health Profile) underline the burden of chronic disease in Romania, which registers the highest death toll and associated hospitalisation rate. At the same time chronic diseases affect especially the persons living in poverty and social exclusion, who have a history of inadequate housing, as well as they lack access to the medical system.

4.4 Analysis of the training workshops with experts from local public authorities

Workshops on the right to housing, attended by representatives from 33 territorial administrative units, aimed to train key resource persons locally, to support community members suffering from housing deprivation, but also to disseminate information and to promote the issue of the right to housing at local authority level. Before detailing the qualitative data gathered by means of these workshops, we note below some quantitative data regarding the participation in the workshops.

Of the total number of 33 persons attending the two rounds of workshops, 16 were from localities included in the project, and out of these, actual interventions in debates had 12 participants from whom we were able to get data about the situation and particularities of the local difficulties. Besides them, we could obtain information and perspectives from another 10 participants from localities which were not included in the project.

Eleven participants of the 33 participants had no intervention, 5 of them from localities included in the project. Of the total, 18 participants were local experts for Roma and 15 were civil servants with a plurality of offices. We mention this as it may be relevant to the issues raised in our discussions, which differ depending on the status and the power of influence associated.

Rural-Urban differences

The main distinction resulting from the situations raised by the participants was the urban vs. rural areas. Even if within workshops were represented also cities dealing with informal housing issues and lack of social housing stock, this situation is common in all the rural localities represented in the workshops.

In rural areas, the informal housing situations are associated either to some historical communities, settled on that land for tens of years or due to family extension processes, leading to occupancy of some additional land out of necessity, with tacit acceptance of the authorities. In most cases, the authorities have accepted a certain type of formalisation by registration in the Agricultural Register, which enabled the extension and connection to the public utilities infrastructure. However, the actual access to utilities depended on the financial capacity of the families to cover the costs for connection and the bills. Moreover, in the absence of a property deed, the stability of the informal housing depends on the goodwill of the local authority.

As one of the participants mentions,

“we have no criteria, housing units, application files and requests. Considering evictions, many persons built their houses on public land, belonging to the local public authority who turned a blind eye and allowed them to build. At a certain point they were registered with the agricultural register to pay those taxes to the local budget.”

In many situations, the participants from rural communities evidenced that the problem is not the lack of land, but the lack of resources for people to build their own houses and to connect to utilities at their own expense.

“Those in the community did not really apply much because they cannot afford to build a house, and they settle for living where they are.”

“People have land but no resources to build on it.”

“The younger generation who have been abroad saved money and connected to the electrical grid, but some of them paid up to 100 million”.

“They intervened in the community and the small infrastructure is quite well developed – water, sewer, asphalt, public lightning. Most of them connected (to utilities) at their own expense.”

“In time they connected to the electrical grid and water, extended the network with their own money. But not everybody is connected, not everybody is connected to the electrical grid and water. It depends on their income.

Indeed, there are still problems there with the electrical grid, many cannot afford to connect to the electrical grid and the houses are much deteriorated, and not well isolated.”

Unlike the rural areas, in the urban areas where the development pressure is higher, the problem of strict conditions for young people to access land or even the fact such lands are no longer available are raised:

“The lands pursuant law 15, the ones for young people, (...) have a lot of conditions – you should build a certain type of house, villa type, you need a certain income. Other types of lands I think are not offered so those without income or very low income do not have that many solutions.”

“They are entitled to it (to land for young people), but we do not have any land stock”.

In urban areas , informal housing issues are mostly associated with the outskirts where precarious families have built houses on public or private land and in some cases face an imminent risk of eviction. Whereas in rural areas you may reach an agreement with the local authorities by registering in the agricultural register and consequently people may apply for an identity document and access utilities or benefits, in rural areas the problem of access to identity documents or social benefits, which depend on a type of legal tenure is more prevalent .

“In this neighbourhood (...) very few have documents and very few may benefit

from heating subsidies. Even if there is the possibility of a gas connection, it is not possible for them to have contracts for gas supply, as you have earlier said and unfortunately they cannot benefit even from that firewood subvention"

However, there are some positive examples and these depended, as some of the participants argued, on including the areas of informal housing in the local development plans:

"I looked at how the community was (...) 15-20 years ago: people had no water, sewerage, gas and asphalt. And with my little strength I managed to bring the zoning plan in the Roma community and people at this moment, practically the poorest ones, have the same conditions as the rest of the inhabitants (...). This also made me fight very much for what I want."

If in rural areas the problem of access to services for the communities living informally is due to the lack of those services (e.g., the lack of jobs or medical services), in informal settlements at the outskirts of the city, the lack of urban infrastructure and public transportation is the reason why inhabitants are isolated from the rest of the town.

"There are problems when the city hall offers packages, (...) to reach those areas because usually these are given when it either rains or snows and we do not have cars to reach that area, (...), as those unpaved, mud-covered streets cannot be accessed".

"The area is also segregated, there is no access, not even that public bus. It is the only area where we have no transportation, not to mention stores and access to other services, medical services, employers and so on. So they are somehow completely isolated."

Nevertheless, in rural areas there is also the issue of reaching the closest town which, in the absence of services and jobs at that community level, due to the post-socialist deterioration of the rural areas, becomes the only possible source of development or even survival.

"Here in our area there is a village with a lot of people but they did not have many jobs. (...) We have paved roads, school minibuses, (but) no connection to the city. There was a time when we had a bus but they gave it up. "

"Health is a big issue as we do not have a medical office (...). For any problem, to the city. "

Regarding the creation of a social housing stock, which is inexistent in rural areas, another difference from the urban area as identified in participants' discourse from communes, is represented by the poverty of the area, of the local authority respectively, which reflects the inequalities of the territorial development of the country.

