

Roma Education Fund
The GALLUP Organisation Romania

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**Analysis of the impact
of affirmative action for Roma
in high schools, vocational schools
and universities**



GALLUP

ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT
OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION FOR ROMA IN HIGH SCHOOLS,
VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES



ROMA
EDUCATION
FUND

GALLUP

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Coordinators: Mihai Surdu and Judit Szira
Authors: Bojinca Marian, Munteanu Daniela, Toth Alexandru – chapters
1-14; Mihai Surdu, Judit Szira – chapter 15
Consultant: Anikó Horváth

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A final word to note that the conclusions and recommendations at the end of the report are our thoughts on this issue and are the sole responsibility of the coordinators.

Mihai Surdu and Judit Szira
Coordinators

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of an integrated analysis (qualitative, quantitative and document analysis) of the impact of the affirmative action for Roma people in secondary and higher education institutions. The purpose is to understand the effects of the implementation of the affirmative action mechanisms and their impact upon beneficiaries and the communities from which they come.

According to the terms of reference for this study, the impact analysis of the affirmative action has the following objectives:

1. Estimating the number of beneficiaries of the affirmative action for Roma people in universities, high-schools and vocational schools.
2. Describing the socio demographic profile of young Roma people occupying reserved places for Roma people in high-schools and vocational schools.
3. Describing the socio demographic profile of young Roma people occupying reserved places for Roma people in universities.
4. Assessing the mechanisms for the reserved places and the effects they may have.
5. Assessing the way the reserved places for Roma students in high-schools and vocational schools are distributed, according to the type of specialization of the institutions.
6. Assessing the way the reserved places for Roma students are distributed in universities, according to the type of specialization of the universities.
7. Assessing the application process for the places for Roma students.
8. Assessing the school performance and the drop-out rate among the pupils and students enrolled on the places reserved for Roma students (high-schools, vocational schools and universities).
9. Assessing the job opportunities (or further continuation of studies) for the graduates of the places reserved for Roma students.
10. Assessing the impact upon the participation in the Roma movement of the graduates of the reserved places for Roma students.
11. Assessing the impact upon the Roma identity.
12. Assessing the impact upon the beneficiaries self esteem.
13. Assessing the relation among the beneficiaries of the reserved places for Roma students and their non-Roma colleagues and the atmosphere in the classroom.
14. Assessing the public opinion regarding the affirmative action for Roma students.

This report tries to understand the short term effects of the affirmative action measures on the main stakeholders (beneficiaries, educational institutions, community), but also the long term effects on the community and the society. Furthermore, the analysis tries to

identify the barriers preventing the access to such places and the risk factors which might lead to students dropping out.

Note that the affirmative action policy is perceived differently by the stakeholders, which is often reflected in their behaviour. Their perceptions of such policies may be structured on a continuum; from the “discrimination of the majority” and “favouritism of Roma children” to the other extreme, where such policies are considered as “a children’s right” or as a “duty of the state to do something”.

Irrespective of how such policies are perceived, most interested parties consider that they should be temporary, until the gaps between the Roma ethnic group and the majority group are reduced, in respect of the educational attainment, school attendance rate, and establishment of intellectual élites. This time horizon is perceived by some of the interviewed subjects as being related to the replacement of the generations (namely the time when the children of the current beneficiaries will reach their adult age) or the integration of Romania within the European Union. Moreover, some of the interviewed subjects believe that affirmative action should be conceived from a European perspective, and, therefore, be developed also at European level.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The affirmative action policy was conceived “on the run” starting from specific objectives such as the training of some social workers belonging to the Roma ethnic group or teachers belonging to the Roma ethnic group, up to much wider objectives such as creating an intellectual élite of Roma people. Thus, in 1992, upon the initiative of the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work of the University of Bucharest, the first reserved places were allocated to Roma candidates, in the specialization for social workers. In 1998, the Ministry of Education adopted the first official regulations (orders 3577, 4562, 5083 of the Minister) to reserve special places for Roma candidates in 7 universities. Later on, such places appeared at an even greater number of universities. **These two time milestones (1992 and 1998) represent the most important moments in the development of affirmative action: the implementation and trial (1992) and the expansion at the level of the entire secondary and higher education system (1998).**

In secondary education, the first affirmative action policy was adopted¹ in 1998, by the creation of some classes for Roma students within “normal” schools (pedagogical high-schools). As of 2000, by order 3294/2000 of the Ministry of Education, affirmative action was extended to the entire secondary education system, and the county school inspectorates were made responsible for determining the number of places and the education units where such places were to be created. These may be granted up to a maximum of two special places per class (over the school registration figure), and the admission will be based on general criteria.

According to the data collected from the school inspectorates and university rectors,² **during 2000-2006, approximately 10,300 students enrolled³ in secondary and vocational education on special places for Roma people, and approximately 1,420 students benefited of these places in universities.** During these 7 years, the number of pupils and students admitted on the special places increased each year, and in 2006, 5 times more students were admitted on the special places in secondary education classes, and over 4 times more students were admitted in higher education institutions, as compared to 2000.

¹ By the same orders of the minister as in the case of higher education: 3577, 4562, 5083 as of 1998.

² The data were collected throughout the survey from the county school inspectorates and universities, on the basis of a standard form.

³ As mentioned in chapter 7, the number of beneficiaries (those admitted and enlisted on these places) is smaller than the number of places reserved for Roma students.

Only two-thirds of the places reserved for secondary education or higher education were taken, which is due to the administrative mechanism of establishment and distribution of the special places for Roma students: the number of allocated places is generally bigger than the estimated demand. As for the secondary studies, the highest occupation rates were recorded during 2001-2004 (70-75 per cent), whereas in the case of higher education, this rate grew a lot during 2005-2006 (over 80 per cent). The decline in the occupation rate in higher education during the last two years may be explained by the fact that the number of allocated places continuously increased each year, whereas the demand decreased.

There is a big imbalance between urban and rural regions, and out of the total students admitted on special places **for the secondary cycle approximately 29 per cent come from the rural areas, whereas this is true for only 20 per cent of the students admitted on special places in universities.**

In secondary education, **approximately two-thirds of the special places for Roma students were occupied in the classes within the theoretic branch** (especially for philology, but also for mathematics-informatics), whereas for the **vocational education, most places (approx. 70 per cent) were distributed in technical classes.**

As for the university studies, the distribution of the special places for Roma students is predominantly in specializations within the human/social sciences (social work, sociology, pedagogy, philology etc). The next most popular specializations, which were approximately equal, were the vocational faculties (specializations such as arts or sports) and the economic science faculties. This distribution depends upon the policies of each separate university, most of them considering the demands of the beneficiaries and the occupation rates relevant to such places registered during the previous years. Moreover, the institutional representatives interviewed for this study explained these occupation differences by means of the type of specialization, the training differences among the candidates on the reserved places and on regular places, regarding the real disciplines (exact sciences), which require generally additional training. Also, at the level of faculties, **the percentage of women admitted on special places for Roma students is significantly larger**, most likely because most places were allocated to the specializations traditionally preferred by women (e.g., human sciences).

The data collected in the course of this study through the sociological investigation show that the **beneficiaries having access to the reserved places in high-schools are more often young people coming from families with a higher education level, from relatively small households and from families with one or at most two children.** These are families where the parents' interest in education is higher, and who have a better material condition than the beneficiaries of the places in vocational schools. Most beneficiaries come from the urban environment and only 5 per cent of them speak Romani at home as the main language. **The highest rate of non Roma students enrolled on special places was found in high-schools: 13 per cent state they are non Roma, neither of their parents being members of the Roma ethnic group.**

Beneficiaries in vocational schools come from larger families, where a significant number of families have more than three children, where the financial resources are poorer, as reflected in the equipment in the household, and fewer beneficiaries have a computer at home (40 per cent) than beneficiaries of high-schools (75 per cent) or faculties (71 per cent). Beneficiaries in vocational schools are more attached to the traditional communities, speak the Romani language more often (20 per cent) and more often follow the ethnic traditions within the family. The rate of non Roma students who enrolled these places is lower: 5 per cent stated they were non Roma.

In the university environment, beneficiaries come from relatively larger families, having 3-4 children. Also, as compared with the beneficiaries from high-schools, the cases in which **young beneficiaries come from families with a low educational background** are more frequent. The equipment in their households reflect they have better economic resources than beneficiaries from vocational schools, however not as good as the beneficiaries from high-schools. The young people have tight connections with the Roma community (15 per cent speak the Romani language at home) and the cases when such places are occupied by non Roma students are not frequent (10 per cent) as in high-schools.

By analyzing only the cases in which the beneficiaries declared they were Roma people, we note that **the Romani language is the mother tongue for less than 25 per cent of them** (22 per cent of the vocational school beneficiaries, 7 per cent of the high-school beneficiaries and 17 per cent of the university beneficiaries). Indeed, ethnic affiliation is not one of the characteristics by which beneficiaries define themselves spontaneously; the most frequently mentioned characteristics are honesty, sincerity, diligence, pride, sociability, politeness etc. **None of the respondents has spontaneously mentioned their ethnic affiliation among the first three things that characterize them most.** However, only 18 per cent consider that being Roma people may represent a disadvantage, more than half being proud of their Roma origin.

Regarding the process of accessing the reserved places, one of the frequent observations of the teaching staff and the representatives of non governmental organizations is that **the period between the announcement of the reserved places and the end of the registration process for the reserved places is very short (less than a month), which does not allow for an effective information campaign.** For the students having access to the reserved places in the secondary education units, **the main source of information is the school, namely the teachers:** 40 per cent of the beneficiaries of the places in high-schools and 49 per cent of the beneficiaries of the places in vocational schools said they heard about such places for the first time from their form teacher or other teachers. The family, either through the parents who searched for such information, or through their siblings who have benefited in their turn of such actions are the second main source of information (31 per cent for high-schools and 27 per cent for vocational schools).

For the secondary studies, the school plays a major role also for the provision of the necessary documentation to the student: **in 28 per cent of the cases, teachers are reported to be**

involved both in counselling students and in obtaining and drafting the files, whereas only 8 per cent of the respondents mentioned such actions by the Roma leaders.

As for the **process of accessing the reserved places in universities, there is a poor involvement of the secondary education institutions in informing potential beneficiaries** about the opportunities to study on these places: only 11 per cent of all beneficiaries (students or graduates) have heard about these places from their teachers in high-school, 36 per cent stated they heard about such reserved places for the first time from acquaintances or friends and 23 per cent have heard about it from their families. It is important to mention the role of the Roma leaders in making the decision to candidate on these places: **beneficiaries made up their minds to go for a special place after discussing with their parents (65 per cent) or with the Roma community leaders (34 per cent)**. Moreover, in 45 per cent of the cases, beneficiaries mentioned the involvement of a Roma leader from their community as helping with obtaining the papers required for registration.

The beneficiaries' motives for accessing these reserved places may be classified into two large categories:

- » Assurance of being admitted or being admitted to a certain education unit, on subsidized places.
- » The fact they may benefit from a right of accorded to Roma ethnic members.

For the beneficiaries of higher education, the financial criterion was mentioned most frequently: the assurance of being admitted on charge-free places (41 per cent).

Although the assurance of being admitted was mentioned by most of the respondents, **less than half of them stated they had an admission average mark under the previous average mark applicable for regular places: 38 per cent in high-schools, 23 per cent in vocational schools and 25 per cent in universities**. This may raise a question mark regarding the admission mechanism for the reserved places, which might be allocated strictly to those who have marks under the last admission average mark, so that it may lead to an increase in the number of Roma studying in secondary and higher education.

Ninety-five per cent of the beneficiaries in high-schools say they would have continued their studies even if no such reserved places. This is in contrast to the beneficiaries in vocational schools, where the existence of these places was a major decision factor – 14 per cent stated they would not have gone on with their studies unless such places existed. In higher education, 78 per cent of beneficiaries would have enrolled for faculty even in the absence of these measures.

The admission procedures and the timetable for submitting documents are rather unclear in the respondents' memory: only 32 per cent of the beneficiaries of high-schools and 20 per cent of those in vocational schools could mention the institution or the person who released the recommendation required for enrollment. Moreover, 27 per cent of the beneficiaries of high-schools and 53 per cent of the beneficiaries of vocational schools stated they had no

such recommendation. As for the higher education, the rate of those stating they had no such recommendation is lower: 13 per cent, but the rate of those who do not remember where they got the recommendation from is still high: 18 per cent. The cases when the beneficiaries stated they paid for such a recommendation are rare: 2 per cent of the respondents in high-schools and 3 per cent of the university respondents, those being from both beneficiaries stating Roma ethnicity and beneficiaries stating non Roma ethnicity.

The beneficiaries of vocational schools and higher education institutions were frequently confronted by difficult situations which affected their performances or even their school attendance rate: financial problems in the family, impossibility to meet the school/academic requirements and the need to take a job while continuing with school. **Financial problems seem to have a more drastic impact during college, 75 per cent of college or higher education graduate respondents stated they considered taking a job in parallel with school, 27 per cent lived through moments when their family had serious financial problems.**

Affirmative action beneficiaries have received various types of scholarships: **for the secondary studies, over 30 per cent have been awarded some form of scholarship, most frequently mentioned being the “money for high-school” scholarship.**⁴ As for universities, **32 per cent of the students and graduates receive/received a social allowance. Fourteen per cent were awarded study scholarships** and 5 per cent were awarded merit scholarships. Although the merit scholarship was mentioned by a small percentage of the beneficiaries, its average duration was higher (3.9 semesters), which means there are beneficiaries who have constantly managed to perform at high academic levels. Moreover, 7 per cent pointed out that they were awarded an OSI/REF academic scholarship for an average duration of 4.2 semesters.

Besides the financial support these beneficiaries need, teachers consider that the moral support of some teachers or mentors is just as important.

Most respondents from the secondary cycle (students and graduates) self evaluate their school performances as better or equal to half of the students in their class (76 per cent). Also, in universities, **almost 80 per cent of the students and graduates assess that they are among the top 50 per cent of students (of the total students attending the same study year, whether their places are subsidized or not).**

In the secondary cycle, the interviewed beneficiaries consider their relations with their colleagues are positive with most or all of them: **85 per cent have/had both Roma friends and Romanian friends, or most of their friends are/were Romanians.** Those are mostly students or graduates who were integrated in majority classes during the previous education cycles.

⁴ The scholarship is included in the national program of social protection “Money for secondary school”, which deals with students coming from families with gross monthly income under a certain level, set by Government decision, or with students who benefit from a protection measure or are under the care of a guardian or trustee.

Amongst those secondary school students who stated that **they have formed a group of friends formed mostly of Roma students (6 per cent), most are girls and belong to those who openly declared their belonging to the Roma ethnic group and to the family they came from.** Moreover, they come more frequently from classes where all or most students were Roma students (half of the cases fall under this category).

The students admitted on reserved places usually prefer not to tell others they are beneficiaries of the affirmative action program. In the secondary cycle, **only 65 per cent of the respondents stated their colleagues knew they had been admitted on the places for Roma students.** The most frequently mentioned way for their colleagues finding out that the student is admitted on a reserved place is the straightforward statement of their ethnic affiliation by the respondent (60 per cent of those stating that it is a known fact), and the display of the list of admitted students or the disclosure of this information by a teacher (15 per cent).

In the higher education cycle, the good rapport and friendships with non Roma students are even more frequent: 86 per cent have more Romanian friends, and 93 per cent state they get along well with all or most of the colleagues. In universities, **70 per cent of the beneficiaries state that their colleagues are aware they are beneficiaries of affirmative action, but the ways of finding this out differ:** the most frequent way is the display of the list of admitted students highlighting those who were admitted on reserved places (50 per cent of those stating that it is a known fact).

The relations with their teachers are more diverse, depending on the degree of teachers' tolerance regarding individuals with a different cultural background, but also on their opinion regarding affirmative action. Thus, at one extreme, in the secondary cycle there were situations when the teachers or form teachers put pressure on the beneficiaries to ask for a transfer to another class or another education unit, from the very first days of school. In the higher education cycles, such tense relations between students and teachers are more rarely reported. Most of the times, the Roma students admitted on the reserved places mingle among the others and most of the teachers are not aware of the names of the beneficiaries of reserved places.

The quantitative analysis shows that, at the level of the secondary education, the participation on the labour market of the graduates is lower, because they prefer to focus on continuing their education. At the time of this survey, **46 per cent of the high-school graduates and 44 per cent of the vocational school graduates were carrying out activities for which they got paid.** The impact of further studies upon the opportunities on the labour market is considered as being a positive one by approximately 61 per cent of the high-school and by 39 per cent of the vocational school graduates.

Among the university students and graduates, the participation rate on the labour market is much higher both during their studies and also after graduation: **38 per cent of the students and 81 per cent of graduates carry out paid activities.** In addition, out of the total

interviewed students and graduates, 42 per cent work for public institutions and 45 per cent for private companies (with Romanian or foreign capital). **Eighteen per cent have a salary less than the minimum net salary for higher education**, which shows that these graduates are in general hired on positions which are inferior to their qualification. **Although they are higher education graduates, the current occupations for 11 per cent of them are inferior to the qualification they got by finishing their studies: seller/cashier, computer operator, receptionist, baby sitter etc.**

Considering the role of their training during study at university, 60 per cent of those who have a job believe that it mattered much or very much in finding a job, whereas only 35 per cent have the same opinion about their relationships. The qualitative approach reveals that both beneficiaries and the various representatives of the education institutions consider that the discrimination due to ethnic criteria for employment has not disappeared. Discrimination seems to be stronger during hiring interviews when the physical features based on which the others identify a person as a Roma individual (skin colour, accent etc.) are more visible.

Although the quantitative data show some distance of beneficiaries of affirmative action from the Roma community, there is some potential for their involvement in volunteer activities with that community. **Approximately 30 per cent of the high-school students and graduates and 24 per cent of the vocational school graduates have participated in activities concerning the Roma ethnic group** (such as debates concerning the problems of Roma students, and courses of Romani language or debates regarding the Roma history) and **13 per cent of the high-school students and 14 per cent of the vocational school students have attended activities organized by non governmental organizations**. In higher education, involvement in such activities is much higher: 38 per cent have attended such an event during the last year. As we mentioned before, there is availability and interest in the activities organized by associations or foundations in the Roma communities much more than the actual involvement up to this moment: **77 per cent of the beneficiaries in the secondary cycle and 88 per cent of those in the university cycle would attend at least one type of activity.**

3. METHODOLOGY

Three different methods were used during this study: secondary data analysis, quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis.

The **quantitative analysis** included two data collection components: data gathered from school inspectorates and public universities; and the sociological investigation among the beneficiaries of affirmative action.

The **statistic data** from school inspectorates and universities was collected by means of two standard forms comprising information about the total number of students/college students, the number of Roma students/college students, year passing and school drop-out rate. The purpose of this phase was to estimate the number and percentage of beneficiaries among the total school registration number, their distribution across specializations, but also the accessibility of these measures for commonly disadvantaged groups: girls and pupils/students from rural areas.

The approach proved to be much more difficult than anticipated because most institutions did not keep distinct statistics about the school history of the students enrolled on the Roma reserved places. For most of the institutions, this approach meant building a collection of data based on the reports submitted by the subordinated education units. Moreover, during the sociological investigation, we found out that some data submitted by the education units or school inspectorates were based on estimates.

Most inspectorates reported that the information such as the year passing rate of beneficiaries or the school drop-out cases, compared to information regarding the total of the school population, were not available. Eighteen of the 40 counties and the Municipality of Bucharest simply sent the forms filled in by the education units, without also filling in the central datasheet per county. In order to get comparable data on the general school registration figures at county level, we consulted the official data bases of the National Institute of Statistics and filled in the central records at county level. There were many discrepancies between the allocated and the occupied places, which have been corrected by extended communication with the school inspectorates.

Data was obtained from 39 universities out of the total of 49 public universities mentioned in the orders of the Ministry of Education and Research, though six said they had no students on the Roma reserved places.⁵

The sociological investigation was performed by taking probabilistic samples of beneficiaries; initially planned as samples of 200 each of university students and graduates, high-school students and graduates and vocational school students and graduates.

The sample of university students and graduates is one stage, structured upon the year of admission (2000-2006) and the specialization (8 categories: 1. Arts, sports, others, 2. Economic sciences, 3. Engineering, 4. Humanistic sciences, 5. Legal and administrative sciences, 6. Medicine and pharmacy, 7. Exact or applied sciences, 8. Unknown specialization⁶).

The sample of students and graduates is quasi-probabilistic, two-stages, with a two-dimensional structure, proportional allocation per layers of the primary selection units. The structuring criteria are: the region (4 regions: Moldova, Transylvania, Muntenia and Bucharest) and branch (3 categories for high-schools: theoretic, technological, vocational, and other 3 for vocational schools: technical, services, natural resources and environmental protection, plus a fourth “unknown” branch grouping the centralized data from the County School Inspectorates, which has not been broken down per specializations).

The samples were: 175 university students and graduates, 181 high-school students and graduates and 184 vocational school students and graduates. The data was collected between April 10th – May 14th, by face-to-face interviews, on the basis of a standard questionnaire coordinated by specially trained operators (see appendix 1). The data gathering took longer than estimated due to the lack of cooperation of some education institutions and the lack of contact data of the graduates. The proportional allocation per layers of the sample makes it representative from the perspective of the structuring criteria (specialization, admission year, region/university centre). The lack of some official data referring to the demographic characteristics of the population did not enable the representativeness of the sample to be tested according to other characteristics. Considering the volume of the samples and the respondent selection manner, theoretically, the sampling error for each of the 3 samples is +/-7 per cent at a confidence level of 95 per cent.

The questionnaire was structured according to the following dimensions: data regarding the school situation, questions regarding the registration process with the Roma reserved

⁵ These are the following universities: Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, University of Agricultural Science and Veterinary Medicine “Ion Ionescu de la Brad” of Iasi, University of Petrosani, University of Architecture and Urbanism “Ion Mincu” of Bucharest, University of Medicine and Pharmacy “Carol Davilla” of Bucharest, Academy of Music “Gheorghe Dima” of Cluj-Napoca.

⁶ This category was created after the analysis of the data received from universities, because some of them could not provide data broken down per specialization.

places (information sources, support, difficulties and getting the required recommendation for enrollment), questions regarding the study period (the relations with colleagues and teachers, income sources and participation in various activities at school and outside the school), identity and self esteem, the stereotypes regarding the belonging to the ethnic group, questions regarding the integration on the labour market (experiences, opportunities and expectations), participation to the activities of non-governmental organizations and questions regarding the social demographic and ethnic profile. The tools are attached to this report.

The sample size allowed only an analysis at the overall level of the sample and no comparative analyses per regions are possible.

The qualitative analysis focused on two large categories of respondents:

- » Beneficiaries of affirmative action: current university students and high-school students (high-schools, professional schools and vocational schools), graduates, rejected applicants and university students and high-school students who abandoned their studies on these reserved places.
- » Representatives of institutions: high-school principals, deans and representatives of school inspectorates and NGOs.

Focus-groups and semi-structured interviews were used so as to understand the behaviours, attitudes and perceptions of the parties involved in this program. Since this is a qualitative survey, the results cannot be extrapolated for the entire population but instead should be treated as hypotheses and insights which must be thoroughly studied within surveys dedicated to the respective problems. The contexts, theoretical sampling and intensity, specific to this type of survey, determine this status of hypotheses or insights for the results.

The following were performed:

- » 8 focus-groups structured as follows: 5 mixed groups of graduates and current beneficiaries (reserved places in high-schools, professional schools and vocational schools) and 3 mixed groups of graduates and current beneficiaries (reserved places in universities).
- » 14 semi-structured interviews with the applicants who have been rejected or abandoned their studies (men and women aged 18 to 25 years old).
- » 12 semi-structured interviews with the beneficiaries of secondary education (students and graduates) and higher education (students and graduates).
- » 37 semi-structured interviews with the representatives of some of the institutions involved in the program: principals of high-schools and professional schools, principals.