"Unfortunately, as I told you, local authorities are very poor. The only income is from the existing businesses in our area, otherwise there is no income. Maybe a project with European Funds. "

"The town hall cannot provide funds for such houses. (...) I lodge a request at the town hall but there is no possibility, no funds and no social housing. From where I come from there aren't any. "

Under these circumstances of the lack of financial possibilities of local authorities , improving housing conditions in rural informal settlements is sometimes taken over by the non-governmental sector, even though these interventions can only be sporadic and cannot substitute the capacity of local authorities.

“On the other side (an organisation) managed what the town hall did not, to renovate (more) houses with thermal insulated windows, roof, water and parquet.”

“I contributed with an (organisation) to the renovation of some houses in the Roma compact community.”

Difficulties of formalising informal housing

The participants in the two workshops have also shared the local difficulties related to the process of formalising informal settlements, these circumstances being mentioned on several occasions as the reason for attending these courses.

“I hope to find out everything related to housing by the end of this course because there are possibilities but there is no will. But maybe there are laws that I don’t know so I cannot say more. To know as much legislation as possible and be able to help people have a good life.”

“My interest from a professional and institutional point of view would be the method of approaching in the future and solving the property deeds issue, both for houses and land. What would be the legal intervention method?”

“The motivation (is) to get involved in solving these problems with the help of authorities, from where we definitely have support. I look for information, legislation, experience and good practice exchanges on this topic.”

“It is not that there is no solution but we have to start from a TO and for this there must be willingness, the local public authority needs to be involved. We have all the support from the mayor but it is very hard and we do not know where to start from. That is why I said the things I shall learn from this course I would apply locally and centrally.”

“Good, the PUZ (Zonal Urban Planning) passed, what’s next? Parcellations, measurements but the constructions which are as they are, if they do not fulfil minimum living standards how would they be authorised?”

“We had a project on property deeds but I do not know what has been solved. The problem is that they do not pay fees and taxes on time, some of them might have big problems here and I do not know if a project helps them as they do not pay fees and taxes on time because they do not have a job. They are interconnected and there is an endless circle.”

Consequently, as we may note, a main problem of formalisation is being unaware of the steps to be taken in applying the new regulations of the urban planning law which theoretically clarify and facilitate formalising these settlements by the local authorities but also impose a procedure which must be followed in this process.

However, as some of the critical¹⁶ positions regarding the project of urban planning law amendment have unfortunately shown, this does not provide solutions or procedures for the cases of informal buildings which cannot be authorised due to noncompliance with the safety measures and/or due to tenants' financial impossibility to sustain the costs of authorisation and the subsequent amounts of corresponding property taxes but also of the extension of the public utilities networks.

The need for social housing

What are the arguments of representatives of LPAs, both from rural and urban areas , for the need to create or extend the social housing stock?

The participants from rural areas mentioned that there have been emergency situations when solutions had to be found for the victims of violence, elderly or sick persons or homeless families.

"We had cases of domestic violence when the mother and children left home and we had no possibility to accommodate them. (We need this) for single mothers or women or single-parent families. Or newlyweds with more siblings in a household and no possibility for 3-4 families to live in 3 rooms, so newlyweds coming from large families. They had to leave abroad to be able to buy land and they struggle on their own, we have such situations."

The participants from the urban areas mentioned the number of social housing units or from the public housing stock rented with social destination in the city are insufficient considering the number of applications and the need is very high, as many persons and families live in inadequate conditions.

"It would be good for the city hall and also for the mayor for social housing units to be built with a quite small amount [rent] because most of them benefit from VMG and ASF (minimum wage) (...) and they cannot afford to pay rent in town. "

"There are complaints because we have this very moment (many) applications in the city hall to which we cannot give an answer.

"Imagine we have around 10 families with 12-13 children in a two-room house. This says it all."

Housing Discrimination

Precarious housing conditions disproportionately affect Roma persons, either in terms of informal settlements in rural or urban areas, or overcrowding and inadequate conditions in public housing stock units or social housing units. Although local authorities have the obligation to maintain these buildings in good state, these are sometimes rented without the necessary minimum conditions.

"Even though the interest of the local authority should be other than the financial one in the case of vulnerable families. But for the moment, at local level, from my

16 Blocul pentru locuire, <https://bloculpentrulocuire.ro/2019/02/12/obiectii-la-completarea-legii-350-2001/>

experience, investments are made in housing units addressing family categories with more consistent income, enabling them to have a decent living. As for the social, disadvantaged or vulnerable categories, they are limited to small spaces where a family could not live decently."

"The outskirts will always be at the end of the works performed at the level of the whole city. This also seems like discrimination, as no minimum is ensured: where it is difficult or impossible for an ambulance, a fire-fighting truck to go. "

"Only Roma apply for these housing units from the housing stock. (...) The discriminatory part occurs when I, as authority, give that space without minimum utilities, no water, light, and precarious conditions inside."

"There are social housing units from the former public housing stock which are rented over 90% to Roma who are very poor."

Moreover, as some of the participants state, the areas of informal housing at the outskirts of cities are formed with the knowledge and acknowledgement of the local authority:

"They did it on the land and with city hall's consent. (...) they did not do it as they pleased, although there are some like that, of course. "

In other cases, in rural areas, the discussion revealed, on the one hand the concentration of housing problems in Roma communities compared to the rest of the population, and on the other hand, the opposing position of Romanian to giving land to Roma has been raised, reason why in some places the land could not be incorporated into built-up areas.

"The Romanians have no problems, only for us everything is lacking."