- » Of primary schools, Romani language teachers, deans, school inspectors and NGO representatives.⁷

Audio recordings were made of the individual interviews and each interview took approximately 35 minutes. Video recordings were made of the focus-groups and each lasted approximately 90 minutes.

It was noticeable that, generally, high-schools, professional schools principals, deans adopted throughout the interview a general “politically correct” attitude, even though, during the informal discussions certain stereotypes or discrimination attitudes towards Roma people were noted. Sometimes, there were situations when school inspectors informally noticed problems regarding the integration of these students with the class, the treatment adopted by teachers etc. but the interviews with the representatives of the respective institutions did not manage to catch such aspects.

Another bias is due to the fact that within focus-groups, some respondents did not state whether they were beneficiaries of a reserved place within the education institution they attended, so as the other colleagues would not find out about this aspect. Consequently, they did not make a clear statement regarding the affirmative action and participated less in the discussion. There also have been cases when respondents were not aware they were beneficiaries of a special place and could not give any details regarding the admission process since their files had been entirely compiled by their gymnasium form teachers.

Moreover, the interviews with the persons who have quitted school or have been rejected during the admission process showed the development of a highly negative emotional attitude dominated by feelings such as: distrust, anxiety, tension, and sadness. This emotional range felt by the respondents could not be overcome during the interviews and sometimes it lead to obtaining incomplete information.

⁷ The distribution of the 36 interviews is as follows: 7 interviews with the university representatives, 6 with principals of secondary schools, 2 with principals of primary schools, 2 with Romani language teachers, 8 with school inspectors, 10 with NGO representatives and 2 with representatives of the central authorities (Ministry of Education and the National Agency for Roma people.

4. AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN THE LITERATURE

Affirmative action may take various forms and materialize in various fields of the social life: for example, access to education, access to public services and employment opportunities. The main reason for adopting affirmative action is to provide equal chances and access to high quality services to marginalized or discriminated minorities. One justification for adopting such affirmative action places the accent on the analysis of the past situation in a certain field, these measures being regarded as a way of repairing past discrimination. Most definitions focus upon the objectives of affirmative action: equity, equal chances, diversity, which are targeted by various measures, in different fields: education, integration on the labour market etc.

As for the affirmative action for Roma people implemented in Romania, their reason and role are connected to the history of this ethnic group. Thus, the first order of the Ministry of Education (Order 3577/1998) did not mention explicitly the existence of past discrimination of the ethnic group, but recounts its history and mentions as an objective “supporting the Roma ethnics efforts to build their qualified civic and cultural presence”.⁸

In Romania, the data show a lower access to education for Roma. Starting with the first years of formal education, there are differences between the access of Roma and non Roma children: 61 per cent of all children have been enrolled for pre-school education in 2000-2001, whereas only 20 per cent of Roma children went to kindergarten.⁹ Such differences have further impact upon the children in the Roma communities and are risk factors regarding the school drop-out rate. The EUMAP report¹⁰ presents the number of school years of the population aged over 10 years old, and indicates a median number of school years for Roma children of 6.8, whereas the entire population aged over 10 is characterized by a median period of 11.2 years.

⁸ “Roma people are a group with a complex history, often dramatic, which the adepts of democracy cannot consider otherwise but with understanding, respect and availability of civil support.

Our Roma co-citizens need educational support these days to build up a natural cultural and civic image, which may allow their integration in a democratic manner within the institutions of the democratic Romania.

Under the shield of the European Council and other international bodies, a beneficial action is being deployed for the civil support of Roma people to help them consolidate the democratic civic and cultural representation they need, inclusively by way of positive discrimination.

Considering these reasons, to support the efforts of Roma people to build up a qualified civic and cultural representation, ...” (Order 3577/1998).

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

¹⁰ EUMAP, Equal access to high quality education for Roma people, Romania, 2007.

Data from the last population census show a very low percentage of Roma population who have completed secondary studies (high-school or vocational school) or higher education; a percentage which is significantly below that for the general or majority population.

Table 4.1 Educational attainment in Romania, by ethnic affiliation, 2002

| | GENERAL POPULATION | ROMANIAN | HUNGARIAN | ROMA |
|---|--------------------|------------|-----------|---------|
| Number of persons who have graduated the form of education | | | | |
| HIGHER EDUCATION | 1,371,108 | 1,280,117 | 64,176 | 684 |
| POST SECONDARY STUDIES | 576,376 | 531,520 | 37,834 | 426 |
| HIGH SECONDARY STUDIES | 7,123,242 | 6,499,100 | 512,461 | 24,505 |
| FIRST SECONDARY STUDIES (GYMNASIUM) | 5,367,630 | 4,772,179 | 413,182 | 94,739 |
| PRIMARY STUDIES | 3,898,996 | 3,467,246 | 230,123 | 146,291 |
| NO SCHOOL | 1,083,935 | 874,938 | 47,260 | 140,220 |
| Per cent persons who have graduated the form of education, out of the total population aged over 10 years old | | | | |
| HIGHER EDUCATION | 7.1 | 7.3 | 4.9 | 0.2 |
| POST SECONDARY STUDIES | 3.0 | 3.0 | 2.9 | 0.1 |
| HIGH SECONDARY STUDIES | 36.7 | 37.3 | 39.2 | 6.0 |
| FIRST SECONDARY STUDIES (GYMNASIUM) | 27.6 | 27.4 | 31.6 | 23.2 |
| PRIMARY STUDIES | 20.1 | 19.9 | 17.6 | 35.8 |
| NO SCHOOL | 5.6 | 5.0 | 3.6 | 34.3 |
| TOTAL POPULATION 10+ | 19,434,788 | 17,435,353 | 1,305,699 | 408,842 |

Data source: Population and house census 2002

The differences between the Roma and majority population also exists in the labour market and are a key factor in explaining the higher degree of poverty among this ethnic group. The low level of education is one of the most important factors which reduces the opportunities of Roma people for decent jobs. Thus, the estimates regarding the unemployment rate of the Roma population vary from 24 per cent to 56 per cent, although there are communities where the unemployment rate is 90-100 per cent among the active Roma population. The EUMAP

report also reveals that, in 2002, the Roma ethnic population is five times more vulnerable to poverty than the non Roma population and that over 50 per cent of Roma were in poverty.

In Romania, the specific literature regarding the affirmative action in education is almost non-existent. Aniko Horvath wrote a Master's thesis on the impact of affirmative action, based on a case study performed at the Babes-Bolyai University. The author concluded that the most important value of these policies is to create an opportunity to increase the mobility of young Roma.

Most debates concerning affirmative action refer to the higher education system in the United States of America. Such debates start from the lack of clear proof regarding the impact of these policies, their enforcement costs and their effects upon minority and majority groups. The experience of American universities was used in this study as a basis for finding the positive or negative arguments for affirmative action.

One of the main conclusions of these studies performed in the United States is that affirmative action has had a positive impact upon the careers of the beneficiaries. William Bowen and Derek Bok¹¹ (former chairmen of Princeton and Harvard, respectively) have assessed the effects of affirmative action in 28 universities. They provided evidence that the impact of these policies was a positive one upon the career and personal achievements of minorities. They argued that "the vast majority of those benefiting from affirmative action, including those with the highest SAT scores, did not feel stigmatized or think they had been harmed by the fact that their schools had affirmative action policies".

As is the case in Romania, there are gaps in school performance upon admission between the beneficiaries and the other students. Harry Holzer and David Neumark¹² explain that these differences disappear when assessing the graduates who benefited from affirmative action. They show that "Blacks admitted to college have on average lower GPAs and graduation rates". However, as illustrated by this article, this is not the only data source which should be analyzed. When analyzing the data from the most selective institution, the conclusion differs: race is not predicative of graduation rates.

Affirmative action policies, as government policies, have costs which are paid by all the society members, even though not all of them benefit in the near future. Massey claims that we should not believe such costs provide support to a limited number of members, but consider the costs as an investment for a better future of the society which will be beneficial for all members.

¹¹ After Garth Massey, "Thinking about Affirmative Action: Arguments Supporting Preferential Policies" Review of Policy Research, Volume 21, Number 6 (2004).

¹² Harry Holzer; David Neumark, "Assessing Affirmative Action", Journal of Economic Literature, Vol. 38, No. 3. (2000).

As for the society, where discrimination is something frequent, affirmative action represents the proper mechanism for changing the conduct of institutions, companies or individuals. Both institutions and individuals will not adopt a certain conduct as long as they may manage otherwise, and as long as the others do not behave differently. Therefore, the government must come up with certain measures to reduce discrimination. Massey states that “it does make sense to act (like a free rider) in terms of rational self-interest, so long as others do not. And this is the basis for the argument favoring affirmative action.”

Besides these reasons which support affirmative action, the mentioned surveys also found a series of counter arguments referring to the following aspects: affirmative action is not equitable for the majority, affirmative action perpetuates racial attitudes and has negative effects upon the self esteem of beneficiaries, beneficiaries need additional support to succeed and affirmative action reduces competitiveness. Moreover, as this report shows, some of the institutional representatives interviewed pointed out such drawbacks of affirmative action.

5. LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

The normative acts strictly regulating these actions are relatively few, being mostly orders of the Ministry of Education issued over the years. This chapter will review the specific provisions regulating affirmative action, within the current structure of the Romanian education system.

Moreover, the normative acts regulating affirmative action refer to an important document for the Roma community: The Strategy to improve the condition of Roma people in Romania (adopted by the Government Decision 430/2001). This strategy proposes measures which must be enforced in 10 fields, including the education. Among the educational objectives, three promote the enforcement of some measures to support Roma children/young people:

- » The development of a program to encourage school participation and to reduce the school drop-out rate, especially among the poorest segments of the Roma population.
- » The further awarding of facilities and subsidized reserved places for Roma young people who wish to attend university colleges and faculties.
- » Attracting young Roma people to the training institutions for public clerks and staff in public institutions (faculties for social work, public administration, medicine, military academies and schools for training police officers and sub-officers, Ministry of Defence, Romanian Intelligence Service etc.).

Affirmative action takes place in the legal framework regulating the structure of the Romanian education system: The Constitution guarantees free access and the Law of Education provides for 10 years for the compulsory education and sets out the structure of the Romanian education system. The Romanian education system is structured, in compliance with the International Standard Classification of Education – ISCED 97.

Table 5.1 Structure of the education system

| AGE | GRADE | ISCED | EDUCATIONAL LEVEL | | | | QUALIFICATION LEVEL |
|-----|--------------|--------------------|---|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| >19 | | 6 | Post university studies | | | | 5 |
| | | 5 | University studies | | | | 4 |
| | | 4 | Pre-university post high-school studies | | | | 3 |
| 18 | 13th | 3 | Theoretical high-school | Art, sports, theological high-school | Technological high-school | Technological high-school | 3 |
| 17 | 12th | | | | | Completion year | |
| 16 | 11th | | | | | | |
| 15 | 10th | 2 | Theoretical studies | Art, sports, theological studies | Technological studies | Vocational school | 1 |
| 14 | 9th | | | | | | |
| 13 | 8th | | | | | | |
| 12 | 7th | 1 | First secondary school (gymnasium) | | | | - |
| 11 | 6th | | | | | | |
| 10 | 5th | | | | | | |
| 9 | 4th | | | | | | |
| 8 | 3rd | | | | | | |
| 7 | 2nd | | | | | | |
| 6 | 1st | 0 | Primary school | | | | - |
| 5 | Big group | | | | | | |
| 4 | Middle group | | | | | | |
| 3 | Small group | Pre-school studies | | | | | |

Of particular relevance for this study are the transitions from gymnasium to high-school or technological studies and from secondary studies to university studies which take place on the basis of an admission process. These are the moments when affirmative action is used to stimulate higher transition rates.

5.1 Affirmative Action for Roma People Provided by Law

5.1.1 Secondary Studies

In secondary education, the first affirmative action policy was adopted in 1998, by the creation of some classes for Roma students within “normal” schools (pedagogical high-schools). The Ministerial order did not provide any details about the admission criteria or the organization of the process, but it is the starting point of affirmative action. 1998 was an extraordinary year for affirmative action as three orders¹³ regarding Roma students were adopted. These orders regulated the admission in pedagogical high-schools for the school years 1998-1999 and 1999-2000. Starting in 2000-2001, affirmative action was extended to the entire secondary cycle system and the school inspectorates were made responsible for setting the number of reserved places in each education institution. From 2003-2004, affirmative action for Roma students within the secondary education system has not been regulated by specific orders of the minister, but within the methodology regarding the organization and development of the admission process for secondary and professional public education system, as approved each year.

Number of Places and Institutions to be Allocated Reserved Places

As of the school year 1998-1999, an order of the Minister defined the normal schools where a class of Roma students was to be established (Order 3577/1998). The Ministry expands these measures from the school year 1999-2000 as well by order 4562/1998, and later, during the same year comes back with Order 5083/1998 which sets the pedagogical high-schools where special classes for Roma students were to be established, and provides the inspectorates with the legal framework to develop affirmative action for each separate county.

For the school year 1998-1999, within normal schools in Bucharest, Timișoara, Cluj-Napoca, Tg. Mureș, Iași, Sibiu a 9th grade of Roma students is established, depending on the demands. (Order 3577/1998)

4. The provisions of the Order of the Minister of National Education no. 3577/1998 regarding the distribution of places for Roma students in normal schools and faculties also apply to the school year 1999/2000... (Order 4562/1998)

Under the supervision of the general school inspector, each County School Inspectorate and the School Inspectorate of the Municipality of Bucharest draft, up to March 1st, 1999, and enforce measures regarding the inclusion of Roma students in professional schools, depending on the profile and economic trends in the region,

¹³ Order 5083/1998, Order 4562/1998, Order 3577/1998.

during the school year 1999-2000. In this respect, the inspectorates cooperate with the representative organizations of Roma people and with the Roma communities.

As for the study year 1999-2000, in the pedagogical high-schools keeping the profile of Bucharest, in the counties of Iași, Sibiu, Mureș, Timișoara, Cluj-Napoca, Dolj, Galați, a 9th grade of Roma students is established, depending on the demands. The high-schools principals cooperate in this respect with the representative organizations of Roma people (Order 5083/1998)

Since the school year 2000-2001, the Minister's order specifically mentions the role of the school inspectorate of setting the number of distinct places for Roma students, without setting a limit for the number of places as long as the general school enrollment figures are not exceeded. Order 4542, issued in 2000 and governing the school year 2001-2002, provides for the first time that these distinct places are allocated separately from the normal places.

2. During the school year 2000-2001, in the secondary and professional cycle, upon the demand of the Roma community, the county school inspectorates and, respectively, the School Inspectorate of the Municipality of Bucharest, will allot distinct places to the young students coming from the Roma ethnic group. School inspectorates appoint the education units and allot the number of places, by fitting them the approved school enrollment figure. (Order 3294/2000)

1. For the school year 2001-2002, in the secondary and professional cycle, upon the demand of the Roma community, the county school inspectorates and, respectively, the School Inspectorate of the Municipality of Bucharest, will allot distinct places to the young students coming from the Roma ethnic group. School inspectorates appoint the education units and allot the number of places, by fitting them in the approved global school enrollment figure. Such places will be allocated directly by the General School Inspector, separately from the places allocated per each education unit. (Order 4542/2000)

From 2003-2004, the admission to the reserved places for Roma students is regulated by means of procedures for admission. The first methodology which comprises such provisions is the one adopted in 2002, mentioning on the one hand the institution which sets the number of places – the admission commission formed at the level of the school inspectorate – and also the maximum limit of the number of reserved places:

Art. 59. (1) The county admission commissions determine, with the prior approval of the National Admission Commission, and announce, by display at the head office of the school inspectorate, up to May 15th, 2003, the education units, the specializations and the number of places allocated to the Roma candidates, on the basis of the affirmative action, promoted in the context of the Governmental strategy regarding the improvement of the situation of Roma people. The number of places being announced cannot be changed after May 15th, 2003.

(2) The reserved places for Roma candidates will be added to the number of places allocated by the school plan, within the limit of 30 students per class. (Order 4857/2002)

As noted from the Minister's Order, there are no specific criteria to guide the decision-making process of the commission regarding the distribution of a number of places for Roma candidates. The orders issued for the next years have not clarified this process in any way.

This provision kept the same form also with the following methodologies for the organization of the admission process, including requirements to display the number of places allocated to Roma candidates.

Art. 55. (1) The county/Bucharest admission commissions determine, with the prior approval of the National Admission Commission, and announce, by display at the head office of the school inspectorate, up to May 15th, 2008, the education units, the specializations and the number of places allocated to the Roma candidates, on the basis of the affirmative action, promoted in the context of the Governmental strategy regarding the improvement of the situation of Roma people. The number of places being announced cannot be changed after May 15th, 2008.

(2) The reserved places for Roma candidates will be added to the number of places allocated by the school plan, within the limit of 30 students per class. (Order 1868/2007)

According to the first methodology regarding the organization of the secondary and professional schools admission process, which also included provisions for the admission on reserved places (O. 4857/2002), such reserved places could be accessed in two admission sessions: in June and in September. According to the methodology adopted for the following year (O. 5514/2003), the reserved places remained vacant during the admission session were used to solve special cases "for students or redistribution on the vacant places, based on the distance from their home, or to correct some typing errors in the data base regarding the students' options". Subsequent to this change, all methodologies provided the use of the vacant reserved places to solve such special situations.

(6) In case the reserved places for Roma students have not been occupied during the first admission session, the requests for such places will be submitted on September 4th 2003, and the candidates will be distributed on September 5th, 2003. (Order 4857/2002)

(6) In case the reserved places for Roma students remain vacant, they will be used to solve the special cases, mentioned under Art. 54. (Order 5514/2003)

Criteria for Enrollment on Reserved Places

The basic criteria for enrollment on reserved places for Roma students were defined in the very first order regulating affirmative action: certifying the ethnic affiliation by means of a letter of recommendation written by the chairman of a legally registered Roma organization. The order does not provide any more details regarding the form and content of such recommendation.

The candidates applying, at any level, for a place allocated, by positive discrimination, for Roma students must submit a recommendation written by the chairman of a duly registered Roma civic, cultural or political organization. (Order 3577/1998)

In 2000, the two orders specified only the fact that the recommendation for a reserved place had to be written by the chairman of a legally registered organization, with no mention of the fact that such organization must be a Roma one.

6. The Roma candidates applying, at any level, for a place allocated separately for Roma students must submit a recommendation written by the chairman of a duly registered civic, cultural or political organization, certifying the quality as member of the Roma community. (Order 4542/2000)

In 2002, the Ministry comes back with the provision that the organization issuing such recommendation must be a Roma one and underlines an important aspect regarding the content of the recommendation which affects directly the entire access process: the recommendation must certify the applicant as a member of the Roma ethnic group and not as member of the respective organization. This provision is important because it means that the organization cannot make giving a recommendation conditional on the applicant joining the organization.

(4) The Roma candidates applying for the places allocated separately for them must submit upon enrollment, besides the documents mentioned under Art. 53 of the hereby methodology, a written recommendation on behalf of the chairman of a duly established Roma civic, cultural or political organization, certifying their quality as members of the Roma ethnic group and not their membership with the respective organization. (Order 4587/2002)

Admission Calendar

The first provision referring to the admission calendar appears in Order 4542/2000, which governs the school year 2001-2002. The Order specifies the deadline for the school inspectorates to accept the applications of the candidates, but does not provide any deadlines for the school inspectorates to solve these applications.

The application on behalf of the Roma community will be submitted to the school inspectorates up to May 15th, 2001, in writing, for the candidates nominated individually. (Order 4542/2000)

For the school year 2003-2004, the admission organization methodology provides a calendar including the main admission phases: display of the available places, enrollment with the reserved places, the distribution sessions and the time for the second admission session.

Art. 59. (1) The county admission commissions determine, with the prior approval of the National Admission Commission, and announce, by display at the head office of the school inspectorate, up to May 15th, 2003, the education units, the specializations and the number of places allocated to the Roma candidates. [...] The number of places being announced cannot be changed after May 15th, 2003.

(3) The applications for the reserved places for Roma students are to be submitted, with the county admission commission, up to June 6th, 2003, 16.00 h. Any requests submitted after such date will not be taken into account.

(5) During June 26-28th, 2003, the county admission commission will distribute the candidates who have submitted their applications up to the date provided under paragraph (3), on the reserved places for Roma students,

(6) In case the reserved places for Roma students have not been occupied during the first admission session, the applications for such places will be submitted on September 4th, 2003, and the candidates will be distributed on September 5th, 2003. (Order 4857/2002)

As of the school year 2004-2005, the admission calendar regulates, for the first time, the information provided for students and their parents, and the methodology for 2005-2006 specifically requires the inspectorates to publish a brochure with information about the places for Roma candidates.

Art. 20. (1) Up to May 1st, 2005, school inspectorates will print a brochure, comprising all the necessary information for the candidates applying for admission to secondary and vocational schools

2) The brochure mentioned under paragraph (1), printed in a number of copies larger than the number of 8th grade students in the county, will be distributed, the latest until May 9th, 2005.

Art. 21. (1) The information in the brochure will be provided to the parents and students and will be presented within training sessions, organized in this respect during May 10th – June 10th, 2005. (Order 4958/2004)

This admission calendar structure also provided deadlines for: drafting the information materials and their dissemination, displaying the places allocated to Roma candidates, accepting the applications for the reserved places and resolving disputes, separately from the computerized distribution, through a public session. In 2008, the testing methods at the end of primary education changed, with national thesis exams replacing national tests during the 8th and 7th grades; however the admission calendar structure was similar to the previous years. As before, the application deadline for the places reserved for Roma students took place prior to the display of the results and the hierarchy per education unit and county/Bucharest.

Information Campaign for Affirmative Action

Order 4858/2004 provides for the first time that the information brochures published by the school inspectorates regarding the admission to secondary and professional schools must also contain information regarding the reserved places allocated to Roma candidates. This brochure is distributed to each student enrolled in the 8th grade, and an additional number of such brochures must be printed for students who were in the 8th grade the previous year but were not admitted to high-school. Thus, Roma students must be informed about the reserved places either through this brochure or through the display of this information by the inspectorate. The two institutions responsible for the promotion of the places for Roma are the inspectorates (through the admission commissions) and general schools which distribute the brochures and organize the information sessions.

Art. 20. (1) Until May 1st, 2005, school inspectorates will arrange a brochure to be printed, containing all the necessary information for the candidates for the admission in high schools and vocational schools, namely the list of secondary and professional (vocational schools) education units, their addresses, the school enrollment plan relevant to each of them for the admission to the respective school year, per forms of studies (day, evening, low attendance classes), branches, profiles, specializations, training fields, the registration codes relevant to each school unit/specialization (according to the provisions of this methodology), the average mark of the last admitted student for each training field, specialization or profile in the respective school unit for the previous year. The information regarding high-schools, respectively vocational schools will be included on separate lists. The brochure drafted by the school inspectorate will contain, for each professional school, the offer of professional training, certified by professional qualifications. The brochure will also comprise the information regarding the reserved places allocated to Roma candidates: the enrollment conditions, the enrollment deadline, the high schools and vocational schools where the places for Roma students are allocated etc.

2) The brochure mentioned under paragraph (1), printed in a number of copies larger than the number of 8th grade students in the county, will be distributed, the latest until May 9th, 2005. Each education unit will receive an additional number

of copies, for the candidates from the previous series. The school inspectorate will keep a number of copies for the candidates coming from other counties and for those who reach the age of 18 up to August 31st, inclusively. These candidates will receive the brochure at the special enrollment center.

Art. 21. (1) The information in the brochure will be provided to the parents and students and will be presented within training sessions, organized in this respect during May 10th-June 10th, 2005.