"That land allocated is in an area where more Romanians live and they were against these things (land incorporation in built-up area) – why should we bring g there, as they will do this and that, steal from us. And it ended as they wanted. No square meter of land has been allocated. "*

"The land is outside the built-up areas and no utilities on it, but we can improvise."

Another discrimination element among those mentioned is the way in which the local authority offers the needed support:

"Many times colleagues refused to go to them (for social investigation). "

"Colleagues raise their voice and make them go from one office to another and so on."

"They (civil servants) need a course on discrimination, not just us, the Roma persons who see it anyway, either directly or indirectly."

"They did not want those persons living in those shelters walk all over the town hall, but to come directly to us."

The existence of such experiences of discrimination is reinforced by the Monitoring report on the implementation of the Strategy of the Government of Romania for the Inclusion of the Romanian Citizens belonging to Roma Minority elaborated in 2017 by the National

Agency for Roma. According to this report “the level of commitment of local authorities to solve Roma issues is very low. As to the relationship between civil servants within the local authorities and Roma citizens, the participants reveal discriminatory attitudes which are an attack on human dignity and affect the communication process for problem solving” (p.19)

Moreover, discrimination against Roma is also manifested in the legal framework, indirectly through formulation of priority criteria to social housing, as the analysis in the first part of the report has shown. In this respect, some of the participants point out as discriminating for the Roma persons the criteria regarding the level of education, as well as the lack of priority given for a very low income level:

“First of all we have to analyse things, who are the people applying for a social housing unit, as they certainly do not have a salary to live on decently, so we cannot expect them to have doctoral or bachelor studies. (...) This was a serious problem for the Roma as they had already started with minus points.”

“As far as I could see, social housing seems quite nebulous and Roma access is almost minimal. (...) A study should be conducted, what persons, disabled, evicted, so we are in the vulnerable group, those up to 35 years old, those from orphanages, retired persons. If they have high income, it is clear they have to be disregarded from the very beginning. [in the sense that they should be]”

Solutions brought by the participants

Among the solutions suggested by the participants for creating or extending the social housing stock, we find that of converting empty buildings or building on available land.

“But there are still long abandoned buildings and these could be converted into social housing. I think each locality has such buildings in which factories used to operate, farms and so on, where it could be suggested to the mayors to convert them with European Funds, because local authorities do not have money.”

“We have a plan, we have already talked to the mayor about large families which do not have enough space, we have a plot of land (...) and we want to develop it and we are considering how to build houses. We have land there and we should do something with it.”

Another type of solution offered concerned ensuring the necessary funds for projects development and the way it could be technically done, to supplement the budget of disadvantaged authorities:

“A few things concerning Roma communities should also be included in the local development plan because otherwise you cannot access European funds. (...) It is the only solution to not depend on the government’s money as a local authority. It is important to include this problem in the local development plan because then things would be easier.”

In other localities the participants talked about new building projects and of formalising informal housing in response to the urgent needs for adequate housing, however in oth-

er localities they were more sceptical in finding some feasible solutions, the alternatives being at best the emergency shelters. As we were talking about the possibility to regulate rent subsidies as an emergency solution, one of the participants outlined that even if private apartments were to be available, no one would rent them to Roma people as the city population is very racist.

Institutional relations regarding social housing access regulation

According to the Monitoring report on the implementation of the Strategy of the Government of Romania for the Inclusion of the Romanian Citizens belonging to Roma Minority, drawn up in 2017 by the National Agency for Roma, there are deficiencies in terms of relationships between local authorities and “the human resource working for the benefit of Roma communities”, especially the local expert for Roma, the health and school mediator, employees of local administrations. (p.13) The participants in the consultations which led to the elaboration of the report, mention that the employers (LPAs) use this resource for other purposes and recommend the development of some working tools and training employers (LPs) with regard to the specifics of the work carried out by the workers for Roma communities. (p.13-14)

In line with this conclusion, some of the participants shared that they do not have good relationships with the employees and civil servants at local level and need support to strengthen their status and thus , to fight more efficiently for the community they represent:

“How can you support us from a legislative point of view, to be able to become public servants, to fight with all weapons, to go all the way for them. BJR (County Office for Roma) was not helpful at all. The fact that we cannot be public servants is quite a grievous injury.”

“Were you invited to attend the local council’s decisions, asked your opinion by someone related to these criteria? (...) So, in other words, no.”

From the discussions in the workshops it turned out that regulating but also the power at local level of the worker for Roma communities depends foremost on the mayor's goodwill and openness. Moreover, where local experts managed to make their voices heard, they attribute it to their fighting spirit and experience in the field:

“My opinion is asked for all the time, I have a very good relation with my colleagues all over (...); I sincerely tell you that I am not afraid of anything because I have some years of expertise, (...) but I did not give up – with documents submitted through the circuit, we work with papers.”

“So our works is really felt, as we are really out there and we know what to do.”

“In the last few years since our presence has become more noticeable in the Roma rights movement, we made a fuss and we did not really let authorities make decisions without taking into account our and the community’s opinion.”

Even where the actual responsibilities of the local expert go beyond the duties they should formally have, this is positively appreciated by those concerned, given the practices of discrimination at the local level:

"I am very pleased as only I can go in the community and conduct social investigations. Until my arrival they were going to the neighbours for statements. It does not seem right to me to go to the neighbours I have a quarrel with for statements and that should be considered the truth and I have no rights because that neighbour that I am not on good terms with stated I have a chainsaw or a television from a certain brand."

Another element that emerged from the discussions in the workshops, regarding the improvement of institutional relations in the allocation of social housing, was related to the degree of involvement of the local Social Assistance Department. (DAS).