Art. 55. (1) The county/Bucharest admission commissions determine, with the prior approval of the National Admission Commission, and announce, by display at the head office of the school inspectorate, up to May 15th, 2008, the education units, the specializations and the number of places allocated to the Roma candidates, on the basis of the affirmative action, promoted in the context of the Governmental strategy regarding the improvement of the situation of Roma people. The number of places being announced cannot be changed after May 15th, 2003. (Order 4958/2004)

Although it mentions that the information must be presented within some information sessions, the Order does not specifically provide what these sessions should consist of and how many of them should be organized within each school and who should organize these meetings, in order to ensure parents and students get good information.

The admission councils at the level of each school unit are responsible for providing direct information to students and parents. Once again, the terms employed in the Ministerial Order are vague, and do not explain clearly how this information process should be organized

Art. 17. The enrollment commissions within the gymnasium education units have the following duties:

- a) organizing, throughout the school year and especially during the second half of the second semester, the information process of the 8th grade students and their parents, concerning the enrollment for public high schools and professional schools, the provisions included in this methodology, the enrollment chart for public high schools and vocational schools etc. (Order 4958/2004)

The regulations continued the same approach to the information process in subsequent years, up to 2008. However, it should be noted that there is an inconsistency regarding the timetable for displaying information: the brochure containing the number of reserved places and the schools where they are allocated is to be printed up to May 1st, whereas according to the Order, the inspectorate should set and display the allocated places by May 15th. Hence, if the inspectorate does not define the places for Roma students prior to May 1st, the information brochure will be published without this critical information. However, this study did not analyse the brochures and so it is not possible to say this has happened in any of the counties.

Coordination of the Admission Process

From the very first Order (3577/1998), the school inspectorates and the schools where these separate places were to be allocated were made responsible for the implementation of such actions. While in the first Orders this duty was a general, non-specific one (“are asked to provide direct support with the organization”), each subsequent Order specified more precisely the institutions and their duties and the admissions schedule.

General school inspectors and principals of the respective normal schools are to provide direct support with organizing the enrollment of Roma students with these classes (Order 3577/1998)

6. The mentioned school inspectorates, university colleges of institutors and universities, as well as the general departments and divisions within the Ministry of National Education will enforce the hereby order. (Order 3294/2000)

Thus, in 2002, the county admission commissions within each school inspectorate were responsible for setting the number of places, taking in the applications and organizing the distribution process. The entire admission process is coordinated by the admission commissions organized on different levels: national, county, gymnasium schools and high-schools. The national commission will draft the admission methodology and monitor the entire process. The county commission plays the most important role, as mentioned above.

The members of the county commissions are:

Art. 15. (1) The county (Bucharest) admission commission is appointed by decision of the general school inspector and is formed of:

| | |
|----------------|--|
| CHAIRMAN | – general school inspector; |
| VICE PRESIDENT | – deputy general school inspector or specialized school inspector; |
| SECRETARIES | – two-three school inspectors; |
| MEMEBERS | – teachers, IT operators, PC operators, secretaries (Order 4857) |

The students who want to apply for these places do not submit their file to the school they come from, but to the county admission commission. Furthermore, the distribution on the reserved places is made separately, within a public session. The criteria used in this distribution are the choices of the applicants and their average admission marks.

Art. 15 (2) The county (Bucharest) admission commissions have the following duties:

- d) determining and announcing the schools, specializations and number of places allocated for Roma candidates;
- e) receiving the applications concerning the places allocated to Roma candidates and distributing the candidates on the announced places.

Art. 59. (1) The county admission commissions determine, with the prior approval of the National Admission Commission, and announce, by display at the head office of the school inspectorate, up to May 15th, 2003, the education units, the specializations and the number of places allocated to the Roma candidates, on the basis of the affirmative action, promoted in the context of the Governmental strategy regarding the improvement of the situation of Roma people. The number of places being announced cannot be changed after May 15th, 2003.

(3) The applications for the reserved places for Roma students are to be submitted to the county admission commission, up to June 6th, 2003, 16.00 h. Any requests submitted after such date will not be taken into account.

(5) During June 26-28th, 2003, the county admission commission will distribute the candidates who have submitted their applications up to the date provided under paragraph (3), on the reserved places for Roma students, pursuant to the descending order of their average admission marks and to the options of the applicants. The distribution will take place during a public session. Pursuant to Art. 2 of this methodology, only candidates who have passed their capacity exam are eligible for distribution; the candidates who failed such capacity exam will be distributed to professional and apprentice schools, on the reserved places for Roma students. (Order 4857/2002)

At the level of school units, the members of the admission commissions are:

Art. 16. The commission at the enrollment center of the gymnasium schools is made of:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| CHAIRMAN | – the principal of the school unit where such enrollment center is registered; |
| VICE PRESIDENT | – the deputy principal or a member of the administration council of the school unit where such enrollment center is registered; |
| SECRETARIES | – the secretary in chief of the school unit where such enrollment center is registered; |
| MEMEBERS | – the form teachers of the 8th grades, IT teachers or other teaching staff members possessing computer operating skills (Order 4857/2002) |

The admission commissions within the school units have no specific duties regarding the implementation of the places reserved for Roma students; however they are required to provide information regarding the entire admission process, to both students and parents. Although there are no specific provisions governing this aspect, in practice students must inform the school about their application for reserved places and not within the computerized distribution system.

Art. 17. The commissions at the enrollment centers of the gymnasium schools have the following obligations:

- a) organizing, throughout the school year and especially during the second half of the second semester, the information process of the 8th grade students and their parents, concerning the enrollment for public high-schools and professional schools, the provisions included in this methodology, the enrollment chart for public high-schools and vocational schools etc. (Order 4857/2002)

The admission commissions in high-schools and professional schools are to make sure the admission process objectives are accomplished and enforce the decisions of the school inspectorate regarding the distribution of the candidates, including those enrolled for the Roma places.

Art. 19. The admission commissions within the secondary and professional units have the following duties:

- a) organizing and monitoring the development of the skills exams, the modern or mother tongue knowledge tests, as the case may be;
- b) organizing, coordinating and monitoring the admission to the respective school unit, in compliance with this methodology;
- c) verifying the documents submitted by the candidates and the correct calculation of the admission average mark;
- d) notifying the county/Bucharest school inspectorate upon any errors they may find with the school documents for enrollment and correcting, where possible, these errors; the correction of the admission average mark improperly calculated is made by the chairman of the admission commission, who signs and applies the unit seal;
- e) providing a permanent presence, throughout the enrollment period, of some members of the admission commission, to provide information and advise the persons coming for enrollment;
- f) displaying, at the office of the school unit, the final lists with the admitted students, validated by the school inspectorate. (Order 4857/2002)

In 2004, the regulations contained provisions regarding the access of Roma students to classes for which they have to pass skill tests or modern language or mother tongue knowledge exams. However, since the distribution of places reserved for Roma students precedes the timetable for these exams, the way by which Roma candidates could have had access to the places in such classes is not provided by the regulations. The solution adopted by Order 4958/2004 was the provisional enrollment of Roma candidates in such classes, so that they may later have the skill tests or modern language or mother tongue knowledge exams. No provision is given regarding the further steps in case Roma candidates fail such tests.

Art. 55 (6) The candidates requesting the distribution on the reserved places for Roma students, in classes requiring skill tests or modern language or mother tongue knowledge exams, will be distributed on a provisory basis in these classes, provided they pass the tests. (Order 4958/2004)

In 2005, the regulations were changed, so that the skill tests or modern language or mother tongue knowledge exams were scheduled prior to the session when Roma candidates are distributed, so that Roma students may have the free access to such places.

In 2006, the regulations clearly specify that the enrollment of Roma candidates is not performed as part of the computer assisted distribution, but separately, as provided for in previous years, through a public session organized by the county admission commission.

Art. 5. (1) The enrollment with secondary or vocational schools, for day classes, of the candidates who passed the national tests (except for those who applied for high-schools/classes requiring skill tests, special education and for reserved places for Roma students) is made by computer assisted distribution, in descending order of the admission average grades, on the basis of the applicant's option for branch, profile, specialization or field, and within the limit of the approved places, by means of the school enrollment plan, for the school units financed by the state budget. (Order 5262/2006)

5.1.2 Higher Education

The first affirmative action was adopted for the university year 1992-1993, at the initiative of the University of Bucharest, specifically the Sociology and Social Work Faculty, and with the approval of the Ministry of Education. In the Social Work specialization, 10 reserved places for Roma candidates were created, where the admission criteria were the minimum ones provided by the regulations in force (minimum mark 5 at the admission contest). As of the university year 1993-1994, the model was also taken over by other similar departments of the Babes-Bolyai University, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University in Iași, and the University of Timișoara.

In 1998, the Ministry of Education and Research adopted the first Order supporting the access of Roma people to secondary/vocational schools or university studies. In higher education, the priority was training social workers from the Roma ethnic group, hence three universities were permitted to organise an admission process for reserved places, without providing a limit for this number of places. Furthermore, to support the idea of training an intellectual Roma élite, 7 universities are allocated 10 places each for Roma candidates.

At the Bucharest, “Babeș-Bolyai” and “Al. I. Cuza” universities the admission is organized by contest, on separate places, in the social work department for the high-school graduates among the Roma ethnic group 10 places are provided

to the rectorships of the Bucharest, “Al. I. Cuza”, “Babeş-Bolyai” universities, West University of Timișoara, the Braşov, Sibiu and Craiova universities, for the Admission session of 1998, for the Roma candidates. (Order 3577/1998)

During the same year, 1998, another Order expanded affirmative action to the university pedagogical colleges within 7 university centers, for the 1999-2000 academic year:

3. For the academic year 1999-2000, the university pedagogical college established with the universities of Bucharest, “Al. I. Cuza”, “Babeş-Bolyai”, Craiova, Timișoara, “Ovidius”, “Transylvania”, are allocated 5 places each for the Admission session of 1999, for young Roma people, on separate places (as subsidized places).

4. The admission session at the Universities of Bucharest, “Al. I. Cuza”, “Babeş-Bolyai” is organized by contest, on separate places, and their actual number will be determined by the respective universities, for the social work department, for young Roma people (as subsidized places).

5. 10 places are provided to the rectorships of the Bucharest universities, “Al. I. Cuza”, “Babeş-Bolyai”, West University of Timișoara, “Transylvania”, Sibiu, Craiova, Constanța for the Admission session of 1999, as subsidized places, for the Roma candidates.” (Order 5083/1998)

The admission criterion was identical to the secondary education, namely the certification of the ethnic affiliation by means of a recommendation on behalf of Roma organizations:

The candidates applying, at any level, for a place allocated, by positive discrimination, for Roma students must submit a recommendation written by the chairman of a duly registered Roma civic, cultural or political organization. (Order 3577/1998)

The distribution of these places across specializations is made by each separate university.

The rectorships of the mentioned higher education institutions have the autonomy to distribute such places per faculties and specialization divisions and make the decision regarding the registration. (Order 3294/2000)

The Orders regarding the access facilities to faculties and university colleges for Roma applicants are adopted until 2002, and have similar contents: the education institutions to be allocated and the number of reserved places; the responsibility for distributing the allocated places and the organization of the admission process and the enrollment requirements for these places.

As of 2003, the number of places allocated separately for young Roma people is provided by the Orders concerning the distribution of the school enrollment figures per higher

education institutions. These Orders specify the total number of places allocated to Roma people and their distribution across universities, with no other specifications. The reserved places are allocated for the licence degree studies:

Art. 3. The school enrollment figure for the cycle of licence degree university studies is distributed per public higher education institutions and per fundamental fields of science, art and culture, pursuant to appendix no. 1, which is an integral part of this order. Out of the total distributed places, 493 are allocated to the admission of young Roma students. (Order 3325/2008)

Since these Orders refer to the last adopted specific Order (Order 3699/2002 regarding the access facilities in faculties and university colleges for Roma candidates) all its provisions concerning the admission conditions and the enforcement responsibilities apply.

Art. 3. The rectorships of the higher education institutions mentioned under art. 1 and art. 2 distribute the places allocated to colleges and faculties, among the departments and specializations which will receive enrollment applications on behalf of Roma candidates.

Art. 4. The minimum admission criteria for university colleges and faculties are provided by the regulations in force.

Art. 5. The Roma candidates competing for the places allocated separately for them must submit, upon enrollment, together with the documents requested by the study unit, a written recommendation on behalf of the chairman of a duly established Roma civic, cultural or political organization, certifying their quality as members of the Roma ethnic group.

Art. 6. The rectorships of the Universities mentioned under art. 1 and art. 2, the General Division for the Coordination of Higher education and the General Division for Education in the Languages of Minority Groups within the Ministry of Education and Research will enforce the provisions of the hereby order. (Order 3699/2002)

The admission calendar and the entire admission procedure are established by the university rectors. The Orders adopted up to this point do not contain any provisions referring to the situations in which the places allocated for the Roma candidates are not occupied and if such places may be used for the other candidates. Furthermore, the Orders provide the allocation for young Roma people of some budget subsidized places, however there are no provisions concerning the situations in which, after the first year of study, the budget subsidized places are redistributed to the students according to their yearly average mark. There are no provisions stipulating that such subsidized places are to be kept as subsidized throughout the entire study cycle or concerning the cases of transfer or postponement of a study year.

5.2 Support Mechanisms for Students throughout Their Studies

The current laws do not provide any special actions to support the students admitted on the reserved places for Roma people throughout their studies. The beneficiaries of affirmative action may receive, to the same extent as any student on normal places subsidized by the state budget, a series of social or study scholarships.

The Constitution itself stipulates that the government has an important role to provide free access to the compulsory education levels, through the scholarships which may be awarded “to children coming from poor families and orphans”.

The Education Law also includes provisions regarding the support mechanisms for students. However it emphasizes the role of scholarships of encouraging and stimulating children to obtain high school results.

(5) Education may be supported by scholarships, study loans, fees, donations, sponsorships, own sources and other legal sources.

(6) The state supports them materially, especially the students who manage to obtain very good study results and prove extraordinary skills for further training for a specific profession.

(7) The state and other interested factors will subsidize the high performance activities, at national and international level, of the students. (Law 84/1995)

Other regulations were subsequently adopted, regulating the scholarship awarding system for public education. Scholarships for pre-university studies have a dual role: “a form of material support for both social protection and stimulation of the students with very good study and discipline results”¹⁴ As for university studies, scholarships are awarded first as support for students with the best academic results, but also to support the students with poor financial conditions.

The pre-university scholarships, provided by law, are:

- » Merit and study scholarships – they may be awarded to 9th grade students, as of the second quarter up to the 12th or 13th grade, depending on the type of programme, subject to the criteria established each year by the administration councils of the county school inspectorates and within the limit of the available funds. These criteria refer most often to the school performance of the students.
- » Social allowances are awarded to certain categories of students in the pre-university cycle, irrespective of their study year: orphans of both parents who do not stay in

¹⁴ Government Decision 445/1995.

orphanages, those affected by certain serious medical diseases, students from the rural environment enrolled in schools from other localities and who cannot be provided with proper meals, students coming from poor families (where the net income per family member is less than 50 per cent of the minimum salary per country and who do not possess agricultural land over 20,000 m² in hilly and lowland regions and over 40,000 m² in mountain areas).

In order to apply for a social allowance, students must submit a request and certifying papers to the scholarship award commission within the relevant school unit. The income which will be taken into account is that with a permanent character. Students coming from families where the net income per family member is less than 75 per cent of the minimum salary per country may receive a social allowance once a year.

The administration councils of the inspectorates establish the number of scholarships and also the number of merit and study scholarships, provided they do not exceed 1 per cent of the total number of students; 1.5 per cent in the case of study scholarships. The scholarship funds are distributed to the county school inspectorates by the Ministry of Education, depending on the number of students enrolled in each county for day classes. The decision specifies that scholarships may not be granted based on discriminatory criteria such as: “religion, race, sex, political preference of the student or his/her family, membership with duly established organizations, studies performed abroad, as well as access to scholarships from other sources.”¹⁵

As of 2004, the Government of Romania launched the National Social Protection Program “Money for high-school” addressing students attending day classes in secondary or professional schools. Under this Program, students coming from families with a gross monthly revenue per family member of less than RON 150 for the last 3 months prior to the submittal of the scholarship application. In addition, the students benefiting from some protection action or under the care of a guardian or trustee, may be awarded the scholarship “Money for high-school”. The amount of such scholarship is determined each year by Government Decision, upon the proposal of the Ministry of Education. Currently, the amount is RON 180 per month.

Beneficiaries of “Money for high-school” scholarships may not be awarded social allowances as well. The selection of those who are awarded “Money for high-school” scholarships is made in the descending order of the monthly gross revenue per family member.

The higher education scholarships are similar to those in the pre-university cycle:

- » Merit and study scholarships are awarded on the basis of academic performance.
- » Social allowances are awarded: to students coming from families where the net income per family member is less than the minimum basic salary per country, to orphans of

¹⁵ Government Decision 445/1997.

both parents, those coming from orphanages or family placement centres and students suffering of certain serious medical disorders.

Social allowances may also be awarded occasionally under the following circumstances: as an allowance for buying clothes for poor students, social maternity allowance (in case of student who gave birth to a child or to a male student whose wife gave birth to a child) and social allowance in case of death of a family member.

The public higher education units receive funds depending on the number of students attending day classes during the respective university year. The quantum and the award criteria for these scholarships are determined by the senate of each individual university.

6. ASSESSMENT OF THE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION MECHANISMS

6.1 Description and Perceptions of Affirmative Action

6.1.1 Secondary Studies

As mentioned in the previous chapter, in 2000, by Order of the Ministry of Education, the affirmative action policy was extended to the entire secondary education system and the county school inspectorates were made responsible for determining the number of places and the education units where such places were to be created. The main characteristic of affirmative measures mentioned by most teachers or school inspectors is that each secondary or vocational school grade may be allocated at most two reserved places for Roma candidates (over the school enrollment figure), and the admission respects the general criteria, whereas the competition is confined to Roma candidates. The enforcement of these provisions is interpreted and applied very differently by different county school inspectorates and by the subordinated schools, given the very vague law provisions.

Thus we allocated 2 places to all specializations and grades. Hence, last year we had 248 places and a coverage degree of 29 point something, thus under 30 per cent. Which means we offer more than receive. (school inspector, I-25)

The number of places is set also according to the laws, which stipulate as follows... each school unit, for each specialization, for each grade will allot maximum 2 places...thus the number may be 0, 1 or 2 places...We've tried and this is the policy of the inspectorate...that each school unit and each specialization should have at least one special place for Roma students. (school inspector, I-24)

Thus, besides the guidelines of the Ministry, we questioned the schools well beforehand so that we may make sure what places to reserve. Usually we reserved more than requested, but in time we noticed students preferred certain types of places and, I might say that, during these last years, the conclusions we drew from experience matched very well their options. (school inspector, I-27)

Qualitative data show that the perception of these actions by the social parties involved in this process is different as well, oscillating from positive attitudes supporting such actions to negative attitudes disapproving them.

Table 6.1 Attitudes of Social Parties

| POSITIVE ATTITUDE | NEUTRAL ATTITUDE | NEGATIVE ATTITUDE |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Beneficiaries: a right, an advantage which must be capitalized</p> <p>NGOs: necessary policies, temporary policies, advantage which must be capitalized</p> <p>Teaching staff in high-schools: a good action for the minority group, an encouragement and a chance for Roma children</p> <p>School inspectors: necessary policies, which should be enforced for a certain period</p> <p>Central administration: actions meant to eliminate the differences among ethnic groups</p> | <p>Teaching staff in high-schools/vocational schools: an action they tolerate; a necessary discriminatory action</p> | <p>Teaching staff in schools: an injustice, discrimination of non Roma students, inefficient actions</p> <p>Teaching staff in high-schools: discrimination of non Roma students</p> <p>Non Roma colleagues – injustice to them</p> |

The attitudes of the concerned social actors (especially institutional ones – principals of high-schools, professional schools, vocational schools, school inspectors etc.) regarding the affirmative action policy are influenced both by the stereotypes concerning the Roma ethnic group, the information they possess about affirmative action, but also by the desire, in some cases, to provide a socially acceptable, non-discriminatory, answer.

The beneficiaries consider the policy as being welcome, useful and beyond the problems which may occur sometimes (discrimination, stigmatization etc.) these measures are regarded as a way of supporting the Roma young people. Therefore, beneficiaries perceive affirmative action as a true advantage they have, as a chance to further their studies.

A right of Roma children and young people

I had heard it was a right we were entitled to and I enjoyed such right... and I am not sorry I did so... (beneficiary, faculty graduate, Bucharest, I-9)

An advantage for the admission process

I: However, what made you choose the reserved places for Roma students and not a regular place?

R: I had an advantage.

I: You had an advantage, what does that mean?

R: To make sure I will be admitted. (beneficiary, high-school student, Turda, FG-7)

Maybe, even if I had a good average mark, I could have been distributed to a worse high-school and so I chose these places. I was sure I would be admitted to the high-school I preferred. (beneficiary, high-school student, Bucharest, FG-1)

Well, I for example, if there were no such reserved places, couldn't have been admitted to this high-school, if I had to compete with everybody, my average mark was small as compared to the others, because the last admission average mark by then was 8 point 16 and my mark was 7 point something, 7 point 16. (beneficiary, high-school graduate, Iași, FG-3)

The opinion of non-governmental Roma organizations concerning the affirmative action policy within the educational system is a positive one as well. Being aware of the problems confronting the Roma ethnic group members, they consider such actions are efficient and necessary, responding to real problems. And some of the representatives of the institutional actors share this opinion.

Temporary measure, necessary for a period

I believe this is a very good action and as long as the educational deficit of Roma people is still bigger than with the majority, such affirmative action is necessary.

On the other hand, I don't think this action will go on forever. It is a stimulating action, and it is welcome for the time being. (NGO representative, Iași, I-36)

An encouragement to enter the system

The fact that they somehow are aware that there is a solution for them as well encourages them to access places in faculty... even if, for example... they may be admitted a bit more easily than the majority... because the competition is lower, this action is taken only for the admission to faculty. Further on, everything is just the same. Hence, their Roma origin will make no difference. (NGO representative, Bucharest, I-35)

Romania is already applying them and I believe that they should be applied for at least 10 years on. Namely, the moment the children of those who are now children will go to school, and the Roma ethnic group will generate a sufficient coefficient of intellectuals, of people who may relate in all directions with the society and the state institutions, then I believe there will be no more problems, the machine will work as a matter of course. (school inspector, I-27)

The opinions of the principals of high-schools and gymnasium schools vary quite a lot on the acceptance/understanding – rejection/discrimination axis. This category of respondents seems to have most preconceptions and stereotypes regarding the Roma ethnic group. Thus, a part of the respondents in this category accept affirmative action and consider they are likely to reduce the social gap, whereas others perceive them as useless and inefficient and at the same time discriminatory against non Roma students. The attitudes rejecting affirmative action are mostly due to the unawareness regarding the problems of Roma communities and to their low level of involvement in the implementation process of affirmative action.