In this regard, some participants stressed the importance of the contribution of DAS both in assessing housing files in terms of urgency and in developing integrated social support plans for families receiving social housing, in order to prevent evictions and social marginalization.

"Everything related to Roma issues or disadvantaged people is a clear need that in those committees that establish the granting of benefits or support these people (...) they should necessarily have a person from the Department of Social Assistance, who knows the cases and can prioritize the needs identified in certain families in those files they study."

"Until now no social investigations were conducted in those families and I want to add this to the new applications procedures, an investigation to see where they live, under what circumstances, who is in more need of that house."

"There are criteria but they rely more on social investigation, the social investigation has the criteria."

"(...) After which a social assessment is carried out [in the sense that it should be carried out], there should be a long-term intervention plan, because it is useless to give him housing if he does not have the possibilities (...)—to also help and advise him, to be able to pay. Because there are many houses that were destroyed; they had nothing to pay with and disconnection from utilities followed, damage to the house and so on."

4.5 Non-governmental organisations training workshops assessment

Within the HOPE project, three series of courses on the prevention of forced evictions were held, with representatives from the non-governmental sector. Of these, two such workshops were transcribed and thematically analysed for this report, in which 24 participants were present, and 17 had contributions during the discussions, from which we were able to systematize the types of local problems and sometimes the solutions they proposed.

Following this analysis we may say that the organisations/participants fall into three types:

- organisations or branches of some organisations working locally (Partida Romilor Murgeni, Partida Romilor Satu Mare, Eco-Ro-Tin Botoşani, Fundația Un Coup de Main d'Emmaus Iași, Asociația Napoca Porolissum, Fundația Humanitas Pro Deo-Reșița);

- organisations or participants working or who had worked at national level, which gives them a comparative and systemic perspective on the issues (Roma Just, European Environmental Bureau, ACTEDO, Alături de Voi)
- organisations working at the level of some geographical areas, which include more communes or cities (Amare Phrala, Asociația Romilor din Ardeal, Asociația GAL Poarta Apusenilor).

Unlike the workshops for representatives of local public authorities, those for the NGOs naturally reveal a more diverse perspective on the types of problems at the local level and are more critical of the attitude or involvement of the authorities in solving them. In this sense, the perspective obtained from the discussions with them is complementary to that of the representatives of local authorities and contributes, along with it, to shaping a more complex picture of the causes and effects of structural housing problems, even if participants from NGOs and those from the LPA represent only partially the same localities.

The main categories of difficulties identified in these discussions were: the issue of property deeds, the issue of evictions or risks of eviction as related to development interests in localities, the issue of criteria for allocating social housing, the problem of degradation and poor rehabilitation of social housing, the issue of the correspondence between salary and rent, as well as the issue of indifference or ill-will on the part of the authorities.

Property deeds issue

As in the case of workshops with LPA representatives, the issue of informal housing also emerged as frequent and acute in the discussions with the NGOs. This problem, in addition to those associated with the lack of municipal infrastructure and connection to utilities, also comes with the potential risk of eviction, housing without property deeds depending on the goodwill of the local authority. This situation is more predominantly perceived as a threat by civil society, while LPA representatives placed more emphasis on the collaboration and goodwill of the mayor's office. Moreover, as we may see from some of the excerpts below (but also from other interventions during the discussions), the issue of housing is exploited for electoral purposes. This is not a bad thing in itself, as it is important for local elected officials to include this issue on their agenda, but it becomes a problem when the measures taken do not pursue legal tenure or when they seek political capital through urban development projects involving evictions.

“The problem that we, the Roma community, would have with our homes is that they are owned by the state, out in the fields. Those houses do not have property deeds or any documents. So town halls, local authorities can throw Roma out at any time and day.” (Bihor County)

“The housing situation in the community is disastrous. So there is simply no more land, no more space for people to build a chicken coop, (let alone) a house. Moreover, all the houses in the community, in Deroaia, do not have property deeds. So no member of the community owns the land. I made many approaches to the mayor's office, I also had discussions with the mayor's office on this topic, but unfortunately I did not reach any results, discussions and that's it. (...) Not to mention the infrastructure. There is no access road. It is good that there is an access road for

Mocănița (local train), but there is no access road for emergency cars. They don't have sewers, they don't have water, they don't have electricity. The situation is the same in the other communities in the Apuseni area, the problem is general with the property deeds.” (Alba County)

“(I) had a problem that the Roma are not offered land for housing, to build a house, and the Roma are abusively occupying land to build where they can, in the fields, and I even had problems with those at the town hall. If a solution were to be found in this way and we could be able to help the Roma to get places or land for houses, it would be extraordinary.” (Murgeni, Vaslui)

“I was interested especially in these housing issues, this was the reason I registered for this course, as they build homes and build them without papers, without anything, because a mayor comes and as the mayor is kind... (...) but in fact the mayor is wrong, (saying) “build there because as long as I am mayor you should have no problems” and the people start building. And when the mayor dies or he/she is gone, others come abusing – that it is illegal or that the land is how it is.” (Sălaj)

“(Security of tenure) is the greatest problem in our county, especially in Alba. There are no property deeds for houses and we have a case where everybody from a block of flats was evicted. They said they’ll evict also those in the houses, the ones without papers for them. (...) The mayor Hava told them after evicting those from Turturica, he left a message on Facebook that steps were taken to evict them too.” (Alba Iulia)

Evictions or eviction risk resulting from development projects

Although this section is in close connection to the previous one, we consider it important to separate it analytically to point out, more than tenure insecurity, the way it is connected with and transformed by the local development projects, an aspect underlined by some of the participants. In this respect, besides the examples above from Alba Iulia, we have more examples in Botoșani, Bistrița and Roșia Montană, whether we are talking about tourism development projects or towns’ historical centres restoration. These may be happy cases like in Botoșani or Bistrița, where the community displaced from the centre of the town was relocated in other houses, even if at the outskirts:

“There were very many buildings, all the old buildings from the old city centre were returned to their owners; whatever, many in that area were glad that they somehow got rid of Roma people. (...) I know that a few of them were already applicants for social housing and all were evicted and simply moved, they were merely allocated a new house because the town hall decided to do other things with the old buildings from the old city centre where they were living.” (Bistrița)

“There was a similar situation here, some of the citizens from the Roma community were indeed moved in what was the outskirts then, but meanwhile that area is an youth housing area (ANL–National Housing Agency). It is somewhere on the outskirts however there are many young people, businessmen included, in these blocks of flats so I don’t see it as a problem. There is also public transportation, pavement, there is also a kindergarten in the area and stores” (Botoșani)

However, there may also be examples where tourism development projects come amid lack of ability and / or willingness of local authorities to provide adequate housing solutions for those affected:

“Câmpeni, Abrud and Roșia Montană town halls signed without any public consultation, without consulting any member of the community or anything, they concluded a partnership with an Austrian investor through which they undertook to make available the narrow train route on which Mocănița currently operates. Ok, all good, but this Mocănița passes exactly through the middle of the Roma community, so exactly through the middle of the Roma community—I don't know, so to speak, 1-2 m from the houses in the community . (...) That investor threatened people, as far as I understand. I talked to the members of the community and he threatened them, he told them that he would get them all out of there, that they did not have property documents and he is somehow the landlord-tenant on that line of Mocănița.” (Roșia Montană)

Moreover, if we link the risk of forced evictions to the local authorities desire to attract investors, we realise, as one of the participants says, that this is a possible future scenario in the case of any locality:

“At least in Botoșani, as it is not a very important and developed city, we did not have such serious situations as were the case in Cluj, Alba and maybe Timișoara, where there are a bit bigger interests. I think this saved us a little. (...) Again, this is not a city of interest for great investors. Sometime in the future maybe the situation would change, I guess.” (Botoșani)

Social Housing Access criteria

Several participants reported, as in the case of LPA representatives, the issue of local criteria for access and priority of social housing applicants. An example highlighted by one of the participants, Roma Just activist, was that of the criteria in Focșani, which exclude people with debts to the public budget and utilities. The related problem, which we will resume in one of the following sections, is the disproportion of forces between local authorities that impose discriminatory criteria and NGOs that challenge them and do not have the same resources and power to fight for years in courts to change them.

“So, those criteria are often disastrous, in fact in most cases. (...) If we conduct research in all town halls where we have social housing stock you shall observe unbelievable abuses of this type (...) and there was no one to challenge them in due time because a local council decision may be challenged during a time span; if no action is taken, it is adopted and remains final.” (Roma Just)

“Most people (who) do not obtain a social housing unit face precisely this criteria which from our point of view should be regulated at national level, (...), meaning the same criteria for all communities.” (Alături de Voi)

Deterioration and poor maintenance of social housing

Another reported problem was the one related to the non-fulfillment by the LPA of the obligations to maintain the social housing units in good condition. According to the Report on Forced Evictions of the Block for Housing, this situation is often encountered at the local level and is primarily related to the poor quality of materials and construction work for this type of housing, which actually reflects the disregard of the authorities to the quality of life of people who benefit from social housing. It also reflects a disregard for social housing as public service.

In the absence of building maintenance and against the background of their degradation due to structural problems of construction quality, it becomes very easy for local authorities and the media to fuel the prospect of “lack of civilization” of tenants, who would not be able to care for the housing units.

“There are those houses, social housing units, that are deteriorated for which monthly rent is paid but no repair is done, the sewerage is a disaster, the foul water drains on the road. They simply made a mockery out of them.” (Târgu Mureș)

“That ghetto was rehabilitated at least 2 times in 20 years, 30 years from the Revolution. And still it has reached a quite advanced state of deterioration. Not even that renewal was made responsibly, it was like, how should I put it, for votes, before the electoral campaign, a Romanian style fast forward work: painting, 2 faucets replaced, but the pipes and the others not. And so the walls fall off.” (Botoșani)

“Of course all the other problems appear, there is not always water, there are pipes, and those buildings deteriorate from the water and lack of maintenance and broken pipes. Clearly, the problem of drinking water or cleaning can no longer be raised there, since practically all those buildings are in a continuous state of disrepair.” (about Botoșani and ghettos area, Flămânzi and Dorohoi)

Wages versus living costs

In the discussions with NGO representatives the issue of the extent to which a person who works can actually support himself/herself from the income earned has appeared several times. This aspect comes as a counterpoint to the common discourse that if you work you will be able to have housing or live decently, respectively that if you fail to make a living, it means that you do not work. Therefore, the emphasis on the employability of marginalized people and on obtaining and maintaining a job as a magic solution to all socio-economic problems, is counter argued by the reality of statistical data, but also by the experiences shared by activists working with vulnerable people. In 2018, 85% of employment contracts in Romania were below the net value of 2552 lei, i.e. below the value calculated for a decent standard of living¹⁷. At the same time, Romania has the highest in-work poverty rate from the EU, of 17%, almost double the European average of 9.6%.¹⁸

17 See Social journal <https://monitorsocial.ro/indicator/salarii-si-viata-decenta-in-romania/> and the study Coșul minim de consum lunar pentru un trai decent pentru populația României, 2018 <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/buka-rest/14759.pdf>

18 European Commission, European Social Policy Network, Luana Pop, In-work poverty in Romania, 2019

“There is a big problem because when we succeed in employing them, we cannot manage to get them employed with a very high salary, no one offers them a high salary so as to be able to have a life, a normal life. And due to the fact that the rent is very high, and of the fact we submit files for social housing and we get no answer, it prevents us from somehow re-integrating them in the society.” (Iași, organisation working with homeless persons)

“Here in Satu Mare the rents are too high for a minimum wage and considering the large number of persons in a low-income family, the lack of jobs especially during this pandemic when very many companies avoid employing Roma people, (...) many would want to benefit from social housing because they cannot afford a rent.” (Satu Mare)

“Yes, you integrate her/him on the labour market and she/he has a minimum wage, let’s get real. A minimum wage while also having a family does not allow you to rent a house on the private market.” (Reșița)

“After all they work too, including people among those mentioned before, parents who work, but it is clear that for a very low salary that is not enough, it is not enough no matter how much they would want that. And living at 100 km from the closest town would be impossible, i.e., commuting costs a lot and so a minimum salary per economy lives you with almost nothing to bring home.” (Botoșani)

Authorities’ disregard or ill-will

Whether we are talking about the provision of land for young people, forced evictions or inadequate relocations, discriminatory criteria for social housing access or the non-allocation in a reasonable time of these homes on which the lives of many depend, the participants shared that they often face opacity and indifference from local authorities, who should be responsible for ensuring the right to adequate housing.

The struggle for their involvement and accountability is one of endurance and determination, given the disproportion of power between the two sides, when the authorities can choose, and often do, to ignore these issues, despite awareness of their seriousness and social urgency.

“I want to tell you I received no answer nor the persons who submitted applications, as many of them told me the town hall was not even willing to accept their applications. Although (...) I had a clear talk with the mayor and my colleagues and I committed to help them draw up the applications (for the land). We received no answer! Now, there would be land available, as it says in the law it depends also on the land the town hall has. We have here a lot of land. Unfortunately the town hall is very very, how I should put it, indolent.” (Roșia Montană)

“No, the town hall simply does not want to. There were certain suggestions from public representatives who would want to take us, move us elsewhere – we live close to the centre of the town. The previous city administration had done its best to isolate us by mounting some banners to hide the community, do you understand?” (Târgu Mureș)

“So, of course we feel discriminated against and you may say that indifference is discrimination. Nobody pays attention to you, not even to give you an answer.” (Târgu Mureș)

“A group of that community (...) are “accommodated” there—improperly said accommodated, as it is a former military building which served the rangers, a very very deteriorated building and you realise that the children going to school or studying have no chance; 4-5-6 family members live in a simple room, as these military rooms were. As far as I understand, they were displaced, evicted from certain areas and a temporary location was found there by mutual agreement. But that temporary has lasted for many years and they have been living there for over 10 years now.” (Botoșani, Prut riverbank)

“In time, we identified many homeless persons who were evicted; even our former beneficiaries encountered problems of this type due to the fact that they could no longer afford to pay the rent. Part of them submitted files for social housing 10 years ago and they have not received an answer up to this moment.” (Iași)

“As we can see, the town hall comes with a very strong weapon, that of making the decision to act from one day to another. Using local police and abuse they can throw you out, change the contract etc. etc., and we come after them with a sling and stones and it might take us 7 years to reach them. ” (Roma Just)

Solutions

a) Imposing nationwide criteria

As we showed in a previous section, one of the most pressing issues reported by participants was the local criteria for allocating social housing, which are discriminatory against the people they should prioritize. From the discussions with the activists, it emerged as a solution the need to amend the Housing Law, in the sense of limiting at national level the power of local authorities to adopt criteria additional to those of social vulnerability provided by law.

“To see how I could do this nationally, to be able to be in solidarity, to change the way the local council imposes the criteria. To follow the ones in the law and that's it, without having other possibilities to adapt them locally. (...) So those criteria are often devastating, in fact in most cases.” (Roma Just)

b) Integrated social services

Another proposal discussed by activists, as well as by LPA representatives, was to regulate integrated social services, which would complement the effective provision of social housing.

“Slowly, although there were good intentions and a certain level of political capital was gained by relocating these people from the city center to that part of Bistrița, I still think that their situation worsened simply by the idea that they were moved from the center to a peripheral area. But their social problems were not taken into account, only the problem of housing and thus not much was solved except the change of the housing itself, the change of the place they lived in.” (Bistrița)

“And I think the problem here is very big, because we as an organization are very active in advocating for integrated services when we provide support to a person or a family to get out or to overcome the state of social vulnerability. Because if you provide social housing, but it does not come bundled with other services, normally that person will not be able to pay rent and even more, utilities” (AdV)

Although we admit that it is necessary to have a social protection plan through which the local authority to prevent possible evictions due to difficulties in paying housing costs, we must discuss how these services are seen by participants, which is closely related to the way in which public social housing services are seen.

During the workshops, the idea of complementary support services was presented as a form of conditioning social housing, these services having the role of helping the person or family in question “to overcome the precariousness” that pushes them from the very beginning to turn to social housing.

“It's like a contract, yes, I give it to you, they are free services, but in fact they are not really free. I ask you to come with something extra, to prove to me that you want to overcome your condition. (...). My goal is not to keep you here indefinitely because you are perhaps blocking it, instead of offering this possibility to others who want to come by and solve their problems. So it is with social housing, it should be a transitional stage in this reintegration process.” (AdV)

However, this perspective is contrary to the idea that the right to housing is a fundamental right, from which also follows the housing first approach of the European recommendations. This approach is based on the principle that this right should not be conditioned in any way but on the contrary, supported by any necessary complementary social measures. However, the perspective of social housing and support services as transients is implicitly based on the idea that precarious people, who claim their right to social housing, are unproductive and uncompetitive people, who must, through these services, be transformed into competitive people. This premise is false because, as other participants have previously argued, the problem is not that precarious people do not work, but that the income earned does not allow them a decent living. To this we must add that certain types of work are not even recognized or remunerated as such, like the reproductive and domestic work which, in the absence of adequate public childcare infrastructure, effectively excludes women with children from the formal labour market.