A chance given to these children, which will trigger a change of mentality

Unless they had the opportunity of these places and took the exams together with the others, they may not have any chances to be admitted and they would not be able to develop a normal, natural, scientific perspective upon the world. They would perpetuate their preconceptions and we would remain with ours (high-school principal, Iași, I-37)

Inefficient actions, a too big effort compared to the outputs, especially given the non occupancy of reserved places

It seemed to me that too much energy is invested in these actions and the effects are rather too weak as compared to the general effort being made: reserving places, creating the relevant commission... (school principal, Bucharest, I-39)

Actions, tolerated accepted in high-school because they play no decision-making role

Honestly, anyone thinks that the access to a class, even at a certain level, is possible on the basis of some knowledge, hence it obvious that the difference between the average marks of the two as compared to the others there were clear discrepancies. They tolerated it and this is it, as a matter of fact they didn't... how should I put it, in all this business the school had no chance to express their wish. (high-school principal, Călărași, I-14)

Reserved places stand for a necessary discrimination

It is a discrimination the fact that they have reserved places is still a discrimination and it would be good if in several years we reached a point where such separate places become useless and Roma children may be admitted as everybody else, through the same selection procedures, with no problems whatsoever. However this would mean solving the problems of their community, namely going to school with all Roma children, attending 1st-4th grades and therefore attending gymnasium classes, in view of going on with high-school without any problems. (high-school principal, Iași, I-17)

An injustice to non Roma children

I don't think they are necessary. It seems to me the society is discriminated in two: Romanian and Roma. And there is discrimination. This is my personal opinion. Why should they have separate places? They are Romanians. It's not them being

Roma and us being Romanians. We are all Romanian citizens. I believe it is unfair, but this is a personal opinion. (school principal, Bucharest, I-39)

Non Roma students accept and do not oppose affirmative action. There are also situations when, due to the lack of information (they do not always know such reserved places are allocated additionally to the school enrollment figure), conflicts or tensions occur.

I: What do your non-Roma colleagues think about these reserved places?

R1: They envy us.

R2: Some of them envy us.

R3: Some of them make comments or curse.

R4: If they were Roma, they would apply as well.

R5: I've heard the same thing, they envy us because they have no chance of being admitted more easily. (beneficiaries, high-school, Bucharest, FG-1)

The representatives of central institutions have a macro perception regarding affirmative action. These are seen as public policies which must correct a situation. The implications, the existing problems at the micro level, determined by the current system of affirmative action seem to be understood to a lesser extent.

Facilitate the elimination of the differences among social groups

It is a necessary action for a better society, where Roma people are active persons on the labor market, active persons, payers of duties... taxes... where we manage to break the chain of the dependency upon social allowances, to break the chain of the dependency upon a life of extreme poverty through the enforcement of affirmative action in terms which may reduce the distance between the majority population and the minority population. (representative of central administration, I-8)

6.1.2 Higher Education System

The allocation system for reserved places in higher education implies two decision-making levels: at the central level the Ministry determines the total number of places to be allocated while each university determines the practical ways of distributing such places. These places are added to the school enrollment figures for normal places. As for setting the total number of reserved places, the Ministry tried to create a balance across regions and specializations, while also considering the occupation rate of these places during the previous year.

The way these reserved places are distributed across various specializations is determined at the level of each university, in line with the principle of the university autonomy. The interviews revealed that there were different strategies regarding the distribution of such places per specializations within the university:

Specializations are determined also depending on the requests of the Roma leaders

We can share them as we wish, after discussing with the deans, but also collaborate with the Roma organizations. (university representative, Cluj, I-42)

This is not a coherent, organized approach by which universities counsel with Roma organizations. The interviews rather showed that on rare occasions non governmental organizations had the initiative of contacting and notifying the universities upon the options of young Roma candidates. Besides, one of the weak points of such approach, perceived by those who mentioned the collaboration with non governmental organizations, is the lack of cohesion among the Roma organizations.

When I become a pro rector for studies, I took over a tradition. Hence, those who preceded me collaborated with these organizations and such organizations are already aware of this thing, and since April-May when the ministry announces the school enrollment figures and we take up sharing such figures, they already approach me, to talk about the distribution of places. This means, how many to go to Law School, to Economic Sciences, to History, to Journalism, to Political Sciences, Sociology, Mathematics. No problem. We have no specific interests. We are aware that the Social Work department is allocated more places, and they expect us to give more, this can be solved, but, the problem is we have no organizations or confederation of organizations or legal representative entities for Roma people to talk to. Today a gentleman from the Sălaj county, from Zalău, visits me, he works with the prefect's office for the Sălaj county, he is the councilor of Mr. or Mrs. Prefect on Roma affairs and wishes to talk to me about the distribution of places. Next day someone from a Non Governmental Roma Organization pays me a visit, the third day is the same. I have to urge the Roma community, however I can only talk to them through their representatives who come to my office, to assemble, to reach an agreement, to come all at once so that we may distribute these places.

The admission is centralized at each university, whereas candidates may choose, in order of their average marks, a specialization

If you want things to go even smoother, except for a few years, lately we organized centralized admission sessions, at university level, namely they submitted their files with the Didactic Pro rectorship, however by including an option for a certain faculty, and after their admission, such files were transferred to the respective faculty and considered as such. (university representative, Iași, I-46)

From the previous years experiences, we identified the specializations potential beneficiaries prefer most, and such specializations are allocated most of the places

As for the places for Roma students, there are some faculties, which, by tradition, are allocated more places. For example, the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, due to its social care division which young Roma students are more interested in, because they, as you may very well know, train social workers who also deal with the Roma population with the specific problems of this category. (university representative, Cluj, I-42)

In case not all the available places are occupied, the solutions adopted by universities are: either to distribute such places to the candidates enrolled for normal places, or to leave them unoccupied.

Well we waited until the closure of the procedures, we noted that those places were vacant, being allocated from the places for Romanians, of course we gave them to Romanians. (university representative, Iași, I-46)

There are no legal provisions regarding this situation, therefore the decision is to be made by the university. The representatives of non-governmental organizations expressed their desire to get involved in the process of deciding on the redistribution of these places so as they may not lose their purpose.

In case there are more candidates, obviously another Roma person will occupy that place, however there were cases when such places remained vacant, and were not occupied by Roma students. Here, the Roma community should decide what to do with the respective places. (NGO representative, Cluj, I-29)

The risks associated with this lacuna in the law are that some universities may avoid publicising these reserved places and thus by redistribution to non-Roma students they may increase the number of regular places subsidized by the state.

The attitudes of the university and faculty representatives concerning affirmative action are generally positive, being perceived as useful actions which may facilitate equal chances for a category at disadvantage. Moreover, reserved places within affirmative action were added to the school enrollment figures of the university, which diminished the attitudes according to which Roma students occupied the places which would otherwise be occupied by non Roma students.

This action does not discriminate them in a positive manner, it only provides or tries to provide equal opportunities. If they had equal chances and would have been favored by means of a political action, that would have been discrimination. They were given an additional chance because they had other disadvantages. (university representative, Cluj, I-42)

I would say that such action, at least managed to provide them with a number of preferential places within the education system, and should be maintained. I find that people come with different levels of knowledge, it's not only them. However, if they are provided the same work, counseling conditions, under the same social conditions, those who are determined to succeed, even though they may have a poorer background, will catch up on the run. Hence, I consider such action should be preserved. (university representative, Iași, I-43)

This is heaven sent. You are aware that most of them come from the rural environment. Material resources there are fewer. Our faculty has very few

students coming from the rural environment. Even though it is a faculty with tradition, which accommodated students from rural regions, nowadays most of them come from urban regions, mostly due to the material difficulties implied by faculty studies. Current Roma students come from the rural environment. (university representative, Cluj, I-41)

6.2 Social Actors Involved in the Access Process to Reserved Places

Providing access of Roma students to reserved places in the secondary or higher education system depends upon a complex network of social actors: from central or decentralized institutions, up to the candidates and their families. Their roles concerning the enforcement of affirmative action, provided by the current laws are generally vague. These legal gaps lead to very different approaches at the local level.

6.2.1 Secondary Studies

The Ministry of Education is the central institution which has created the legal framework for the implementation of affirmative action. Each year, the Ministry sets up the calendar for admission for Roma candidates to secondary studies. The Ministry's role, identified within the interviews is, on the one hand, to regulate such actions, and, on the other hand, to communicate the necessary information to the involved actors.

Although the Ministry has a coordinating role in this process, there is no consistent approach to monitoring the enforcement of these actions. Over the years, there have been some initiatives to gather data regarding the number of beneficiaries of these actions, however there are no regular procedures in this respect, and, on the other hand, no specific legal obligations.

Monitoring the enforcement of these actions is considered as a difficult task also due to the relations between inspectorates and ministries, in the context of the decentralizing process:

...there is this soft breeze blowing of poorly understood decentralizing trend... however, unfortunately, this is our relation with the inspectorates... when they are interested in solving something, they immediately conjure a document like this one. When they are not so interested, they slow down its enforcement...

I: Do you have any mechanisms to sanction them?

R: We do, but we consider that we must make them understand that this autonomy... maybe we also make mistakes, at the center, because we consider that autonomy must be assumed with its good... and bad sides... and wait patiently for them to grow up... to understand that we are the ones providing the education plan, we provide the figures... we provide... namely there has

to be a minimum decency, because some day we'll hold the upper hand and if we want to, we will remember all... Well, there's this game and they take advantage of the fact we cannot afford the time to check how many vacant places they have... and believe them, but we know they lie... this seems to be the state of facts... it is very difficult... we'll always play like this unless we make up our minds: well, we are decentralized and this is it. (central authority representative, I-28)

The school inspectorates in the counties are the decentralized institutions which enforce these actions and decide upon the number of places and how they will be distributed, but also manage these reserved places for the secondary education system.

As mentioned above, the way of determining the number of places and school units where places for Roma candidates are allocated is very different for each county, due to the lack of exact legal provisions.

The inspectorate keeps contact with the schools and the Roma organizations and leaders to have a general view of the demand of reserved places in the secondary education system. Unofficially, there is this "census" mechanism of Roma students in the 8th grade applied in some of the counties.

In January, a notice is sent to the schools requesting the options of Roma children. By April, we do the same, hence a second notice is sent. Also in January, I have a meeting with the NGO representatives, they make their own investigations and send me other lists with possible places. In April I submit these places to the Inspectorate management board for approval. (school inspector, I-23)

The inspectorate may also collaborate with the prefect's office or the town hall when they have Roma councilors, whereas they have the official competence, according to the interviewed inspectors, to issue such recommendations. The Roma councillors or the councillors representing the Roma community within the local administration are not mentioned in the Ministerial Order as being among the social actors who may issue such recommendations. However, this approach was mentioned by the school inspectors especially when the non governmental sector is poorly represented at county level. Moreover, in some counties, the inspectors for the Roma community collaborate with the local authorities and the NGO networks to draw them into the information process concerning the affirmative action policy. This approach depends very much upon the initiatives of the inspectors for the Roma students and their interest in this issue.

We also collaborate with NGOs and they get quite involved, we have the councillor with the Prefect's office, we have the ANR, several levers and a mixed work group within which we provide information during general assemblies, attended by all leaders of the communities in the county. They will forward such information. We work on several routes, the leaders, NGOs and schools. (school inspector, I-21)

We don't work with leaders, especially political leaders. We work with the human resources in the system, first of all with the teachers of Romanian language, and there we have a sanitary mediator and an expert at the level of town halls. Moreover, we had NGOs who participated and organized information campaigns among the communities. We had meetings with parents, students, we informed them about the available possibilities. This was the general procedure. (school inspector, I-22)

As for the monitoring procedure, there are no specific legal provisions. Therefore, the most frequent situations are those in which inspectorates poses most data regarding the students who are allocated the reserved places. What happens further on to these students is not monitored at all most of the time.

From the point of view of the Inspectorate, these places have this status until they get occupied... Hence for us, they get occupied in June, during the two distribution days, then it's our student... they are all the same, their ethnic affiliation is irrelevant... they are all the same" (school inspector, I-24)

R: Well, I'm not the only one gathering data about the Roma student. You may see that in the Romanian school system they are regarded as Jews were during the Nazi regime. That's because not even in the American laws Afro-Americans are not named as black, or white. Pardon me.

I: True, but considering the fact they are enrolled on reserved places...

R: They are enrolled on reserved places and only when they do bad things do they return to me. The rest of the time, they are with the school. Therefore, I have these meetings, I meet with them, tell them whether there are any conduct problems... (school inspector, I-25)

School inspectorates coordinate the education in Romanes language at local level as well. According to the statements of the inspectors, although the schools, teachers and teaching staff had a reserved or even negative attitude in the beginning, in time this attitude changed, seeing how important the Romanian language teacher was for the interaction with the Roma community, in view of changing the preconceptions of Roma and non Roma students. Some inspectors noted that even the Romani language teachers help reduce school drop-out and improve the attitude of students towards school.

We took care, selected people, organized a very good information campaign, gave them as examples, and ever since a very interesting phenomenon happened, school principals began realizing it was a good thing. By having a Romani teacher in school, the relation with the Roma community is well set. This teacher is a positive example for the community, on the other hand, so he/she is actually a model, the ice is broken, the attitude of Roma people towards school is changed. During the following years, something very positive occurred, if I were to put it this way. Principals came to ask me to appoint Romani teachers in their schools as well. (school inspector, I-27).

Where Romani teachers are employed, it is obvious, and no statistics are necessary, that the attendance, school drop-out rate has improved, Roma students got closer to school, changed their mentality to a large extent. (school inspector, I-27)

The gymnasium school is a key institution for the access to reserved places. First of all, the school has to officially publicise the entire admission calendar and the enrollment process for the 9th grade. The attitude of the management and teaching staff towards Roma students is an important factor in encouraging or motivating students who want and are entitled to access reserved places.

In the first place, the school must notify the existence of these places, must tell them how many places are available, the enrollment term, hence the entire admission schedule. (school principal, Bucharest, I-39).

However, there is another problem, principals used to make general announcements regarding the national exam, but they were not interested in promoting special actions, because these were delicate matters. Many Roma children were not declared and principal considered that “as long as they are not declared, I have no reason to encourage them go for a special place”. (school inspector, I-22).

In cases when teachers or the school management do not understand the usefulness of these actions and/or consider them as unjustified privileges, the school encourage Roma students to go for these places. An example of the negative attitude towards these places is presented below, where the principal of the school points out the fact that, although they have very many Roma students, only very few of them declare their Roma origin and access these places.

The weak point is that they are stuffed with the idea they are a minority group, this is how they get the idea they are a minority who must be helped. If I had any authority, I would tell them they are Romanians and that there are no differences, hence there is no thing, nothing in this country specially made for Romanians which is forbidden to Roma people. However, there are lots of things for Roma and there's no place for Romanians there. For example this distribution, this is how discrimination occurs. Through this separation... well, Romanians do not really agree because it is not normal that a child should have a reserved place only because he/she is Roma. Where is the right of Romanians to a reserved place, somewhere else? This is discrimination. (school principal, Bucharest, I-39)

The interviewed representatives of institutions consider that publicly admitting their ethnic affiliation is a very delicate issue for most adolescents, especially because they had been labelled by colleagues or teachers. Therefore, it is very important that a Roma person should encourage them, make them more confident and act as a model of stating one's ethnic origin. For most students, primary and gymnasium schools were periods when they tried to speak out or even deny their ethnic affiliation. Thus, the 8th grade, when they have to state their identity in order to exercise certain rights is a very sensitive moment.

I have seen the reaction of Roma children in the presence of the school mediator who is somehow, with the adequate inverted commas, one of them. It makes a huge difference, a huge one, because they believe, maybe it's just my opinion, but I still consider they feel more at ease and safe if one of them tells them that this is how things are. (school principal, Bucharest, I-39)

The teaching staff consider that school should advise students so as they may choose the most appropriate secondary or vocational school for their professional training level and vocation.

I asked them to be advised, counselled and go for: those places which match their skills, their training level, and well, we have no warranty that it happened like this all the time. (school inspector, I-27)

Non governmental organizations are mentioned, in the Ministerial Orders regulating the system of reserved places in the secondary and higher education systems, as certifying factors for the ethnic affiliation of the candidates for these places. Besides this role provided by the regulations, Roma organizations or those protecting the Roma might carry out a series of other activities to support education or cultural activities. Some organizations carry out information campaigns in schools or high-schools and make contact with potential beneficiaries. In the rural areas, students have less chances of being contacted by such an organization because the distribution of NGOs for Roma across the country is not uniform, and the number of NGOs in the urban regions is bigger. A solution discovered by some inspectors is to establish a link between candidates and the organizations in other cities or even from other counties, and bring them together in the public sessions, but this type of relation is very weak and purely informal.

It is a little difficult for children in the rural regions, where there are no NGOs which may issue these certificates, but we have eliminated this obstacle; we invited all NGOs in the municipality to attend our public sessions and they bring their type forms and seals and issue them on the spot. (school inspector, I-23)

Some of the teaching staff in secondary and vocational schools consider that non governmental organizations issuing these recommendations should also advise students, so that they may choose a school where the admission average mark is not much higher than their own. This solution is difficult to implement because it requires NGOs to possess very good knowledge about the admission procedures into secondary education and the experiences of the previous years; moreover, this approach is rather a way to transfer the responsibility for information dissemination. Besides, no governmental policy may impose responsibilities on the non governmental sector; instead, it may merely recommend partnerships. Moreover, advising candidates to go to certain high-schools, where the admission average mark is closer to the potential beneficiary's mark, would make reserved places useless. There were teaching staff members who believed that organizations should focus on Roma students with good school results, to actually make a selection among those who will benefit of these places.

I mean, NGOs, for the sake of promoting their Roma to these classes, accept anyone at a certain moment. No, if they also promoted only children with good marks, this would be the only actual solution, which may be enforced from this very year. If NGOs wouldn't go and take those with 5 marks to gull them into a high-school and tell them to go with those with 8 average marks, because it is clear that person would adapt to a class, let's say, better... (high-school principal, Călărași, I-14)

The interviewed NGOs pointed out the fact that they widely depend on the school teachers and principals concerning their student information actions about the opportunities offered to Roma candidates, and therefore they may come into contact either with all the 8th grade students, or only with the Roma students selected by the teaching staff.

The moment we gathered the Roma children... so they were gathered by the management. We complied with what was on offer, if I may say. If the principal gathered... ordered a gathering of Roma students... ok I only spoke to the Roma children. (I-35)

The families of Roma candidates (especially their parents) play an important role in making the decision to further their studies, particularly furthering their studies on the reserved places for Roma students.

At least in my case, I finished school; I was never influenced by what the others were saying. I wanted to do something, I had my parents' support and, now, one can see that all of them respect me to a certain extent because you did something and didn't give up despite all obstacles. (beneficiary, high-school, Arad, FG-4)

With me it was my mother who made me do it, if it were for me I would have ended at the complementary school, as they used to call the apprentice school by that time. (beneficiary, university, Bucharest, FG-2)

If we see the practical side, the family support you, otherwise you can't make it. (beneficiary, university, Bucharest, FG-2)

Some of the parents express their fears concerning the treatment of their children the moment they access these reserved places.

I've met cases when parents admitted their Roma origin but asked me if their son's/daughter's Roma origin and the fact they were admitted to high-school on the reserved places for Roma students will be displayed. We explained that no teacher would cause troubles regarding the fact that a child is Roma. He/she is admitted on that separate place but no... (school inspector, I-26)

As for the parents who are not home because they are abroad, their absence is reflected upon the school life of children, who are very likely to quit school. There are also cases when the

parents of Roma students do not value school and education as a successful strategy in life, focusing on the traditional values of the Roma community and placing the family on top of all. Thus, in some cases girls choose marriage and boys get a job to become a householder.

As for girls, there this extra motivation related to the fear they may get deprived. Most often the perception of Roma people regarding the secondary education and the non Roma girls in high-schools is slightly deformed, namely they think “if I send my girl to school there, and tomorrow the girl violates the virtue of virginity, she will get deprived, start smoking, drinking and other things, so it is better with no school, let her be a good girl because otherwise no one may have her”. As a wife I mean. As for boys, let’s assume that the main reason is the attitude, shall I say, non constructive about school “well, there’s no use going to school because you’re not going to end as an inspector, or lawyer, why learn so much? Get a job or start a business because you will have children soon, you’ll need financial support not only from us, you’ll have to provide for your family”. (NGO representative, Dolj, I-37)

The Roma candidates are a major part of the decision-making process regarding the decision to further their studies, to access the places for Roma students, but also to choose a certain educational branch. The general reason to further their studies is to increase the chances of getting a good job. However, the desire in find a good job may also be a factor determining them to quit school, especially when young Roma choose to go abroad. These trends are not specific to the Roma community, but apply to the entire Romanian society. Moreover, their interest in finding a well-paid job leads them to choose vocational schools, which offer a qualification immediately after graduation.

The temptation is real, we have very good students who quit, very good girls and boys who went to Spain, to Italy to find a job, although many of them come from very good families. (school inspector, I-26)

I ‘ve met children who passed the national exam with quite good marks, who preferred going to a vocational school to learn a trade such as manicurist, pedicurist, something of this sort. And I asked them why, since they could go much further, and they said they want to earn their living much earlier, and they also came from families with very good material conditions. But this was the choice of both children and parents. (school inspector, I-26)

Also, Roma students have negative experience or perceptions regarding the statement of their ethnic origin. Avoiding situations which force them to admit their ethnic affiliation is one of the main reasons against applying for reserved places.

Around four of the students, who, at a certain moment, thought they were good students and didn’t need the Roma places, or they thought it was a little... it sounds a little as if it was a shame to apply for places for Roma. And these

children actually were left behind, and we had to go for the second session and get the worst places. (school principal, Călărași, I-38).

- In some cases, the bad side is we could have done better.
- In what respect?
- I could have succeeded by myself, without being classified as a Roma. (beneficiary, high-school, Călărași, FG-6)

6.2.2 The Higher Education System

The Ministry of Education sets the yearly number of reserved places for each university subsidized from the state budget. The number of places is determined, on the one hand, on the basis of the estimates provided by the school inspectorates regarding the 12th grade students who wish to go on with their studies, and on the other hand, on the basis of the experience from previous years and the occupation rates of these places.

From the perspective of the representatives of higher education institutions, **high-schools** are responsible for disseminating information about the reserved places in the higher education system. In universities, those interviewed stated that high-schools, as an institution, play a major part regarding the access to these places by providing school training and stimulating the school performances of all students, irrespective of their ethnic affiliation, so that there may be no gaps among Roma and non Roma students. In practice, according to the beneficiaries' statements, high-school plays a very small part in spreading the information regarding the existing places within universities and even smaller in informing students regarding the places reserved for Roma people. This is also due to the lack of specific obligations provided by the applicable laws.

As with the secondary system, **non governmental organizations** promote affirmative action and issue recommendations for Roma candidates. Moreover, at the level of higher education, there is a better connection between the non governmental sector and the beneficiaries of affirmative action.

The universities define how the reserved places allocated by the Ministry will be distributed, organize the admission sessions and enrol the admitted candidates. After enrollment, the students admitted on the reserved places are regarded as any students enrolled on subsidized places. The only exception is the fact that, irrespective of the results obtained throughout the academic year, the students on reserved places remain on the subsidized places.

The reasons and motives of **Roma candidates** and **their families** are no different from those of candidates for high-schools: increasing opportunities in the labour market. As for certain more attractive specializations, the competition on the places for Roma students is as high as with normal places, which discourages some of the candidates to apply for admission on these places.

Very many Roma students have found out about these reserved places and the competition is very high. If you check with the faculty, there's 3-4 of them competing on one place, just as with the places for Romanians, there's no benefit whatsoever. (beneficiary, high-school, Iași, FG-5)

An extra reason, as compared to the secondary studies, is of financial nature: going for the reserved places spares them the school fees, and for some of the candidates, this may be the only criterion which determines them to go on with their studies.

7. DESCRIPTION OF THE BENEFICIARIES OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

7.1 Estimating the Number of Beneficiaries and Assessing the Distribution of the Reserved Places for Roma Students¹⁶

This section analyzes the data gathered by Gallup from the school inspectorates and universities.