In addition, the increasingly complex thinking of conditionings for social protection services starts precisely from the premise that people want to take advantage of the system and “indulge” in the state of dependence, an idea that delegitimizes public services and fuels suspicion and hatred against precarious people, as reflected in the recent public campaign against “socially assisted people”.

“We must be aware that many people will live there their generation and the next generation, because due to the level of education they will always have minimum wage and will barely be able to pay up to date housing expenses, living expenses and utilities. And so it would be too painful to be transient from the start. It may be possible for some, yes, some will be able to be transient, but be aware that for some there

is no way. And then what are we going to do, we are going to leave those people in the street again?! Because time has passed, time has expired?" (Reșița)

Land for young people or attribution of empty buildings

Two other types of solutions were proposed by a participant from the rural area, and these were also recurrent in the workshops with LPA representatives: granting land to young people under Law 15 and reconversion and allocation of empty buildings/houses in the locality, to those currently living in overcrowded conditions:

"(S)et some criteria and let's put those houses that are still empty, that now are practically empty, they degrade. And do it to help the community members who stayed here." (Roșia Montană)

"Discussions on law 15/2003 on married young people. Here we can say that we took a lot of steps, we even had a meeting with the young people and with the representatives of the mayor's office, even the mayor participated in the meeting. Because, as I told you on the first day, if you remember, communities are compact, that is, there are many in very small spaces. So there is no space to build. Many of the locals stay with their parents in the house because they have nowhere to go. They have the opportunity to build a house, but they do not have the necessary land." (Roșia Montană)

4.6 Recommendations on the improvement of the national and local legal framework

- Amending the Housing act, to include:
 - Prohibition of forced evictions , i.e., evictions without adequate relocation
 - Nationwide eligibility and priority criteria for social housing; limiting the legal possibility of the local authorities to establish additional criteria or to distort through scoring the priority granted by law to social vulnerability
 - Clear definition of inadequate housing conditions and insertion of social inquiry, as part of the assessment process of social housing applications, in order to determine social emergencies
 - The provision of support social services, complementary to social housing allotment, namely support for rent and utilities payment in the case of low-income persons. These services and benefits, as well as social housing and other types of housing support should not be conditioned in any way, in accordance with the housing first principle
 - The definition of a reasonable term for the actual allotment of social housing
 - Setting up local authority's obligation to draw up and make public annual analyses concerning:
 - > Local housing needs and difficulties, identified on the basis of social inquiry
 - > The number of social housing applications and their date

- > The applicants' profile according to the priority criteria
- > Social housing applications versus social housing allotment
- > The number of non-eligible applications and the reasons for it
- > The evolution of the public / social housing stock and their occupancy status.

The data is necessary to identify the impediments in accessing social housing, to summarise nationally the local housing problems and to ensure transparency in the management of the public / social housing stock.

- Improving the local criteria for social housing allotment, in compliance with the provisions of the Housing act; the various eligible social categories should not be made to compete with each other when accessing social housing (all the eligible social categories should be allotted social housing in a reasonable term and, as the case may be, the most serious housing issues should be prioritised).
- A better correlation between the Housing act and the social and anti-discrimination legislation but also between the housing strategy and other strategies (for example, the Strategy for Roma inclusion, the Strategy for the prevention of poverty, the Strategy for Youth, for people with disabilities, for sustainable development); a better correlation between government ministries (Ministry of Development, Ministry of Labour etc.), and between different city halls' departments (public estate, housing , urban planning, social services).
- The mayors, through the City Halls Association, should notify the Government about the local social housing needs, and also about the need to simplify the process of accessing governmental funds for social housing
- The elaboration of local housing strategies, assumed through local councils' decisions, operationalised in multi-annual action plans and adequately budgeted to achieve annual objectives. The strategy shall include the assessment of the city halls' compliance with the right to adequate housing and to a healthy environment. The local strategies should also include an assessment of the local needs for social and emergency housing, as well as an assessment of the available public estate that could be converted, in order to increase the social/emergency housing stock. The measures/indicators shall annually refer to the number of forced evictions prevented, the solutions to the housing problems in informal settlements, the number of social housing units increased through construction, renovation or re-assignment of housing functions to vacant public buildings, etc.
- Strengthening the institutional position of the Roma local expert and of the other social workers with attributions in Roma communities, by compelling LPAs to consult them about the city councils' plans and decisions that impact the community.
- Creating/increasing local social housing stock
 - Identification and reconversion of the empty buildings in the localities
 - Simplify the access to governmental programmes for social housing construction
 - Granting priority in local budgeting to construction of/reconversion to social housing
- Monitoring and preventing forced evictions by:
 - Complementary social protection services/benefits, support for utilities/rent payment

- Governmental support in formalising informal settlements or alternatively adequate relocation of the affected communities.
- Creating a mechanism for the civil society to report at central level the local situations in risk of forced evictions
- LPAs to draw up procedures for monitoring the eviction risk and preventing forced evictions
- Governmental support in formalising the informal settlements
 - Creating support procedures at governmental/regional level for the clarification / adaptation of the institutional steps to be followed by LPAs in the local formalisation processes
 - Creating support procedures at governmental/regional level for covering the costs of construction authorisations in the informal settlements and of the costs to connect to public utilities
- Independently or at the same time with the formalisation procedure, the extension of urban and public utilities infrastructure in the informal settlements, with the purpose of improving the housing conditions, by including the respective areas in the local development plans.