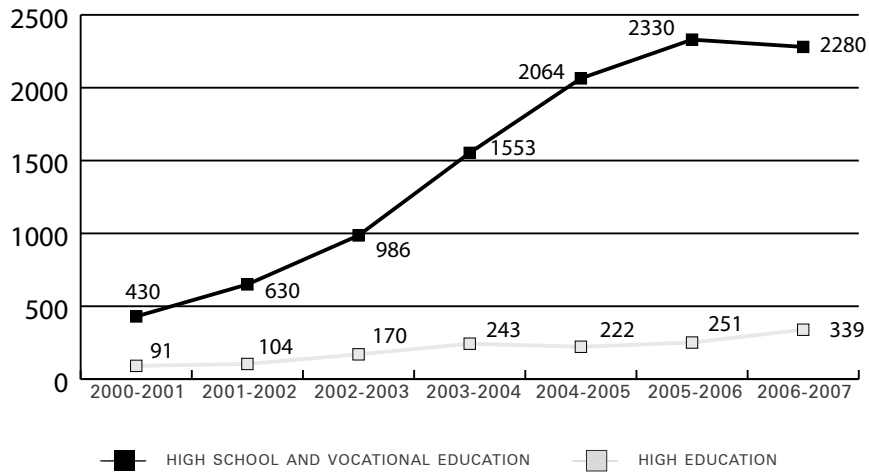
Between 2000 and 2006, approximately 10,300 students were enrolled in high-schools and vocational schools on reserved places for Roma students. During the same period, approximately 1,420 students were enrolled in higher education on reserved places. During these 7 years, the number of pupils and students admitted on the reserved places increased each year, and in 2006, 5 times more students were admitted on the reserved places in secondary education classes, and over 4 times more students were admitted in higher education institutions as compared to 2000.

Table 7.1 Evolution per year of the number of students enrolled on the reserved places for Roma students

| UNIT TYPE | SCHOOL YEAR | | | | | | | Total |
|---|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------|
| | 2000-2001 | 2001-2002 | 2002-2003 | 2003-2004 | 2004-2005 | 2005-2006 | 2006-2007 | |
| HIGH-SCHOOL | 69 | 192 | 424 | 699 | 996 | 1,087 | 1019 | 4,486 |
| VOCATIONAL SCHOOL | 361 | 458 | 562 | 854 | 1,068 | 1,243 | 1,261 | 5,807 |
| TOTAL FOR HIGH-SCHOOLS AND VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS | 430 | 650 | 986 | 1,553 | 2,064 | 2,330 | 2,280 | 10,293 |
| HIGHER EDUCATION | 91 | 104 | 170 | 243 | 222 | 251 | 339 | 1,420 |

¹⁶ This chapter features the statistic data gathered from school inspectorates and universities. Unless otherwise provided, this is the data source.

Figure 7.1 Evolution of the number of secondary level students enrolled on the reserved places for Roma students



Only two thirds of reserved places in secondary and higher education have been occupied by students. The qualitative interviews with the representatives of inspectorates and schools showed that there was a practice to set a number of places bigger than the actual demand, due to the students' reticence in stating their ethnic affiliation at school, and including an error margin for potential candidates from other counties.

The evolution of the occupancy of the reserved places allocated to Roma students is different for high-schools and vocational schools as compared to universities. For secondary studies, the highest occupation rates of reserved places were recorded during 2001-2004 (70-75 per cent-see table 2), whereas in the case of higher education, this rate grew a lot during 2005-2006 (over 80 per cent). The decrease of the occupation rate during the last two years may be explained by the fact that the number of allocated places increased each year, whereas the demand decreased. The explanation of this evolution of the occupancy rate of the places allocated to Roma students in the higher education sector is most likely due to the improved distribution of these places to faculties and specializations which previously registered a higher demand of such places. This was not a formal change but was determined by the analysis of the occupancy rate and the previous results, in each county, respectively university centre.

The distribution of students by gender on reserved places in high-schools, vocational schools and universities is relatively balanced, with no big deviations to signal any inequities among women and men concerning the access to these places. In faculties, the percentage of women admitted on reserved places for Roma students is significantly larger, most likely

because most places were allocated to specializations particularly preferred by women (e.g., humanistic sciences).

As for the access of students to the reserved places for Roma, according to their residential origin, the data gathered from inspectorates and universities point out a **large unbalance between urban and rural regions**. Out of the total students admitted on reserved places for the secondary cycle and universities approximately 29 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively, came from the rural areas.

Table 7.2 Percentage of reserved places occupied out of the total allocated places and the distribution of students admitted on reserved places according to gender and residential environment

| SCHOOL YEAR | RESERVED PLACES IN HIGH-SCHOOLS | | | RESERVED PLACES IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|--|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| | Per cent of occupied places | Per cent students females | Per cent students from rural areas | Per cent of occupied places | Per cent students females | Per cent students from rural areas |
| 2000-2001 | 52 | 48 | 37 | 45 | 47 | 17 |
| 2001-2002 | 75 | 51 | 26 | 49 | 50 | 25 |
| 2002-2003 | 76 | 49 | 24 | 50 | 52 | 16 |
| 2003-2004 | 71 | 50 | 28 | 70 | 43 | 19 |
| 2004-2005 | 75 | 46 | 31 | 46 | 52 | 18 |
| 2005-2006 | 61 | 48 | 29 | 83 | 63 | 20 |
| 2006-2007 | 53 | 45 | 31 | 85 | 62 | 22 |
| Average values | 66 | 48 | 29 | 66 | 55 | 20 |

The lack of a monitoring system for reserved places, especially the frequent changes of the inspectors liable for the education of Roma students determine the impossibility of inspectorates to provide detailed information concerning the specialization of beneficiaries. It has been possible to estimate the specialization for only about 60 per cent of students on reserved places.

As for the secondary education **approximately two thirds of the reserved places for Roma students were occupied in the classes within the theoretic branch** (especially for philology, but also for mathematics-informatics), whereas for the vocational education, most places (approximately 70 per cent) were distributed to technical classes.

As for the university studies, most of the reserved places were in the specializations within the human or social sciences category (social work, sociology, pedagogy, philology etc). Approximately 35 per cent of the reserved places for Roma students in universities were occupied at faculties delivering humanistic specializations. This preference of Roma candidates for humanistic faculties may be explained by the training gaps regarding the exact disciplines (exact sciences), which require additional general training.¹⁷ The next most popular specializations, which were approximately equal, were the vocational faculties (specializations such as arts or sports) and the economic science faculties.

Table 7.3 Distribution by branch of reserved places for Roma students in secondary and vocational schools

| BRANCH | NO. OF STUDENTS ENROLLED ON RESERVED PLACES | |
|--|---|--------------------|
| | High-schools | Vocational schools |
| Theoretical | 1,619 | |
| Technological | 416 | |
| Vocational | 397 | |
| Technical | | 2,671 |
| Services | | 812 |
| Natural resources and environmental protection | | 385 |
| Unavailable data ¹⁸ | 2,054 | 1,939 |
| Total | 4,486 | 5,807 |

¹⁷ “And they have problems [students admitted on reserved places n.a.] generally with foreign languages. This may be astonishing, but it’s those who do not speak their own dialects at home. So they have problems with foreign languages, with Chemistry, also with Mathematics, because often their aspirations are higher than the skills acquired in.” (school inspector, I-25).

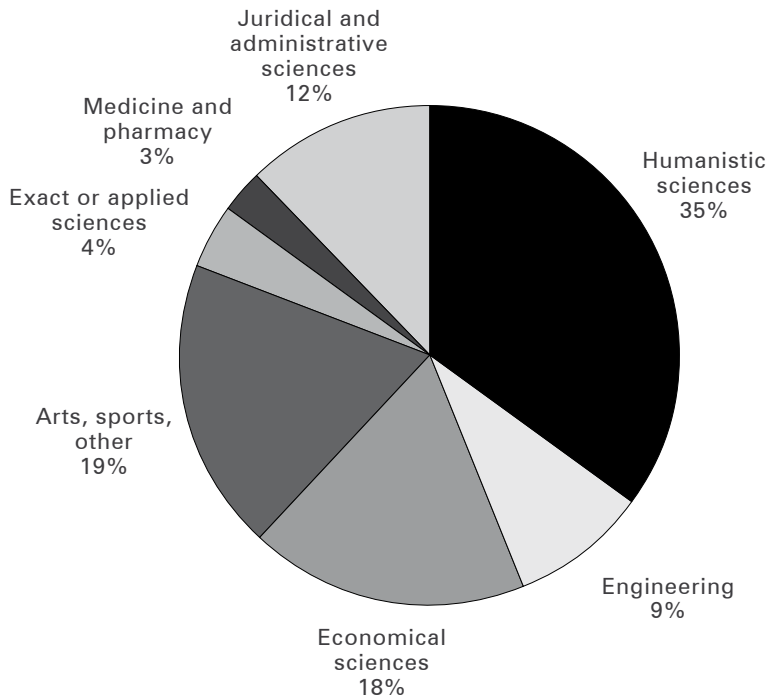
“However, they have another problem, which we must consider, and although I tried to compensate as much as I could, that they usually are quite poorly trained, most of them. And this applies to fundamental disciplines such as Chemistry, where they have major deficiencies and it is very difficult to catch up.” (university representative, I-45).

¹⁸ Inspectorates haven’t provided any data concerning specializations, despite our persistence, the reason are the lack of a management system for this information, the frequent replacement of inspectors etc. As provided in the methodology chapter.

Table 7.4 Distribution by specialization of reserved places for Roma students in universities

| SPECIALIZATION | NO. OF STUDENTS |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Arts, sports, other | 153 |
| Economic sciences | 141 |
| Engineering | 71 |
| Humanistic sciences | 271 |
| Legal and administrative sciences | 93 |
| Medicine and pharmacy | 22 |
| Exact or applied sciences | 34 |
| Unavailable data | 635 |
| Total | 1,420 |

Figure 7.2 Estimation of the distribution of reserved places in universities according to specialization



7.2 Social And Demographic Profile

During the sociological investigation among the beneficiaries, data was gathered about the social-demographic profile of students at all levels of education where affirmative action has been implemented: high-school education, professional education in vocational schools and higher education. The main results are synthesized as follows.

Beneficiaries having access to the reserved places in high-schools are more often young people coming from families with a higher education level and from relatively small households and from families with one or at most two children. These are families where the parents' interest in education is higher and which have a better material condition than the beneficiaries in vocational schools. Most beneficiaries come from the urban environment. Only 5 per cent of them speak Romani at home as the main language and only 28 per cent possess sufficient Romani knowledge so as to at least understand what is being said.

Beneficiaries in vocational schools come from larger families, and a significant number of families have more than three children. They also come from households which are poorer, as reflected in the equipment in the household: for example, the rate of beneficiaries having a computer at home is much lower than beneficiaries of high-schools or faculties. Beneficiaries in vocational schools more often come from the traditional communities, speak Romani more often (20 per cent speak it at home) and follow more often within the family the ethnic traditions.

In universities, there are students coming from relatively large families, more families with 3-4 children than in the case of high-school beneficiaries. Also, as compared with the beneficiaries from high-schools, the cases in which young beneficiaries come from families with a low educational background are more frequent. The equipment in their households shows they have better economic resources than beneficiaries from vocational schools, however not as good as the beneficiaries from high-schools. The young people have tighter connections with the Roma community (15 per cent speak the Romani language at home) and the cases when such places are occupied by non Roma students are less frequent.

The differences noted among the beneficiaries of high-schools and universities may be explained by the alternatives they have when making the transition to a higher education stage. Thus, when moving on to high-schools, the admission to a public high-school is almost the sole alternative to further their studies. Private institutions are almost non existent, hence this moment is perceived by both the candidates and their families as a crucial one. As for the higher education, the paid places either in public institutions or private ones are a feasible alternative for the families with a certain level of financial resources.

As a general rule, the socio-demographic and ethnic profile differs from the Roma ethnic group profile that emerges from the Population and dwelling census of 2002. According to the census data, only 39 per cent of the Roma people live in urban regions, whereas over 60 per cent of the beneficiaries of affirmative action come from the urban areas (up to 80 per cent with high-schools). Likewise, if at the level of the Roma population, by the time of the census, 44 per cent spoke Romani as mother tongue, the percentage of beneficiaries speaking Romani at home varies from 5 per cent to 20 per cent.

The ethnic affiliation of beneficiaries was determined by self identification. Thus, 13 per cent of high-school beneficiaries, 7 per cent of vocational school beneficiaries and 11 per cent of university beneficiaries state they are of Romanian origin. Interviewers were asked to note down if, in their opinion, respondents are of Roma origin or not (the results are presented in table 6). In most cases, the answers match, however in approximately 6 per cent of the cases, although the respondents stated they were of Romanian origin, the interviewer considered they were of Roma origin, or that they might be of Roma origin. Furthermore, the opposite situation is more frequent, namely for 7 per cent of the respondents in high-schools, 11 per cent of the respondents in vocational schools and 12 per cent of the respondents. The ethnic affiliation of beneficiaries was determined by self identification. Thus, 13 per cent of high-school beneficiaries, 7 per cent of vocational school beneficiaries and 11 per cent of university beneficiaries state they are of Romanian origin. Interviewers were asked to note down if, in their opinion, respondents are of Roma origin or not (the results are presented in table 6). In most cases, the answers match, however in approximately 6 per cent of the cases, although the respondents stated they were of Romanian origin, the interviewer considered they were of Roma origin, or that they might be of Roma origin. Furthermore, the opposite situation is more frequent, namely for 7 per cent of the respondents in high-schools, 11 per cent of the respondents in vocational schools and 12 per cent of the respondents in universities, the interviewer considered they were of Roma origin or was unsure about their Roma origin, although they had declared themselves as Roma. The hereby report will further analyze the ethnic affiliation starting from the self identification data.

Table 7.5 Socio demographic and ethnic profile of interviewed beneficiaries

| HOUSEHOLD TYPE | HIGH-SCHOOL | VOCATIONAL SCHOOL | UNEVERSTITY |
|--|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 68 per cent come from households of 3-4 persons - 55 per cent have 1 or 2 brothers and sisters - 14 per cent have 3 to 4 brothers and sisters - 30 per cent of the respondents come from families with a single child | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 68 per cent come from households of 3-4 persons - 55 per cent have 1 or 2 brothers and sisters - 14 per cent have 3 to 4 brothers and sisters - 30 per cent of the respondents come from families with a single child | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 34 per cent come from households with 3-4 members - 38 per cent come from households with 5-6 members - 48 per cent have 1-2 brothers and sisters - 26 per cent have 3-4 brothers and sisters - 7 per cent state they have over 7 brothers and sisters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 50 per cent come from households of 3-4 persons - 27 per cent come from households of 5-6 persons - 62 per cent have 1 or 2 brothers and sisters - 19 per cent have 3-4 brothers and sisters |
| EDUCATIONAL PROFILE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 48 per cent of fathers and 39 per cent of mothers have graduated a professional or high-school - 14 per cent of fathers and 20 per cent of mothers have graduated up to gymnasium - 9 per cent of fathers and 7 per cent of mothers have graduated university or post university studies - 75 per cent of brothers and sisters aged between 7 to 14 years attend some form of education - 41 per cent of beneficiaries' brothers and sisters aged between 19 to 25 years attend some form of education - 80 per cent of the beneficiary graduates furthered their studies after finishing high-school | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 38 per cent of fathers and 15 per cent of mothers have graduated a professional or high-school - 36 per cent of fathers and 55 per cent of mothers have graduated up to gymnasium - 2 per cent of fathers and 3 per cent of mothers have graduated university or post university studies - The school attendance rate reported to the 7 to 14 age segment is 100 per cent - 59 per cent of brothers and sisters aged between 15 to 18 years attend some form of education - 27 per cent of brothers and sisters aged between 19 to 25 years attend some form of education 51 per cent of the beneficiary graduates went on with their secondary studies after finishing vocational school | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 48 per cent of fathers and 37 per cent of mothers have graduated a professional or high-school - 25 per cent of fathers and 36 per cent of mothers have graduated up to gymnasium - 6 per cent of fathers and 3 per cent of mothers have graduated university or post university studies - The school attendance rate for the brothers and sisters aged 7 to 14 years is 100 per cent, - 89 per cent of brothers and sisters aged between 15 to 18 years attend some form of education - 66 per cent of brothers and sisters aged between 19 to 25 years attend some form of education - 43 per cent of the beneficiary graduates furthered their studies after finishing faculties on reserved places |

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| <p>ECONOMIC CONDITION</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 41 per cent of mothers and 23 per cent of fathers are inactive on the labour market - 18 per cent of fathers are qualified workers, 10 per cent are enterprisers, and 9 per cent work with services and trade - 12 per cent of mothers work with services and trade, 12 per cent are unqualified workers - 9 per cent of fathers and 8 per cent of mothers were unemployed during the last 2 years for more than 6 months | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 52 per cent of mothers and 33 per cent of fathers are inactive on the labour market - 23 per cent of fathers are qualified workers and 14 per cent of mothers are qualified workers - 6 per cent of parents are unqualified workers - 10 per cent of parents were unemployed during the last 2 years for more than 6 months | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 51 per cent of mothers and 33 per cent of fathers are inactive on the labour market - 21 per cent of fathers are qualified workers and 13 per cent of mothers are qualified workers - 6 per cent of parents are unqualified workers in agriculture - 5 per cent of parents were unemployed during the last 2 years for more than 6 months |
| <p>REVENUES</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The most important source of revenues in the household is the salary (39 per cent), 6 per cent occasional revenues and 5 per cent from licensed independent activities - 35 per cent of respondents have a stated monthly personal income under RON 300 - 33 per cent possess air conditioning devices and 49 per cent microwave ovens - 54 per cent have a car in their household - 75 per cent have computers and 73 per cent have access to the internet at home | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The most important source of revenues in the household is the salary (41 per cent), and the occasional revenues from licensed independent or occasional activities (16 per cent) - 8 per cent have as main stated source of income the Minimum Guaranteed Revenue - 46 per cent of respondents have a stated monthly personal income under RON 300 - 11 per cent possess air conditioning devices and 22 per cent microwave ovens - 36 per cent have a car in their household - 40 per cent have computers and 27 per cent have access to the internet at home | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The most important source of revenues in the household is the salary (53 per cent) and pensions (15 per cent) - 42 per cent of students have a stated monthly personal income under RON 300, and 24 per cent between RON 300 to 900. - 48 per cent of graduates have revenues between RON 600 to 1200, and 10 per cent over RON 2000 - 13 per cent possess air conditioning devices and 37 per cent microwave ovens - 47 per cent have a car in their household - 71 per cent have computers and 58 per cent have access to the internet at home |

| | | | |
|---------------------------|---|---|--|
| ETHNIC AFFILIATION | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 58 per cent come from Roma families, 22 per cent from mixed families, and 13 per cent from Romanian families - 5 per cent speak currently Romani at home - 28 per cent state they possess Romani knowledge as much as to at least understand what is being said | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 76 per cent come from Roma families, 13 per cent from mixed families, and 5 per cent from Romanian families - 20 per cent speak currently Romani at home - 39 per cent state they possess Romani knowledge as much as to at least understand what is being said | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 63 per cent come from Roma families, 18 per cent from mixed families, and 10 per cent from Romanian families - 15 per cent speak currently Romani at home - 44 per cent state they possess Romani knowledge as much as to at least understand what is being said |
| RESIDENCE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 81 per cent come from urban areas - 9 per cent of school students live in another locality during school, 6 per cent in hostels and 2 per cent with a landlord(lady) - 69 per cent of graduates currently live with their parents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 59 per cent come from urban areas - 8 per cent of school students live in another locality during school, 5 per cent in hostels - 78 per cent of graduates currently live with their parents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 73 per cent come from urban areas - 44 per cent of school students live in another locality during school, 32 per cent in hostels, and 9 per cent with a landlord(lady) - 47 per cent of graduates currently live with their parents, and 22 per cent have their own household in another locality |

Table 7.6 Ethnic affiliation – self identification and hetero identification

| STATED ORIGIN OF THE RESPONDENT | | INTERVIEWER'S OPINION CONCERNING THE ETHNIC AFFILIATION OF THE RESPONDENT | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|--|----------|--------------|------------|
| | | IN YOUR OPINION, IS THE RESPONDENT A MEMBER OF THE ROMA ETHNIC GROUP? | | | |
| WHAT IS YOUR ETHNIC AFFILIATION? | | Yes | No | I'm not sure | Total |
| HIGH-SCHOOLS | Romanian | 3 | 6 | 4 | 13 |
| | Roma | 76 | 2 | 5 | 82 |
| | Other | 1 | | | 1 |
| | No answer | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| | Total | 81 | 8 | 11 | 100 |
| VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS | Romanian | 4 | 1 | 2 | 7 |
| | Hungarian | 1 | | 1 | 2 |
| | Roma | 79 | 1 | 10 | 90 |
| | No answer | 1 | | | 1 |
| | Total | 85 | 2 | 13 | 100 |
| UNIVERSITIES | Romanian | 2 | 4 | 6 | 11 |
| | Roma | 75 | 1 | 11 | 87 |
| | No answer | | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | Total | 77 | 6 | 17 | 100 |

The qualitative analysis, respectively the interviews with beneficiaries or representatives of the institutions implementing such actions, focused on the reasons and expectations of the beneficiaries, and also on the perceptions of these representatives upon the beneficiaries as a social group. The common feature of the beneficiaries is the motivation to further their studies, in order to increase the opportunities they have in the labour market and reaching a certain status in the society. Moreover, in the beneficiaries' opinions, further studies, in both secondary and especially higher education, may increase their social capital.

We all wish for a better life. Nowadays it is very difficult without school, higher education. Those who have little more ambition and want a better future are aware of this fact. (beneficiary, university, Cluj, FG-8)

Having a qualification, a diploma. What can you do with 8 grades? You do nothing... After school, you manage to blend better with the society, you can

talk to people, explain something. When going to a job interview, you show your diploma. An 8th grade graduate shows what? They stick with the countryside, and cows. (beneficiary, high-school, Călărași, FG-6)

You access a world where you can learn a lot, among people specialized in some field. You learn, you discover. An learning environment. (beneficiary, university, Cluj, FG-8)

Somewhere else you cannot make any friends, only in school. A relation...For example a friend of mine became a policeman, another a lawyer... I can rely on them. (beneficiary, high-school, Călărași, FG-6)

The impression of the representatives of the involved institutions (school inspectorates, school units and non governmental organizations) upon the beneficiaries focuses on three general features: young beneficiaries come from richer families than the rest of the Roma population, the young persons are ambitious, but they have lower professional training. The representatives pointed out that, generally, young persons who attended high-school or faculties come from families with stable revenues, and from families who value education.

First of all, young people who choose to go on have had other conditions, a more decent living, have had the possibility to finish high-schools, which require money; their parents have healthier mindsets and explained their children they had to go to school. (NGO representative, Călărași, I-34)

There is no difference. It's their wish, desire to surpass their own status, namely to do something for themselves, no one does it for the sake of the ethnic group, on the contrary you prove the others they are better than them. (university representative, Bucharest, I-40)

Yes, an example for my children because I finished school and then I found a job and got married, this would be an example for my family. (beneficiary who quit high-school, Cluj, I-5)

As for the candidates who wish to access reserved places, the opinions of the teaching staff and school inspectors support the idea of a gap between the performances of these candidates and the ones on the normal places. Therefore, wishing to increase their chances of being admitted to high-schools with a better reputation, beneficiaries choose to enrol for these places.

Those who are good, to make sure they go to a good high-school, and those who are not so good, to have a chance of attending high-schools in due time and receive a good education. (school inspector, I-21)

Maybe, even if I had a good average mark, I could have been distributed to a worse high-school and so I chose these places. I was sure I would be admitted to the high-school I preferred. (beneficiary, high-school student, Bucharest, FG-1)

These actions are perceived as aids to keep in school those who would be tempted to join the labour force, assuring them of higher chances of being admitted.

Maybe these reserved places facilitate their access to education and maybe they are sort of tempted to join the education system knowing that there are reserved places for them, however this is a quite difficult and delicate issue. (high-school principal, Cluj, I-13)

According to the inspectors' experience, young Roma who have school results similar to those of the majority avoid applying for these places and making public their identity. They generally come from families with a certain social condition.

Those who do not apply for separate places come from families with relatively big revenues. Anyway both the child's father and mother have revenues, are more involved from pre-school education until high-school graduation. (school inspector, I-26)

Usually, those who apply for normal places either wish to prove they are able of more and somehow consider this ministry action addresses students with deficiencies... "well, we are not disabled, we are able to compete for normal places as well!", or have had previous talks with their non Roma colleagues and they found out they felt it was unfair, such as: "good for you, you go there, have an extra chance, why shouldn't we have such a chance? This is a discrimination against us". This is how they see the issue. (NGO representative, Dolj, I-37)

There are also cases of young people with school results similar to the majority population who consider that going for reserved places is a right they have to exert and a way to assert their identity. However, these cases are rare and most of the students with high average marks choose not to declare their identity by accessing these places.

We have to also mention the cases in which non Roma students benefit from these places, as a way of ensuring that they will be admitted to the preferred school. These situations have been identified by all types of interviewed subjects (representatives of inspectorates, NGOs, high-school and even beneficiaries).

Then, in the previous years we were confronted with cases when the children we couldn't identify as members of the ethnic group declared themselves as Roma hoping to be admitted to the preferred high-school. For example some of them wanted to go to the Pedagogical High-school or other high-schools and declared themselves as Roma and were considered as Roma students and got those places. (school principal, Bucharest, I-39)

Particularly in large towns where compact communities are rare, getting a recommendation may be a simple formality:

- I: Were there several children competing for these places, or were there more Roma students?
- R: There were more students for these places. Not necessarily Roma students, since I am not of Roma origin, however... I enrolled for these places to get a better place, I told you.
- I: So you are not of Roma origin?
- R: No, no.
- I: Neither of your parents is Roma?
- R: No, no.
- I: Then, how did you get that certificate?
- R: By mere presence.
- I: Mere presence? Where? You went to an organization, or how did it go?
- R: Yes, exactly, how can I explain? Near the school, there was a block of flats, as I had darker skin, yes, I told them I was one of them, as they saw me...
- I: And they asked you no questions?
- R: No, nothing. They handed me a certificate and... I can't remember... I took it to the school and submitted it." (beneficiary who abandoned high-school, Bucharest, I-47)

8. ASSESSMENT OF THE ENROLLMENT PROCESS FOR RESERVED PLACES

8.1 Description of the Process of Accessing Reserved Places

8.1.1 Secondary Studies

The steps of allocating these places are determined on a yearly basis by the Ministry of Education, within the admission regulations, together with a specific calendar:

- » Determining and announcing the number of reserved places and the education units.
- » Enrollment of candidates on reserved places.
- » Distribution of admitted candidates on reserved places.

The county school inspectorate, through the admission commission it appoints, must establish the number of reserved places. In view of determining the necessary number of places, inspectorates request information from general school concerning the number of Roma students in the 8th grade. These statistics are mainly based on hetero-identification (identification realised by the others not by the subject herself or himself), and the data accuracy depends upon the availability of form teachers and principals of the schools to get involved in this process.

The census is performed at class level, at school unit level and at sector level, and respectively at municipality level... Thus, when we perform the census of Roma students...the same conditions also apply to the 8th grade... especially now... and then see, until March, what are their options... Of course their options may change... they will vary, however at a rate of 90-92 per cent we can be sure... Thus, we have our form they have to fill in, a form per class, which the form teacher delivers to the secretary's office and they forward it to the secretary's office of the school units... they centralize them... and then forward them to the inspectorate... (school inspector, I-24)

R: The inspectorate asked us quite recently, one month and so I think, a thorough report in which we had to answer some questions starting from non discrimination and the creation of some special classes for Roma students. [...] How was I supposed to tell how many of them were Roma when they did not declare they were Roma?

I: And then what is the solution?

R: The solution is to search the papers. What can I say? I said that... and this is true. There are no special classes for them, they are not discriminated, they are integrated. Those who want to make such statement, simply do it. I jumped

over the number of Roma students. Well, out of those who graduated the 8th grade, if I saw they were, let's say, 20, and only three of them wanted to enlist: I declare I am Roma. What do I do, who am I according to what... I place him/her into a pattern and yes he/she matched it and is a Roma? Who am I to do this? No one can do such a thing. It is a matter of their own choice. Their own choice and they, when they are interested in making this statement or when they have no such interest, understand the bad and the good, prefer not to declare. (school principal, Bucharest, I-39)

The interviews with the school inspectors showed that the final number of allocated places also includes a margin of error, so that Roma children who were not identified by the teaching staff may have the opportunity to apply for these places. Moreover, there is a certain degree of mobility across county boundaries, hence, among the high-school candidates for the reserved places, there may also be students from the neighbouring counties or from other counties.

The places are announced by publishing and displaying the admission information brochure. Moreover, schools have to inform the parents and students about the general procedures of admission to the 9th grade. Among this information we may also find those referring to the possibility of accessing these reserved places. Information is disseminated at meetings with parents or directly through discussions with students in the classroom. The high-school admission regulations provide for the dissemination of brochures containing all details regarding the admission, including the information about reserved places. Non governmental organizations send volunteers who talk to students about these reserved places. Depending on the collaboration with the school, there have been two situations: representatives of non governmental organizations discuss about the admission to high-schools with all students in the 8th grade, irrespective of the ethnic affiliation of students, or talk only with Roma students the school has selected for this type of discussion (on the basis of hetero-identification).

One of the frequent observations of the teaching staff and the representatives of non governmental organizations is that **the period between the announcement of the reserved places and the end of the enrollment process for the reserved places is very short (less than a month), which does not allow for an effective information campaign.**

The files are submitted, according to the admission regulations, at the school inspectorate, with the admission commission. In practice, many times schools take care of the enrollment of these children on these reserved places, especially in the rural areas.

I brought a piece of paper. I talked to the principal and he took care of everything. (beneficiary, high-school, Călărași, FG-6)

I talked with Mrs. inspector, she explained it to me and told me I had to get at least a 5 mark to be admitted to the place I wanted. I wrote an application in her office. (beneficiary, high-school, Călărași, FG-6)

The details about the enrollment process mentioned by the beneficiaries are quite limited, whereas this process is considered as an easy one, without any problems.

The admission decisions actually take place within a public session organized by the school inspectorate, at the date set by the Ministry of Education. This session is attended by the candidates for the reserved places together with their parents/tutors and the representatives of non governmental organizations who support or advise those students for whom they issued recommendations. The distribution of candidates on the reserved places is performed in the order of their average marks.

The last step consists of the enrollment with the 9th grade in secondary/vocational schools. The admitted candidate receives a certificate from the inspectorate to hand it over at the high-school. No difficulties or problems for this stage have been reported. In case not all reserved places get occupied, the regulations provide that they should be used for solving “special situations”.

A recommendation certifying the Roma origin of an applicant may be obtained by non Roma persons against some amount of money or by deceiving those who issue such recommendations. The criteria of assessing the ethnic affiliation mentioned by the NGO representatives, due to the lack of any family genealogical data, are relative: physical aspect, accent and knowledge of Romani. As pointed out by the subjects, there are no unique physical features specific to Roma people and many Roma families do not speak Romani anymore. The position of most NGOs concerning these ambiguous situations is to consider that a person stating an ethnic affiliation cannot be refused this right: “Roma people are those who assume this identity” (school inspector, I-22). As for other organizations, this is still a subject of debate and analysis in view of finding an optimum solution.

I also had a discussion on this theme with my colleagues and we tried to find a method to issue this certificate based on several criteria. Namely, when a boy comes to us, he should come with his family, bring documents, pictures, because, honestly, the criteria for that certificate are few; you only look at him to see if he's black skinned, but we have colleagues who have fairer skin than Romanians, because they come from mixed families, and then it is very difficult to make decisions based on their skin color. We have to find another way. (NGO representative, Iași, I-33)

Generally, the recommendation issuance process consists of an interview trying to assess both the ethnic affiliation and the student's reasons for accessing these reserved places.

They asked who are we, why we wanted to go for it and if I felt I was able to, if I thought faculty was useful to me, if it helped me, if I would finish it or not, I mean if I intended to attend one year and then quit or probably it is not so well if one goes for it, is admitted and then quits the faculty one, two years later. (candidate rejected for the reserved places at university, Bucharest, I-10)

The involvement of the inspectorate through a more thorough verification of these recommendations is a solution to reduce the number of cases when the beneficiaries of these actions are not Roma. Thus, if the inspector collaborates with a network of Roma leaders whom he may question for information directly from the communities of the applicants, he/she may prevent the enrollment of non Roma students on these places.

On the other hand, having a direct dialogue with students, no one could sneak, as I heard it happened in other schools, majority students managed to sneak on the places for Roma. With us this was not possible as you may see we used several filters. First the school sends a sealed notice to the inspectorate and takes responsibility for the data accuracy, that he/she is a Roma student, then we have the recommendation issued by an NGO, and some NGOs used to make mistakes, but they had no choice of passing me by because I called them to have a little talk. (school inspector, I-27)

8.1.2 Higher Education

The admission to the higher education units on the reserved places for Roma students is organized by each university according to its own methodology. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the enrollment is possible either with the faculty or with the university rectorate.

The information about the available reserved places is disseminated by each university. According to the interviews with beneficiaries, most of them found out either directly from the university or from the brochures published each year which contain all of the university educational offerings. Other important sources of information for applicants about the available places are their friends, relatives who have already accessed such places or the non governmental organizations promoting affirmative action.

I first found out from Romanians, from my classmates who went for SNSPA and took me with them to find out more. We went there and I saw there were available places and then went home and talked to my father and mother and to some friends who gave me some advice. (beneficiary, faculty, Bucharest, FG-2)

I wasn't aware there were reserved places for us and likewise, I had a Friend in the locality and she told me to come as well. (beneficiary, faculty, Cluj, FG-8)

Some universities promote directly their entire education offerings in high-schools, according to one of the interviewed deans.

We appointed a team who go, do, and present in high-schools all the available places and the opportunities we offer. In all counties in Transylvania, as this is our area, we do not go to the South or to Moldova, they have other universities which do the same. (university representative, Cluj, I-45)

As for the first generations of beneficiaries of affirmative action, non governmental organizations played an important role in the enrollment process, accompanying the university candidates when submitting their files and raising beneficiaries' awareness of the ethnic community from which they came.

I was very proud, when I submitted my file I felt very proud about it... Yes... And I remember that my file was submitted by the Association of Roma Students, having Aurelian Nicolae as chairman... I have to tell you how it went with me... My recommendation was signed by Nicolae Gheorghe, the president of the Romani Criss Association by that time... And when he signed my recommendation he looked from under... he looked at me and said to me very clearly... He looked me in the eyes and he said: "You have a moral duty to your people and must work hard... you must return what you have received... never forget that..."... And it haunted me for quite some time this moral contract I assumed. (beneficiary, university, Bucharest, I-9)

Later on, together with the increase in the number of reserved places and candidates, the involvement of organizations became rather limited and was reduced to issuing recommendations certifying the ethnic affiliation of the applicant. However, there are examples of organizations which keep in touch with the students and draw them into volunteer activities.

The actual process of enrollment is not considered as a difficult one, the most important barriers are related to the lack of information concerning the available places or the organizations which may issue letters of recommendation.

For me, it was a true adventure until I managed to enlist for faculty: look for some activist, a Roma party to get the certificate, look for someone else, through other sources, there was no office to talk to, endless visits to [...] for that certificate. All these should be ordered. (beneficiary, university, Cluj, FG-8)

After I finished high-school I found out about the reserved places for Roma students from underground sources, I mean it wasn't something official, to be given a list, so that I may ask for information from each faculty regarding the number of places, what possibilities lay ahead of me. This process should start during high-school, so that everybody may build a plan. I cannot go for a faculty just because I was offered this. The places in faculties should be made public, be known prior to the high-school graduation exams, so that we may know where we want to go. And take advantage of this. (beneficiary, university, Cluj, FG-8)

Pursuant to the opinions of university management boards, this is a smooth process especially because the admission, in some cases, is not based on exams or the competition is quite low.

Now there is no stake, there is no admission, the competition is not so high, it is not a big deal getting enrolled. Anyway the places are special, so there is no big fight for them. It could have been so and we would have had problems, but, this is not the case. (university representative, Cluj, I-42)

8.2 Enrollment Process: Phases and Involved Actors

For the students having access to the reserved places in the secondary education units, the main source of information is the school, namely the teachers: **40 per cent of the beneficiaries of the places in high-schools and 49 per cent of the beneficiaries of the places in vocational schools said they heard about such places for the first time from their form teacher or other teachers.** Another important source of information is the family, either through the parents interested in such information, or through their brothers or sisters who have benefited previously from the affirmative action policy (31 per cent for high-schools and 27 per cent for vocational schools).

As for the decision to access these reserved places, the main actors in this process, whom the respondent has talked to prior to enrollment, are the parents and teachers. As for the high-school beneficiaries, parents were consulted by 88 per cent of the respondents, whereas in the case of vocational school beneficiaries, only 63 per cent of the respondents talked to their parents, preferring, to a large extent, to talk to their teachers (46 per cent). This may be a result of the lower educational attainment of the vocational school beneficiaries' parents. Their parents are the first to be mentioned (52 per cent) concerning the procurement of papers and performing all the necessary formalities for the enrollment on these places. Moreover, teachers are often mentioned (45 per cent) as being involved in this process.

By analyzing the data relevant to the beneficiaries of reserved places at secondary studies level (secondary and vocational schools), we may note that their parents played an important role both in making the decision and also in preparing the documentation, in 58 per cent of the cases, whereas in 18 per cent of the cases, the respondents stated that their parents had got involved neither in making the decision to apply on reserved places nor in obtaining all the necessary documents for enrollment. **As for 28 per cent of the cases, teachers are mentioned to be involved both in counselling students and in obtaining and preparation the documentation, whereas only 8 per cent of the respondents mentioned such actions on behalf of the Roma leaders.**

Table 8.1 Main social actors involved in the counselling and decision making process

| | | WHO ASSISTED YOU IN GETTING ALL THE PAPERS AND FILING THEM FOR THE ENROLLMENT FOR COLLEGE ON A RESERVED PLACE FOR ROMA STUDENTS? | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|-----------|------------|--------------|
| | | | | | | |
| WHOM DID YOU COUNSEL WITH/TALK TO PRIOR TO ENROLLMENT FOR A RESERVED PLACE FOR ROMA STUDENTS? | | | Your parents | | | |
| | | | Yes | No | No answer | Total |
| | Your parents | Yes | 56 | 19 | 1 | 76 |
| | | No | 5 | 18 | | 23 |
| | | No answer | | | 2 | 2 |
| | | Total | 61 | 36 | 2 | 100 |
| | | | The form master/a teacher | | | |
| | | | Yes | No | No answer | Total |
| | The form master/a teacher | Yes | 28 | 14 | | 41 |
| | | No | 9 | 48 | 1 | 57 |
| | | No answer | | | 2 | 2 |
| | | Total | 36 | 61 | 2 | 100 |
| | | | A Roma leader of the community you belong to | | | |
| | | | Yes | No | No answer | Total |
| | A Roma leader of the community you belong to | Yes | 8 | 4 | | 12 |
| | | No | 8 | 78 | 1 | 86 |
| No answer | | | | 2 | 2 | |
| Total | | 16 | 81 | 2 | 100 | |

Per cent total respondents in the secondary education system

The information regarding the affirmative action for Roma people within the higher education system is mostly disseminated informally, through the social networks with whom a potential beneficiary may keep in touch: 36 per cent stated they heard about such reserved places for the first time from acquaintances or friends and 23 per cent have heard about it from their families. Thirty-one per cent have found about this opportunity through the representatives of some public or private institutions, such as teachers or representatives of some non governmental organizations. Five per cent of the beneficiaries have found out about these places from the mass media. It is significant that secondary

education institutions are only weakly involved in informing potential beneficiaries about the opportunities to study on reserved places **in higher education units: only 11 per cent of all beneficiaries have heard about these places from their teachers.** The passage from gymnasium to high-school features some continuity and a better coordination of the information process; in contrast the passage from high-school to higher education, the responsibility of information regarding the reserved places is not assumed by the education institutions, and the process takes place mostly informal.

In higher education, beneficiaries made up their minds to go for a special place after discussing with their parents (65 per cent) or with the Roma community leaders (34 per cent). The involvement of Roma leaders in this decision-making process is mentioned more often for the admission to higher education institutions than with high-schools. Moreover, in 45 per cent of the cases, beneficiaries mentioned the involvement of a Roma leader from their community in view of obtaining the papers required for enrollment.

The decision to further their studies would have been the same even if no such reserved places existed in high-schools – 95 per cent said they would have enrolled even without a reserved place. As for the beneficiaries of the affirmative action in vocational schools, the existence of these places was a decisive factor, with 14 per cent stating that they would not have gone on with their studies. As for the beneficiaries of higher education, 78 per cent would have enrolled for faculty even in the absence of these measures, whereas for 18 per cent of them these actions were an argument either in favour of furthering their studies or for enrollment with a certain faculty where no such places existed.

Under these circumstances, the beneficiaries' motives may be classified into two large categories: assurance of being admitted in general or being admitted to a certain education unit on a subsidized place and the fact they may benefit from a right of Roma ethnic members. As for the beneficiaries of the affirmative action in high-schools, the reasons they mentioned most often in favour of accessing these places were: assurance of getting a place in high-school (25 per cent), getting a place more easily (25 per cent), exerting a right/taking advantage of an opportunity (17 per cent) and the wish to attend a certain better high-school (16 per cent). As for the beneficiaries of reserved places in vocational schools, the most frequently cited reasons were: getting a place more easily (26 per cent), the certainty of a place (21 per cent), the wish to have a qualification (14 per cent) and the fact that these places are a right/an opportunity they must take advantage of (12 per cent). **For the beneficiaries of higher education, the financial criterion was mentioned most frequently: certainty of being admitted on a place free of charge (41 per cent),** easier admission procedures (26 per cent), assurance of getting a place in a certain specialization (19 per cent), the wish to further their studies (11 per cent) and the right to benefit from these places (9 per cent).

Most respondents had no arguments against the enrollment on reserved places, which they might have considered by the time they made such decision. Thus, the only reservation was related to the fear of being discriminated based on ethnic criteria: 8 per cent of the high-school beneficiaries, 3 per cent of the vocational school beneficiaries and 8 per cent of the higher education beneficiaries.

Although the assurance of being admitted was mentioned by most of the respondents, **less than half of them stated they had an admission average mark under the previous average admission mark applicable for normal places: 38 per cent in high-schools, 23 per cent in vocational schools and 25 per cent in universities.** This may raise a question mark regarding the admission mechanism for the reserved places, which might be allocated strictly to those who have marks under the last admission average mark, so that it may lead to an increase in the number of Roma studying in secondary and higher education.

The information concerning the enrollment process are quite few regarding the secondary and vocational school beneficiaries. Thus, **only 32 per cent of the beneficiaries of high-schools and 20 per cent of those in vocational schools could mention the institution or the person who issued their recommendation required for enrollment.** Moreover, **27 per cent of the beneficiaries of high-schools and 53 per cent of the beneficiaries of vocational schools stated they had no such recommendation.** The organization mentioned most often as a source of recommendations is the Roma Party. As for the beneficiaries of higher education, the rate of those stating they had no such recommendation is lower, **13 per cent**, but even more, **18 per cent** did not remember from where they got the recommendation. Some students and graduates also mention some public institutions such as the Roma advisors in the Town Hall or the Prefect's office.

The connection with the organization which issued the recommendation required for enrollment is mainly made on the basis of the information provided by the family or acquaintances (over 40 per cent of the beneficiaries of all forms of education have initially heard about such organization from relatives/acquaintances). The differences between accessing secondary and higher education are determined by the role of the school as a provider of information. Thus, **26 per cent and 31 per cent of the respondents in high-schools and in vocational schools, respectively, initially heard about such organization from their teachers/form teacher and only 14 per cent and 11 per cent respectively have heard about such organization due to its notoriety within the community.** As for the university level, **24 per cent have heard about such organization because it is very well known in the community, and 8 per cent from their colleagues.** Only three per cent have heard about it from teachers, and four per cent from the county school inspectorate.

The cases when the beneficiaries stated they paid for such a recommendation are rare: two per cent of the respondents in high-schools and 3 per cent of the university respondents. Also, in some rare cases respondents mentioned that the organization refused to issue such recommendation: **2 per cent of the respondents in universities.**

8.3 Obstacles in Accessing Reserved Places

Interviews and focus groups with beneficiaries and representatives of the involved institutions showed the fact that there was a series of factors limiting the access of the target group to the reserved places. Some of the factors are specific to the target group; however there is a series of contextual factors which affect the entire society.

8.3.1 Contextual Factors

Education attainment for the entire society is low, and young people wish to become independent financially as soon as possible, so they choose a job instead of education.

The reasons start from general ones, the entire Romanian society, who lost its confidence in the power of education and its ability to help children grown up well and be ready for life. This aspect characterizes almost all families. (high-school principal, Iași, I-17)

You see, children go home and they say very well: you struggled and learned, you finished a faculty, got diplomas, teaching degrees. As compared to our corner neighbour who owns a boutique, what can you offer me? Look, his child drives this car and has eight grades and I am a student in some year and buy a pair of sport shoes every three months. Roma young people, like everybody else find it hard to understand that values are acknowledged in time and that achieving value means a lot of work in advance. (NGO representative, Bucharest, I-30)

The preconceptions existing in the society, which characterize the persons in the public education systems discourage young people who might benefit of these places.

The impediment, if it exists, is linked to certain preconceptions. Preconceptions that Roma people are not able to attend some educational process at high level, that they do not need education because the moment they return to their community, they become bad, what they used to be. (university representative, Iași, I-44)

Poverty, especially in the rural areas, reduces the chances of children attending good quality compulsory education and, also reduces the chances of reaching the stage when they may benefit from affirmative action.

Especially in rural areas, it is horrible. The poverty is frightful. Those children have no note books to write on. They cannot go to kindergarten because their governess requires them to have all sorts of colour books and other stuff... materials which the Ministry should provide each year because it is public education. (NGO representative, Bucharest, I-35)

8.3.2 Specific Factors

» **Abandoning school in favour of getting a job**

There are very many children in the community who work, who probably are a source of income for their parents...probably a source of income for their family... who have no other chance. (representative of central administration, I-8)

It is the same with me. One of my colleagues quit the faculty and went to Spain to work and go on with his studies there. (beneficiary, university, Bucharest, FG-2)

» **Inefficient and late promotion of affirmative action**

This problem regarding their admission and the existence of the respective places, unfortunately, is not debated until spring to summer when this situation is very close, according to the calendar. Maybe if it were presented earlier by the respective organizations and they informed them about its existence, hence, maybe the time is too short and they haven't enough time to understand it is for their own good. (school principal, Bucharest, I-39)

» **Early marriage** which leads to school abandonment before being able to access these reserved places

...And even young girls I had hopes for, little girls in the 5th grade, they don't let them go to school anymore, and have them married. (school inspector, I-25)

» **Lack of family supervision, for the families with migrating parents**

Six little girls got married: one in the 4th grade, two in the 6th grade and around three in the 8th grade. Precisely because of this. Their parents left. Many of them are not interested in how they are doing. (school principal, Călărași, I-38)

» **Reticence of stating their Roma origin** for fear of possible abuses from authorities

They change, and let me tell you something, I was present at the census in Roma districts, whom you know, and many of them did not register as Roma. Why not register. Why should we register as Roma, who knows then, they has us on paper as Roma and if something happens, they take us and gone we are. So there is this fear. (NGO representative, Arad, I-31)

» **Fear of losing the community values**

Due to their poor education, Roma people believe, they are certain that too much civilization, too much school, too much interaction with the society leads to a loss of values. (NGO representative, Iași, I-33)

9. ASSESSMENT OF SCHOOL/ACADEMIC PERFORMANCES AND RISK FACTORS

9.1 School Performances and Attendance to Classes

Most respondents from the secondary cycle (students and graduates) self evaluate their school performances as better or equal to half of the class they attend/attended (76 per cent). The admission average mark does not correlate with the school results throughout their studies; though respondents who stated that they had an admission average mark higher than the last average mark for the normal places are seldom found among the bottom half in their class. This means that the gaps in the school results which exist at admission do not necessarily perpetuate through the high-school studies.