Annex - LPA questionnaire table

No.	Locality	County	Number of Romani persons	Number of households of Romani persons	Number of persons/ household	Medium size of a household	Are there Romani people with no property deeds for houses and their corresponding land?	Is illegal housing tenure a major problem in the municipality?	Are there Romani houses not connected to utilities?	What type of utilities?	Most of Romani have financial resources to pay utilities?	Are there paved roads corresponding to all Romani houses?	Has the municipality applied for some housing projects financing in the last 3 years?	Is the municipality competent to draw up and implement housing projects?
1	Beius	Bihor	500	84	10	20mp	No	No	No	n.a.	Yes	No	No	Yes
2	Bistrita	Bistrita Nasaud	3425	685	7	40mp	300	No	Yes	Sewer, running water	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
3	Calarasi	Calarasi	17%	3000	5	30mp	450	Yes	Yes	Gas, water, sewer	No	No	No	Yes
4	Campulung	Arges	4.31%	3.64%	5	50mp	20	Yes	Yes	Gas, water, sewer	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
5	Carei	Satu Mare	7%	7%	5	30mp	50	Yes	Yes	Gas, water	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
6	Cristurul Secuiesc	Harghita	8%	5.58%	5	30mp	150	Yes	Yes	Gas, water, sewer	Yes	No	Yes	YES
7	Cugir	Alba	859	400	5	15.33mp	20	Yes	Yes	Sewer, gas	No	No	Yes	No
8	Drăgănești Olt	Olt	15,4%	10.90%	8	No data available	300	Yes	Yes	Electrical power, gas, drinking water	Yes	No	No	Yes
9	Drăgășani	Vâlcea	2760, 13.6%	720, 9%	4	No data available	100	No	Yes	Electrical power, gas	Yes	Yes	No	No

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10	Făgăraș	Brașov	2126, 6.92%	748	3	30mp	1000	YES	Yes	Gas, water, sewer	No	No	Yes	Yes
11	Fetești	Ialomița	11%	10%	10	54mp	120	Yes	Yes	Water, sewer	No	No	No	No
12	Focșani	Vrancea	5500	No data available	5	21mp	30	No	Yes	Gas, electrical power	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
13	Iernut	Mures	846	220, 33.60%	4	20mp	Yes	110	Yes	Gas, electrical power, water	No	No	Yes	Yes
14	Jimbolia	Timiș	1300	10%	5	20mp	Yes	Not known for sure	No	Water, sewer, sanitation	No	No	No	No
15	Ludus	Mures	1300	500, 10%	4	30mp	1000	No	Yes	Gas, water, sewer, electrical power	Yes	No	No	No
16	Marghita	Bihor	1811, 10.6%	364, 5.72%	4	16mp	300	Yes	Yes	Gas, sewer	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
17	Odorheiul Secuiesc	Harghita	10.69%	10%	5	20mp	325	Yes	Yes	Gas, electrical power, water	No	No	Yes	Yes

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18	Ștefănești	Argeș	2000, 12.5%	574, 10.7%	4	20mp	140	Yes	Yes	Water, sewer, sanitation, gas	No	No	Yes	Yes
19	Săcueni	Bihor	3200	No data available	5	No data available	590	Yes	Yes	Electricity	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
20	Sântana	Arad	1154, 10%	479, 12%	7	No data available	184	Yes	Yes	Gas, water, sewer	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
21	Sectorul 2	București	5639	No data available	5	No data available	No data available	No	Yes	Gas, electrical power, water	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
22	Sectorul 6	București	30000, 10%	6000	5	No data available	500	Yes	Yes	Sewer, gas	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
23	Băneasa	Constanța	35%	35%	6	No data available	Yes	No	Yes	Gas, water, sewer	No	No	No	Yes
24	Bujoreni	Vâlcea	600, 16%	250, 10 %	4	40mp	180	Yes	Yes	Gas, water, sewer, electrical power	No	No	No	No
25	Simian	Mehedinți	1294 din 10780	889, din 5796	3	30mp	Yes	Yes	Yes	Electrical power, gas, drinking water	No	Yes	No	Yes

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26	Cetățeni	Argeș	1150,34%	359, 28%	5	No data available	300	No	Yes	Water, sewer, sanitation, gas	No	No	No	Yes
27	Fărcaș	Dolj	369, din 28089	111 din 874	4	No data available	40	Yes	Yes	Water, sewer, sanitation, gas	Yes	No	No	No
28	Jilava	Ilfov	2500 din 12000	350, 20 %	7	No data available	150	Yes	Yes	Current, water, gas	Yes	No	No	Yes
29	Slobozia	Ialomița	1272. 2.7%	352, 2.15%	3	30mp	212	Yes	Yes	Water, sewer, gas	No	No	Yes	Yes
30	Nădlac	Arad	500	No data available	5	20mp	150	Yes	Yes	Water, sewer, electrical power	Yes	Yes	No	No
31	Reghin	Mures	6.22%	4%	5	30mp	80	Yes	Yes	Sewer	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
32	Vaslui	Vaslui	1080, 1.08%	240, 1,12%	6	No data available	110	No	Yes	Sewer, water	No	No	No	Yes
33	Moinești	Bacău	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
34	Giurgiu	Giurgiu	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
35	Satu Mare	Satu Mare	7500	1500	5	20	1000	Yes	Yes	Current, drinking water, sewer	Yes	No	No	Yes