Table 9.1 Students' perceptions of their performance during secondary studies

| | | APPROXIMATELY, WHERE WOULD YOU SAY YOU STAND IN YOUR CLASS, IN THE ORDER OF THE MARKS YOU GOT? | | | | |
|--|---|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|-------|
| | | Among the first 10 per cent | Among the first 25 per cent | Among the first 50 per cent | In the second half of the class | Total |
| AS COMPARED TO THE LOWEST ADMISSION AVERAGE MARK, FOR REGULAR PLACES, FOR THE SPECIALIZATION YOU ATTEND, IN THE SECONDARY/ VOCATIONAL SCHOOL YOU ATTEND, YOUR AVERAGE MARK WAS: | Above the last admission mark for the regular places | 33 | 22 | 30 | 15 | 100 |
| | Equal to the last admission mark for the regular places | 22 | 18 | 35 | 26 | 100 |
| | Under the last admission mark for the regular places | 23 | 16 | 32 | 30 | 100 |
| | Total | 26 | 19 | 32 | 23 | 100 |

Per cent per line

Also, in universities, almost 80 per cent of the students and graduates say that they are among the top 50 per cent in order of their average marks (of the total students attending the same study year, whether their places are subsidized or not). None of these cases reveals a statistic association between the academic results upon admission to faculty and those obtained throughout the studies, even though the recorded percentages show a slight trend,

for those who were admitted with a higher or equal average mark as compared to the last admission average mark for regular places, of staying among the first 50 per cent of the students in their year of study.

Table 9.2 Students’ perceptions of their performance during higher education

| | | APPROXIMATELY, WHERE WOULD YOU SAY YOU STAND IN YOUR YEAR, IN THE ORDER OF THE MARKS YOU GOT? | | | |
|--|---|---|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|------------|
| | | Among the first 25 per cent | Among the first 50 per cent | In the second half of the class | Total |
| AS COMPARED TO THE LOWEST ADMISSION AVERAGE MARK, FOR REGULAR PLACES, FOR THE SPECIALIZATION YOU ATTEND, YOUR AVERAGE MARK WAS: | Above the last admission mark for the regular places | 50 | 36 | 14 | 100 |
| | Equal to the last admission mark for the regular places | 39 | 47 | 14 | 100 |
| | Under the last admission mark for the regular places | 32 | 43 | 25 | 100 |
| | Total | 42 | 41 | 17 | 100 |

Per cent per line

As for attendance, most respondents assess they have the same number of absences or less than their colleagues. The percentage of those who state they have/had more absences is 8 per cent in high-schools, 12 per cent in vocational schools and 8 per cent in universities.

For the secondary studies, over 30 per cent have been awarded some form of scholarship – the most frequently mentioned being the “money for high-school” scholarship¹⁹ (24 per cent in high-schools and 43 per cent in vocational schools). Study scholarships²⁰ are mentioned by less than two per cent of the beneficiaries, whereas four per cent have met the criteria to be awarded a social scholarship,²¹ which means that their families had lower

¹⁹ The scholarship is included in the National program of social protection “Money for secondary school”, which deals with students coming from families with gross monthly income under a certain level, set by Government decision, or with students who benefit of a protection measure or are under the care of a guardian or trustee.

²⁰ Merit and study scholarships are awarded pursuant to the study results.

²¹ Social allowances are awarded to secondary school students depending on the material condition of their families or legal guardian or on the basis of other criteria provided by the law (mainly medical criteria).

financial resources. In high-schools, the main source of funds for scholarships is the state and only rarely private sources (associations/foundations).

As for universities, 32 per cent of the students and graduates receive/received a social allowance. Fourteen per cent mentioned study scholarships, and 5 per cent merit scholarships. Although the merit scholarship was mentioned by a small percentage of the beneficiaries, it has also recorded a higher average duration (3.9 semesters), which means there are beneficiaries who have constantly managed to perform at high academic levels. Moreover, 7 per cent pointed out the fact they were awarded an OSI/REF scholarship for an average duration of 4.2 semesters.

Beneficiaries who attend/attended high-school have been confronted more rarely with difficult situations which affected their study performances or even their school attendance rate. Thus, 23 per cent have had moments they felt could not learn as much as they were required, 14 per cent mentioned difficult financial situations for their families and 6 per cent considered dropping-out school at a certain time. Students in vocational schools are confronted more often with difficult situations: 41 per cent stated they lived through moments when their family had serious financial problems, 32 per cent thought about taking a job at the same time as studying, 34 per cent felt they could not learn as much as they were required and 15 per cent considered dropping out of school. **Financial problems seem to have a bigger impact on beneficiaries at university with 75 per cent of the students or higher education graduate respondents stated they considered taking a job in parallel with school**, 27 per cent lived through moments when their family had serious financial problems and 41 per cent felt they could not handle the academic requirements. Note that 5 per cent of the higher education beneficiaries and four per cent of vocational school beneficiaries had moments when their families asked them to quit school.

Another important indicator for the school/academic results is the final exam success rate, respectively the high-school graduation exams, qualification exam or licence degree exams. The best situation is recorded **in high-schools where 97 per cent of the interviewed graduates²² stated they succeeded at the high-school graduation exams**, followed by vocational schools, where 88 per cent of the graduates stated they were awarded a qualification certificate. As for the higher education, 86 per cent stated they got a licence degree.

Moreover, 64 per cent of the interviewed beneficiaries from secondary education consider they will attend a higher level of education. Thus, in high-schools, 79 per cent of the graduates said they went on to faculty (84 per cent of those who carry on), college (12 per cent) or post high-school (4 per cent). As for vocational schools, the percentage of students

²² The sample of beneficiaries from secondary schools included 63 graduates, the sample of beneficiaries from vocational schools included 68 graduates, and the sample of beneficiaries from high studies institutions included 58 graduates.

going on with their studies is smaller: 51 per cent go to high-school, whereas 47 per cent of them stated they enrolled on Roma places.²³

9.2 Risk Factors which may Determine School Drop-Out

The interviews with teaching staff members and former beneficiaries revealed that there is a large number of cases in which beneficiaries of reserved places (especially in high-school units) have quit their studies. There is a series of general factors, which determine school drop-out at the level of the entire school population, but also a series of factors which may determine school drop-out and characterize, to a larger extent, the beneficiaries of affirmative action.

As for the secondary cycle, a series of factors concerning the family environment and the resources of the households beneficiaries came from, the school results gaps, the attitude and conduct of the teaching staff have been mentioned. In the case of university students registered on reserved places, the factors which may lead to school drop-out are economic ones (lack of financial means), finding a job or inability to meet the educational requirements (especially with technical faculties).

9.2.1 General Factors

During the last two years, ever more families in Romania, irrespective of their ethnic structure (the parents of the current students), get ever less involved in the educational process, letting children/young family members make decisions concerning their own education.

The representatives of the institutions consider that the temporary migration of the parents to jobs abroad leads to an increased vulnerability of children and subsequently to school drop-out. Besides, recent surveys show the effects of the temporary migration of parents upon their children's education.²⁴

Those who quit school did it for family reasons as well: many parents went abroad, children were unsupervised or the oldest took care of the youngest and hence forth a series of troubles. (high-school principal, Arad, I-12)

²³ The continuation of vocational school consists of one more year of study and then going to the higher secondary school cycle on a technological branch. Studies may be furthered within the same school unit or another, depending on the student's options. The admission to the further year of study is made in the order of the average marks for the 9th and 10th grades. After finishing secondary schools, graduates may take the secondary school graduation exams and later pursue high studies. The current laws contain no specific provisions concerning the places for Roma, therefore the situation of these reserved places is unclear.

²⁴ "Home alone! The survey performed in the Iași area upon the children separated from one or both parents who left to work abroad", Social Alternatives Association, Iași 2006.

"Analysis at national level of children left behind after their parents went to work abroad", UNICEF Representative office Romania, 2008.

9.2.2 Specific Factors

Pressure exerted by colleagues or teachers upon the students admitted on reserved places

Children in my school who are permanently picked at: “hey you, who got in on Roma places, were you worthy of this high-school, you took someone else’s place” and already that child, after what I have already offered him/her, I destroy him/her if I permanently pick at him/her... Even if he/she was not admitted on a Roma place, if one of the kids goes to high-school and is alone in that classroom, he/she is accused of having taken someone else’s place and Roma children places. (school principal, Călărași, I-38)

If the high-school is a top list one and we have students admitted on reserved places, many among them have quit. They either could not meet the system requirements, or the teachers have tried to discourage them as much as they could. (school inspector, I-21)

Beneficiaries of reserved places have **poor chances of getting social allowances**, due to the lack of documents or the rigid award criteria for these scholarships.

Scholarships... if I meet the scholarship requirements, ok, but if they have a carriage and a donkey or horse at home, they do not get a scholarship. Nor that money allowance. (school inspector, I-25)

The current affirmative policies focus only on the moment of admission to the secondary or higher education units. After admission, the mechanisms to support beneficiaries and prevent them from dropping-out school are those for any other student: social allowances (or money for high-school), merit scholarships and rarely some scholarships provided by non-governmental organizations.

Because these reserved places were due to social policy reasons, not necessarily minority policy reasons, because these individuals are socially, statistically disadvantaged, then, eventually these subsidized places might also be accompanied by an allowance for priority hostel accommodation or priority scholarships for this category. Sometimes we accept them on reserved places but have no possibilities of providing them accommodation. (university representative, Cluj, I-42)

It is not enough to give this Roma student who comes... well they usually come with very poor marks, they must be provided for as well, some scholarship, separately from the normal one and... because they come from poor, wretched families, miserable and don’t have the possibilities of most others to self support, to... If we had a support system, other than the actual one, maybe it would be better. (university representative, Cluj, I-45)

Besides the financial support these beneficiaries need, teachers consider that the moral support of some teachers or mentors is just as important.

There should be some tutors, not in the legal sense, but as British universities have, especially for them to guide them a little because they come from environments we are very much aware of and they have to get accustomed to this world they aim for and then someone has to teach them a little what this world they are trying to access is made of. (university representative, Iași, I-46)

The differences in education attainment between beneficiaries of affirmative action and their colleagues may grow and act as another pressure factor upon beneficiaries.

These reserved places were occupied with an average mark of, let's say, 5, whereas the other children were admitted with more than 8. This gap between the admission marks was certainly felt during their subsequent development. (high-school principal, Iași, I-17)

There are some cases when the student chooses a high-school... and then, a month or two later, goes to the Inspectorate saying: "Mr. Inspector let's do something to transfer me to another high-school or another school unit because I cannot make it..." ... Well, we try to be professional and find a place where he/she may not be left behind... to stay in school... (school inspector, I-24)

Inability to meet the university requirements. Hence they came from very weak schools and could not cope with it. (university representative, Cluj, I-45)

There are certain difficulties regarding the communication with the families of Roma students, difficulties perceived by the teaching staff and which are explained by their living conditions but also by the values of traditional communities.

Well, if when you have a problem with a student, with most of them you manage to get in touch with a parent one way or another, either the parent comes to school, or you pay them a visit at home. In their case, you may not always succeed. Sometimes we succeed, sometimes we don't. There is also this problem that they live in a certain area, and it is quite difficult for a female form teacher, for example, to go to an area which is not so easy to go to. (high-school principal, Cluj, I-13)

Early marriages, especially when the family has financial problems, are one of the major causes for school drop-out among female Roma students.

R: Well, I still wanted to go to school, I got married and... what was I supposed to do? Being married and going to school?

I: What did your family say when you made this decision to quit?

R: They didn't let me go on, and so I quit. I took a job. (beneficiary who quit high-school, Bucharest, I-7)

First, my husband didn't let me because he is jealous, and I didn't want to go on either. I didn't feel the need to go and I didn't like high-school as well. I didn't like it at all, nor the friends I used to have there, boys, or girls. I wanted to quit long before. Because they were not like me, my type. There boys were big, smoked, took drugs and anyway I didn't want to stay any longer, I wanted to move, but as I got married... (beneficiary who quit high-school, I-59)

But how did they quit?

They actually got married, she doesn't go to school anymore, she was pregnant. She couldn't go to school with her belly to her throat. And they weren't expelled, they stopped coming to school, they recorded the absences. And as absences were recorded, the relevant sanction was applied. ...Well, if she got married and took a husband, children come next and the obligations for her husband, especially with us Roma... With Roma people the husband is the mirror of the woman. (Romani language teacher, Bucharest, I-16)

The poor financial resources of the families have a direct impact on the learning process, either by the need to take a job in parallel with studies or by the lack of materials or human resources for certain practical works requested within the various study disciplines.

I: And what happened in their case? What were the reasons of their drop-out?

R: Economic, financial ones.

R: Especially those who come from outside Iași, they have to pay for a room, and this is Euro 100-200, not counting meals, transportation.

(beneficiary, high-school, Iași, FG-5)

There were two students in my year who also had a job because, although they paid no study charges, faculty costs, they had needs which required money. They took a job and couldn't cope with school and exams and quit. (NGO representative, Constanța, I-36)

Other things concerning the drafting of special works, many of those who are our students but also prepare a licence degree... let's say some have farms at home, others have butcher's shops, others something else... they have nothing. And we have to check where to send them, how to do things, where they should gather data for a scientific work. Thus, we have to be more preoccupied. (university representative, Cluj, I-45)

The bigger concern regarding the material condition, weighing against education, determines the beneficiaries to look for **a job at a very young age**. The wish to be financially independent and to support their parents brings them to certain circumstances when they cannot afford studying and working at the same time.

Apart from the situations when financial problems prevailed and could not be solved except by finding a job and dropping out of school, respondents consider it is also about some "type

of mindset of Roma people” which focuses on the current conditions, without thinking in a longer term perspective.

Roma people value money more, not education. They’d rather go to work, to provide for themselves. ...I used to work during 10th grade as well, but 11th grade has a more complicated schedule. It was my own decision and I was aware I was quitting school, and I thought that maybe I would go to evening classes later on, to finish school, which I will finish sooner or later. (beneficiary who quit high-school, Cluj, I-4)

Then I went to Italy and stayed for 4 months and a half, I went to my sister and worked there in a bar and came back 4 months later I couldn’t go on with school. It was not a good decision when I left, because now I cannot go to school anymore, because I am too old. (beneficiary who quit high-school, Arad, I-3)

It is the same with me. One of my colleagues quit the faculty and went to Spain to work and go on with his studies there. (beneficiary, university, Bucharest, I-2)

Some of the representatives of non-governmental organizations consider that **the participation in too many volunteer activities** which are a condition for obtaining certain scholarships from some non-governmental organizations may lead beneficiaries to neglect their studies and even quit school.

Roma organizations believe they should only certify the Roma ethnic affiliation of candidates: ...because there were quite many cases when young Roma had to work and even neglect their studies, the very reason they needed such recommendation, had to apply them so as they may be awarded an OSI type scholarship or other facilities on the basis of this recommendation... the issuance of this recommendation was conditioned by these... those hours of work, 6 months of work. 6 months during which the young Roma could have lost not only the place where they lived on rent or with a landlord(lady), for example, if he/she was a student in Bucharest, but also loose the university year, thus the most important objective he/she had applied for. (NGO representative, Dolj, I-37)

The family environment is a major factor in whether beneficiaries are able to go on with their studies. Many times the parents of the beneficiaries see the growth of the educational level as a factor which may lead to quitting the traditional way of life of Roma people, as a separation from the family, the community.

I: Are you encouraging her to go on, with school?

R: I do... but my husband doesn’t...’ cause having no boys, he doesn’t let her, well... she’s a girl... and she’s alone... to protect her... to take care of her there... She’s quite pretty and...” (mother of high-school graduate, Onești, 51)

10. ASSESSMENT OF THE RELATIONS AMONG BENEFICIARIES AND THEIR NON-ROMA COLLEAGUES

10.1 Relations with Their Colleagues

10.1.1 Secondary Studies

In the secondary cycle, the interviewed beneficiaries consider their relations with their colleagues are positive with most or all of them. Only 6 per cent stated they have made friends more among their Roma colleagues, **85 per cent having both Roma and Romanian friends or mostly Romanian friends**. The latter are mostly students or graduates who have been integrated in majority school classrooms: 84 per cent have attended classes with few Roma students or without any Roma students during the previous cycles and 43 per cent don't know any Romani language at all. Twenty per cent said their families spoke mostly Romani and 13 per cent that their families observed most Roma traditions.

Table 10.1 Students' assessments of their relations with colleagues, in secondary units

| | | IN YOUR GROUP OF FRIENDS FROM SCHOOL THERE ARE/ WERE | | | | | |
|---|------------------------------|---|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| | | Several colleagues of Roma origin | To the same extent, colleagues of Roma and Romanian origin | Several colleagues of Romanian origin | I have/had no friends in school | Don't know/ No answer | Total |
| AS FOR YOUR RELATIONS WITH YOUR CLASSMATES, WOULD YOU SAY YOU ARE/ WERE GETTING ALONG WELL: | With all your colleagues | 6 | 10 | 46 | 2 | 4 | 68 |
| | With most of your colleagues | 1 | 4 | 21 | 0 | 0 | 26 |
| | With few of your colleagues | 0 | 1 | 3 | | 0 | 5 |
| | With none of your colleagues | | | | | | 0 |
| | Don't know/ No answer | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| | Total | 7 | 15 | 70 | 2 | 5 | 100 |

Per cent of the total

Looking at those who stated they have a group of friends formed mostly of Roma colleagues, they are mostly girls and belong to those who openly declared their belonging to the Roma ethnic group and to the family they came from. The cases in which they learned in primary and gymnasium school in classes where all students or most of them were Roma are more frequent (half of the case fall under this category). However, the number of those who can speak Romani is relatively small, almost half of them said they cannot speak this language at all.

A comparative analysis of the beneficiaries from rural and urban areas shows that the respondents coming from rural communities have a stronger tendency to form a group of friends with the same ethnic background. Looking at the entire sample does not show any associations between the level of self esteem and the ethnic structure of the group of friends. However, comparing the beneficiaries from rural areas with those from urban areas, there is a stronger tendency among the beneficiaries from urban areas to have a level of self esteem above the average (42 per cent for urban areas and 30 per cent for rural areas).

Table 10.2 Students' assessments of the ethnic structure of the group of friends, in secondary education units, according to the residential areas of respondents

| | | RESIDENTIAL ENVIRONMENT | | |
|---|--|-------------------------|------------|------------|
| | | Urban | Rural | Total |
| IN YOUR GROUP OF FRIENDS FROM SCHOOL THERE ARE/WERE: | Several colleagues of Roma origin | 3 | 17 | 7 |
| | To the same extent, colleagues of Roma and Romanian origin | 15 | 15 | 15 |
| | Several colleagues of Romanian origin | 72 | 65 | 70 |
| | Several colleagues of Hungarian origin | 1 | | 1 |
| | I have/had no friends in school | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| | Don't know/No answer | 6 | 2 | 5 |
| | Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Per cent per column

Although 13 per cent stated they have had experiences when colleagues treated them differently due to their ethnic affiliation, most of them fall under the category of those who have had both Roma and non Roma friends, and such experiences had no long term effect upon their relationships.

In the secondary education stage, the students admitted on reserved places usually prefer not to tell others they are beneficiaries of affirmative action. However, there are various situations when the status of beneficiaries of affirmative action becomes known: the lists of admitted students per classes are displayed and this aspect is mentioned there, the form

teacher lets the entire class know who the students enrolled on reserved places are, or the situations when beneficiaries are asked to enrol for Romani classes.

I am enrolled on a special place and my colleagues are not aware of that. I'm afraid of discrimination. Nor do my close friends know. (beneficiary, high-school, Arad, FG-4)

When I [the teacher of Romani] come for them, obviously the others know, but this is not a problem because there are very many of those who were admitted based on Roma files and go like this a year or two and then they start to think they shouldn't be enrolled as such, as Roma students. The oldest are 17, 18 years old. They have contact with girls. They are still haunted by this handicap. (Romani language teacher, Bucharest, I-19)

When their colleagues find out they have been admitted on reserved places, the relations among beneficiaries and their non Roma colleagues are affected for some time. However, in time these relations get over the preconceptions concerning the ethnic affiliation.

It happened to me in high-school, but I don't care about it. I think I was in the 9th grade, at the beginning, and the used to make comments about my ethnic affiliation. (beneficiary, high-school student, Bucharest, FG-1)

I: how did your colleagues react?

Ag: they accepted me in the end and now they make no differences. (beneficiary, high-school, Oltenița, FG-6)

Until they get to know you, all the classmates keep away from you for fear you might steal something. (beneficiary, high-school, Arad, FG-4)

I: When was the most difficult time for you?

R: In the beginning, until I got accustomed.

I: What was difficult in the beginning?

R: With my colleagues. I saw myself as a Roma and that people looked at me differently, this is how I saw myself, and I needed some time to get used to the idea. (beneficiary, high-school, Oltenița, FG-6)

The interviewed teaching staff members consider that the relations between Roma and non Roma students are good also due to the fact that this is not a new issue, most of the education units having more Roma students than those enrolled on reserved places. Moreover, by the age of adolescence they have hobbies which may unite them within the same groups:

No, there are no tensions and I'll explain why: we have more Roma students than those enrolled on reserved places, so they have somehow been present in this school for years, prior to the launch of this admission program on reserved places and this feels somehow natural. (high-school principal, Cluj, I-13)

No, the high-school is not affected by such segregation, no, because the students are at the age when they can take care of their clothes, and students who get to high-school are really determined to graduate, to learn well, to make a good impression upon their colleagues so that no one may laugh at them, and then the differences almost don't exist, I really haven't been confronted in high-schools by this type of problems. They manage to mingle well, have friends, no one avoids them at all, because they think differently, are more mature themselves and the others. (NGO representative, Bucharest, I-30)

I learned from small children that adults don't know how to behave. They get along very well. I didn't say well, but very well. Why is it so? Not only in my class, I watched them on breaks or on the occasion of various activities... they don't know what grudge, hatred is, or how to speak... As with any child of a certain age, not everything is perfect. Us, adults, and still speak dirty, what about... However, when something happens, they support and defend each other: but, why did you talk like that, why is it like that... but why... all those why's. (Romani language teacher, Bucharest, I-18)

The relations among Roma and non Roma students start from certain stereotypes and fears which equally characterize both groups.

With my colleagues... I saw myself as a Roma and that people looked at me differently, this is how I saw myself, and I needed some time to get used to the idea. (beneficiary, high-school, Călărași, FG-6)

I was afraid in the beginning, I thought I would be marginalized, that they would laugh at me, exclude me from their group, but I stepped up and made friends with them and we had no more problems. They weren't bothered that I was Roma and them Romanians, or other nationalities. They asked me some time, due to my darker skin, if I was or not. I admitted it, because I am not ashamed, and everything went on. (beneficiary, high-school student, Bucharest, FG-1)

The relations with Roma colleagues depend on finding some common activities and similar behaviours. Some of the students think Roma boys find it easier to mingle with the class than girls.

R: It's easier with boys, we adapt more easily.

I: How did you adapt?

R: For example we went out after school, also used to miss classes and go to bars.

R: Things you do in high-school.

I: Which boys do more often than girls?

R: Naturally. We went out in the school yard to play football. (beneficiary, high-school, Călărași, FG-6).

However, most beneficiaries consider they formed a mixed group of friends.

I: Did you make any friends?

R: Yes.

I: Roma as you?

R: Romas and Romanians, and Hungarians. Hungarians were also reclude, same as us... (beneficiary, high-school student, Cluj, FG-7)

10.1.2 Higher Education

In the higher education cycle, the good rapport and friendships with non Roma students are even more frequent: 86 per cent have more Romanian friends, and 93 per cent state they get along well with all or most of the colleagues. Only four per cent have or had more friends from among their Roma colleagues. There are no noticeable differences across those from urban and rural areas or gender. In universities, although identification of ethnic affiliation is not the cause of any tense relations between the beneficiary students and those on normal places, it remains a taboo subject or is the source of some discriminatory comments.

Within the **higher education system**, in some universities, only the students and rectorate are aware they have been admitted on reserved places because the admission is centralized, at the level of the university. In other universities, this is a public fact, because it is mentioned on the student lists.

Most students don't even know they are Roma and even if they knew, Roma students are approached as colleagues, with equal rights. (university representative, Cluj, I-41)

No one asked me and I wasn't about to tell them. There are some girls I get along with better, they know, I have no problems with them or them with me. (beneficiary, high-school, Iași, FG-5)

As a rule, beneficiaries say they would rather not make public their ethnic affiliation or the fact they have been admitted on reserved places. Some of them do not admit it even if they were confronted directly.

In faculty there are reserved places for Roma and teachers want to know who those persons are, it seems to me they should know. We have 10 students on reserved places and only 4 of them stood up, the rest of them no, even if they were in the room. We were looking at each other but did not turn ourselves in. It seemed strange to me they didn't stand up. (beneficiary, high-school, Iași, FG-5)

The relationship experiences with non Roma colleagues, as reported by the subjects, revealed the fact that the stereotypes concerning the Roma ethnic group were felt during daily interactions.

Even if we were colleagues and got along very well, and we had everything they had, however I've heard things like: look at that gypsy, she learns well. The boys no, the girls yes. (beneficiary, university, Cluj, FG-8)

If you do something good and then say you are a Roma, this is a very good thing, they admire you very much for that, provided you don't tell them before. If a Romanian stay near me and we both do the same thing, then they tell me how much they appreciate me, because I am Roma, but not to the other student, 'cause they knows Romanians can do it, but if you are a Roma, what a progress! (beneficiary, university, Cluj, FG-8)

Some NGO representatives noted that some of the Roma candidates hesitate in stating their ethnic affiliation, even when asking for a certificate, although those they talk to belong to the same ethnic group:

I saw young people who come to us and ask for certificates and would rather hide in a corner and stay there, when asking. I met others who come and are very proud and self confident. (beneficiary, university and NGO representative, Bucharest, FG-8)

By the beginning of the implementation of affirmative action, in some universities, both the teaching staff and students were reserved, and even the faculty management admitted that.

I noted from the very beginning some reticence either on behalf of the colleagues, or the teachers, or the students. I mean are they prepared to meet the requirements, to cover the bibliography, to complete the research on site, to analyze? (university representative, Iași, I-44)

The interviewed representatives of universities state that the relations among Roma students on reserved places and non Roma students are good, the evidence on which such statements are based is the lack of official notices regarding any conflicts or problems regarding the relations among Roma and non Roma students.

The teaching staff members consider that there are certain humanistic specializations, both within the secondary and higher education phases, where the specific features of the studied disciplines requires another conduct from students, another attitude to diversity and multiculturalism.

Due to the fact they study pedagogy, psychology from the 9th grade, they have a different attitude, come with a positive attitude towards these children. They never despised or disregarded them. (high-school principal, Iași, I-17)

10.2 Students' Relations with Their Teachers

The relations with their teachers are more diverse, depending on the degree of teachers' tolerance regarding individuals with a different cultural background, but also on their opinion regarding affirmative action. Thus, at one extreme, in the secondary cycle there were situations when the teachers or form teachers pressured the beneficiaries to ask for a transfer to another class or another education unit, from the very first days of school.

There were even form teachers, who otherwise were real ladies, who always said "If not, move, move." And I had some advising classes in the high-school I teach and talked both with the teaching staff members and parents and children and insisted not to do such transfers. Although families would have rather transferred the student "than to fail him/her..." (school inspector, I-25)

Some said "Yes, it is a good thing indeed helping them", others said "What, why should they have reserved places, what do we do, this is discrimination to us, the majority?" (school inspector, I-27)

The most frequent attitude from teachers in secondary and vocational schools was a "tolerant" one, as long as they had no decision making authority regarding the allocation of these places. Moreover, the tolerant attitude is also determined by their perception of affirmative action as incorrect, discriminating towards the majority population.

Toleration, this is the general idea, I mean something like "This is life, they were accepted on these places, they will finish school" (high-school principal, Călărași, I-14)

Obviously this is a positive discrimination and sometimes we may say Roma students do not benefit of rights but privileges, whereas the others benefit of only rights (high-school principal, Arad, I-12)

Some teachers also tend to associate the lack of good school results with the ethnic affiliation and the features of the entire ethnic group.

I think it happened in the beginning, however very rarely. For example, even when a child failed to pass to the next grade, he hasn't succeeded with one discipline, the tendency was to blame all on his/her ethnic affiliation and on a difficult relation between the child and the teacher. (high-school principal, Iași, I-17)

I believe teachers consider students on reserved places are different, more stupid, they think they had smaller marks but got in front of all. (beneficiary, high-school, Călărași, FG-6)

A colleague of mine, for example, when the teacher asked her to come to the blackboard and she didn't know, he said Roma students don't learn, because this is how gypsies are. (beneficiary, high-school, Bucharest, FG-1)

In the higher education cycles, such tense relations between students and teachers are more rarely reported. Most of the times, the Roma students admitted on the reserved places mingle among the others and most of the teachers are not aware of the names of the beneficiaries of affirmative action.

Those who get in here are students like everybody else. When I come into a class I don't know who's Roma or who isn't. Sometimes, some Romanian or Hungarian has darker skin. (university representative, Cluj, I-42)

Moreover, students admitted on reserved places do not ask to be treated differently than the majority, on the contrary, they try to integrate and respond to all requests. Even though some teachers have doubts regarding the ethnic affiliation of some students, the policy promoted by the university representatives is to avoid any comments or discussions on this theme.

Now we have students in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th year and no one has ever asked for special treatment. I believe they wished to be treated like everybody else, which is what we did. (university representative, Iași, I-43)

In case the teacher is somehow astonished, or has some reticence regarding the presence of the Roma student in the room, he/she tries to hide them. (university representative, Iași, I-44)

Teachers say that, when Roma students have very good results, they become a positive example and are praised, since the general belief is such results denote highly skills provided they come from disadvantaged environments.

Some teachers, who find out about a former highly skilled student, are positively impressed that a student who has poorer material conditions manages to obtain good study results. (university representative, Cluj, I-41)

On the contrary, I noted that the academic and student community was happy and appreciated when a Roma student did their work, learned well and integrated within our community. (university representative, Cluj, I-45)

In some universities, working with Roma students admitted on reserved places is associated with the experience of working with students from disadvantaged categories. Roma students are considered as a disadvantaged category and the experience of the university with integrating some students coming from institutions of child protection helped them approach Roma students properly.

And we are accustomed to working with people who don't excel, but are rather, on a Gauss curve, somewhere in the middle, there. Thus we have the necessary diplomacy and wisdom to deal with these aspects separately. For example, we have a lot of, we used to have, now we don't have as many, but still there are many children who come here, high-school graduates from orphanages and so... and they are at least equally sensitive to work with and require attention like them, like Roma children. (university representative, Cluj, I-45)

11. ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION UPON JOB OPPORTUNITIES

The quantitative analysis shows that, at the level of the secondary education, the involvement of students or graduates in lucrative activities²⁵ is lower, whereas they rather focus on continuing their education than on their professional integration. However, among all the interviewed secondary education graduates (high-school and vocational schools), 22 per cent of the respondents, ever since they finished their studies, have had a job and also continued their studies.

Table 11.1 Professional integration and continuation of studies concerning the graduates of secondary studies

| SINCE YOUR GRADUATION UNTIL NOW, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING SITUATIONS CHARACTERIZES YOU? | | | | | |
|---|-----------|--------------|----|-----------|-------|
| | | I have a job | | | |
| | | Yes | No | No answer | Total |
| I HAVE CARRIED ON/I AM CARRYING ON WITH MY STUDIES | Yes | 22 | 42 | 1 | 65 |
| | No | 15 | 17 | | 31 |
| | No answer | 2 | | 2 | 4 |
| | Total | 38 | 59 | 3 | 100 |

Per cent out of the total graduates of secondary and vocational schools

A significant proportion have not succeeded in finding a job; 21 per cent of the graduates who actively searched for a job, but failed. Moreover, 9 per cent of the graduates, although they say they looked for a job, have had no jobs after graduation, not even occasional ones.

²⁵ Romanian laws provide that Romanian citizens are entitled to work since the age of 16, and since 15 only with the approval of the parents and doctor.

Table 11.2 Difficulties regarding the professional integration of secondary studies graduates

| SINCE YOUR GRADUATION UNTIL NOW, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING SITUATIONS CHARACTERIZES YOU? | | | | | |
|---|-----------|--|----|-----------|-------|
| | | Since I have finished the high-school, I've had several occasional jobs | | | |
| | | Yes | No | No answer | Total |
| SINCE I HAVE FINISHED THE HIGH-SCHOOL, I HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR A JOB BUT HAVEN'T FOUND ONE YET | Yes | 9 | 11 | 1 | 21 |
| | No | 11 | 63 | | 75 |
| | No answer | | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| | Total | 21 | 75 | 5 | 100 |

Per cent out of the total graduates of secondary and vocational schools

As for the high-school graduates, their most frequent option is to go on with their studies. Therefore, the cases when high-school graduates failed to integrate on the labour market are less frequent.

Table 11.3 Professional integration of the secondary and vocational school graduates

| SINCE YOUR GRADUATION UNTIL NOW, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING SITUATIONS CHARACTERIZES YOU? | | | | | |
|--|--|--------------|--|--|-------------------------------|
| | I have carried on/I am carrying on with my studies | I have a job | Since I have finished the high-school, I have been looking for a job but haven't found one yet | Since I have finished the high-school, I've had several occa- sional jobs | I have founded a family |
| HIGH-SCHOOL | 79 | 38 | 14 | 19 | 17 |
| VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS | 51 | 38 | 26 | 22 | 16 |

By the time of this survey, 46 per cent of the high-school graduates and 44 per cent of the vocational school graduates were carrying out activities for which they got paid. Among students, the figures are four per cent and 5 per cent respectively.

High-school graduates work in both private Romanian companies (41 per cent) and public institutions (32 per cent). Although the small number of cases does not allow a more detailed analysis, the main domains in which these graduates work are trade and education. Vocational school graduates who have a job mostly work for private companies, either with Romanian or foreign capital (64 per cent) and less of them for public institutions (10 per cent). Seventeen per cent said they worked for natural entity employers. Besides, the vocational school graduates are more often willing to work without contracts: 53 per cent do not have a contract, as compared to 21 per cent of high-school graduates. The chances of getting an unlimited duration contract are much higher for high-school graduates: 44 per cent of those who currently have some form of contract) than with vocational school graduates: 32 per cent. The fields where vocational school graduates work are more diverse due to the wide range of specializations after they graduate. The most frequent fields are: construction (17 per cent), trade (15 per cent), unqualified or qualified work (15 per cent), transport (10 per cent) and public foods (10 per cent).

High-school graduates reported salaries most between RON 300-900 (59 per cent) which is higher than vocational school graduates, where 53 per cent get less than RON 600. This difference might be determined by the fact that the frequency of occasional jobs is higher for vocational school graduates and this may influence the estimate of the monthly revenues. Thus, the comparisons between the two categories must be avoided, considering the fact that the average values of occasional revenues vary a lot throughout the year.

Further studies are considered to have a positive impact on opportunities in the labour market by 61 per cent of the high-school graduates and by 39 per cent of the vocational school graduates. Most vocational school graduates (46 per cent) consider that relations mattered a lot or very much in finding a job.

For high-school graduates who do not have a job at the moment, this is a personal choice and not their inability to adapt. Thus, 70 per cent of the graduates who do not perform any lucrative activities at the moment did not perform any such activities ever since they finished high-school; their explanations are approximately the same: they have not looked for a job, especially since they will go on with their studies.

The perceptions of university students regarding the opportunities on the labour market have been analyzed from two perspectives: finding a job prior and after graduation. High-school students are relatively reserved regarding the issue of finding a job prior to graduation, with **only 40 per cent estimating they had chances of finding a job in the locality they live and 43 per cent think they had chances in the locality where they went to school.** The graduation of planned studies (irrespective of level) increases the students' confidence in their chances of finding a job both in their own locality (59 per cent), but especially in the locality where they go to school (69 per cent).

Students in vocational schools are less confident in their opportunities on the labour market both prior to and after graduation: 23 per cent consider they have chances in locality where

they live and 28 per cent think they have bigger or very big chances of finding a job in the locality where they go to school. As with high-school students, they consider their chances will increase after graduation: 41 per cent believe they have big or very big chances in the locality they live in and 53 per cent in the locality where they study.

We should mention the percentage of those who are not so confident in their chances of finding a job in the locality where they study or they live: 6 per cent consider they have very small or no chances of finding a job after graduation, in the communities where they were trained. Moreover, 24 per cent of the high-school students would look for a job abroad if they had the chance to choose. Vocational school students mention more frequently the option of looking for a job abroad, possibly due to their qualification obtained by vocational training (high-schools – 24 per cent; vocational schools – 60 per cent).

The options of high-school students concerning the fields in which they wish to work after graduation are closely connected to the specializations obtained after further studies: economy/tourism (15 per cent), police (15 per cent), medicine (9 per cent) and law (8 per cent). The expectations of vocational school students are rather connected to the fields they get qualified for during vocational studies: tourism and public foods (11 per cent), mechanics (9 per cent), transportations (8 per cent), textile industry (6 per cent) and trade (6 per cent).

Among the university students and graduates, the participation rate on the labour market is much higher both during their studies and also after graduation: **38 per cent of the students and 81 per cent of graduates perform paid activities. Fourteen per cent of the graduates mentioned the fact they have not found a job after finishing the faculty although they have been looking for one and 10 per cent have not found a job and not had even occasional jobs.** 43 per cent of higher education graduates will continue their studies after they get their licence degree.

Most of them work on the basis of contracts (90 per cent) on unlimited duration (58 per cent) or limited duration (32 per cent). **Although they are higher education graduates, the current occupations for 11 per cent of them are inferior to the qualification they got by finishing their studies: such as seller/cashier, computer operator, receptionist and baby sitter.**

However, most of the graduates who have a job work in the public sector: 21 per cent are public clerks, 30 per cent are teachers, officers with the army or policemen (4 per cent). Besides, out of the total interviewed university students and graduates, 42 per cent work for public institutions, and 45 per cent for private companies (with Romanian or foreign capital). The salary ranges of university students or graduates who have a job are varied, but the most frequently mentioned are RON 300-1600 (75 per cent). It is significant that 66 per cent of those who are employed have a monthly salary less than the average national salary (RON 1248 in June 2008) and 18 per cent have a salary less than RON 600, whereas as of January 2008 the minimum net salary for the occupations requiring the graduation of higher education is RON 741. This means these graduates are hired on positions inferior to their qualification according to their higher education graduation.

Considering the role of their training during faculty, 60 per cent of those who have a job believe that it mattered much or very much in finding a job, whereas only 35 per cent have the same opinion about their relationships.

Most of the university students who do not have a job are confident in their chances of finding a job prior to graduation in the locality where they study. Moreover, the expectations regarding their professional integration after graduation are more connected to the locality where they currently go to university (65 per cent consider they have big or very big chances in the locality where they go to university and 42 per cent in the locality where they live). Twenty-seven per cent of university students say they intend to leave the country after graduation, and 21 per cent of the total interviewed beneficiaries (students and graduates) would look for a job abroad if they could.

The fields in which they want to work after graduation are mostly connected to the social work (10 per cent), education (9 per cent) or public administration (8 per cent), followed by other public or private fields: journalism (6 per cent), marketing (6 per cent), informatics (5 per cent) and economics (5 per cent).

The plans for the future of the students include first of all finding a job (83 per cent) and continuing their studies (65 per cent). Fifty-six per cent intend to find a job and at the same time to continue their studies and 36 per cent of all the interviewed students intend to continue their studies, to look for a job and to form a family.

The qualitative approach reveals that both beneficiaries and the various representatives of the education institutions consider that the discrimination due to ethnic criteria for employment has not disappeared and is still an impediment. Beneficiaries often talk about how ethnic factors were major barriers in getting a job.

You know very well, someone comes to a company, to the employer: oops, this one is a gipsy, I won't take him. I don't know, maybe it's easier if he has a university degree, unfortunately. I disapprove of this but it happens. (university representative, Cluj, I-42)

Discrimination seems to be stronger during hiring interviews when the physical features are more visible based on which the others identify a person as a Roma individual (skin color, accent etc.). In these situations, studies, the education level seem to matter less or be neglected by the employer. The direct interaction between candidate and employer is dominated in these circumstances by already existing social representations. Consequently, many times the employer does not evaluate in an objective manner the qualities of the candidate and is influenced by a general image concerning Roma and acts according to it.

When you go to an interview, I speak from my own experience, when there are people there who want to help you, you realize from the very first meeting they want to help you and it's irrelevant to them if you're tall, skinny, what ethnic or religious group you

come from. Or, there are people who ask you insipid questions, making you realize they do not want you to be the image of the company, to represent the company. Such questions sound like this: “You know you have to submit your crime record...” Well, I have it..!, “You know you also must have your medical exams done...” Thus, they try to find a reason... You may speak two foreign languages, be a communicative person, have some brains in your head, be resourceful, be handsome enough, not be ugly and so on, still they are bothered by your skin color, and this actually makes you feel inferior. (beneficiary, university, Bucharest, FG-2)

Such discrimination experiences with job interviews lead to disillusion and frustration.

In October 2006 I took my officer exam. I succeeded with 10 and I was rejected. I was informed I don't have a proper behaviour in the society, I'm still on trial with the General Inspectorate of the Police (IGP). On 3rd this month I had my court term and I was told that my complaint was not justified. I told them, could you please show me one or two behaviours which are inadequate, that I am bad for the society or that I have an improper behaviour as you say and I was told it was not possible because these were secret documents. This is my deepest frustration, I won't get rid of it so easily. (beneficiary, university, 56)

As for those who do not have the obvious features which determine the employers to classify them as Roma, the difficulties of finding a job are those applicable to all young graduates or to the rural areas.

Moreover, we noted that the beneficiaries of affirmative action in high-schools or professional schools tend to wish to go on with their studies and to apply for a faculty. To be sure they will succeed, most beneficiaries say they will also choose the reserved places in faculties. Their wish to succeed is stronger than their worries concerning the social acceptance or their fear of discrimination.

Even among those who quit studies we found respondents who want to come back to school and continue. This is the case especially when financial problems have reduced, when the quitting reason was not their getting married, when the respective person already has a job and wishes something more, wishes to grow.

I want to build a carrier myself, to be somebody, because with only high-school and the high-school graduation diploma I don't see myself very happy in a few years, it's better to have a specialization because without such specialization... working God knows where... (faculty drop-out, 61)

12. ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT UPON THE ROMA CIVIC MOVEMENT

The beneficiaries may get involved in activities or events concerning the Roma ethnic group at school or within public institutions, or during the events organized by Roma associations. As also underlined in the chapter referring to the enrollment process, the connections of beneficiaries in high-schools with the organizations delivering such recommendations are rather weak, and more than half did not remember if they had one and what was the name of the organization issuing such recommendation. As for vocational schools, this happens more frequently, though still with only 20 per cent mentioning such an organization.

Approximately 30 per cent of high-school students and graduates and 24 per cent of vocational school students and graduates have attended any activities concerning the Roma ethnic group, most frequently debates about the problems of Roma students, classes of Romani or debates about the history of Roma. Most of these activities are organized by the school or school inspectorate and to a smaller extent by foundations/NGOs.

13 per cent of high-school students and 14 per cent of vocational school students attended activities organized by the non-governmental sector. In terms of availability, the interest in the actions organized by associations or foundations within the Roma communities is much higher than the actual participation until now: 77 per cent of the beneficiaries in secondary units would attend at least one type of such actions. The most attractive types of programs beneficiaries would attend as volunteers would be educational. Respondents were also open to the other types of programs (promotion and support of the rights of Roma people, health, cultural programs or distribution of material aids); 46 per cent of them said they would be willing to attend all types of programs. 38 per cent of the respondents know such organizations and would like to get involved, and 38 per cent want to get involved, but do not know any such organizations. The availability and knowledge about such an organization are not sufficient factors to determine their involvement as 38 per cent who meet these two criteria, but only 25 per cent attended such activities during the last year. This group should be rather seen in terms of the potential which could be valued by means of proper mobilization actions.

Table 12.1 Willingness to attend programs in favor of Roma community, within the secondary study units

| | | HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF ANY ORGANIZATIONS/FOUNDATIONS WHERE YOUNG ROMA GET INVOLVED IN THE ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING THE ROMA COMMUNITIES | | | |
|----------------------------|-------|--|----|-----------|-------|
| | | Yes | No | No answer | Total |
| WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE | No | 4 | 18 | 1 | 23 |
| | Yes | 38 | 38 | 2 | 77 |
| | Total | 42 | 56 | 2 | 100 |

Per cent of the total respondents in the secondary education system

| DURING THE LAST YEAR, HAVE YOU ATTENDED ANY PROGRAMS/ACTIVITIES ORGANIZED BY ASSOCIATIONS, FOUNDATIONS OR NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS? | |
|---|-------------|
| Yes | 25 per cent |
| No | 75 per cent |

As for the beneficiaries of higher education, the participation in activities organized by associations or foundations is much more frequent, with 38 per cent of them saying they did this last year. In addition, 43 per cent have attended during their studies some debates about the problems of young Roma, 28 per cent attended debates about the history of Roma and 18 per cent attended classes of Romani.

Eighty-eight per cent of the students/graduates are willing to attend various programs supporting the Roma community, and 76 per cent know about such organizations. Sixty-eight per cent of the total interviewed beneficiaries are willing and say they heard about such organizations, whereas 19 per cent are willing, but do not possess such information.

Table 12.2 Willingness to attend programs in favour of Roma community, within the higher education units

| | | HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF ANY ORGANIZATIONS/ FOUNDATIONS WHERE YOUNG ROMA GET INVOLVED IN THE ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING THE ROMA COMMUNITIES | | |
|----------------------------|-------|---|----|-------|
| | | Yes | No | Total |
| WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE | No | 7 | 5 | 12 |
| | Yes | 69 | 19 | 88 |
| | Total | 76 | 24 | 100 |

Per cent of the total respondents in the higher education system

Beneficiaries who were willing to participate and also possess information were those having tight connections with the community: half of them attended such activities during the last year and 35 per cent say they can speak Romani fairly well or fluently.

Table 12.3 Willingness to attend programs in favour of Roma community, within the higher education units, by level of knowledge of Romani

| WILLINGNESS TO ATTEND PROGRAMS WITHIN ROMA COMMUNITY | LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE OF ROMANI | | | | | | Total |
|--|------------------------------|-------------------------|--|---|--------------------------------|-----------|-------|
| | I can speak fluently | I can speak fairly well | I understand everything, but I can't speak very well | I understand a little, but I cannot speak | I have no such language skills | No answer | |
| WILLING AND POSSESSING INFORMATION | 23 | 12 | 14 | 16 | 34 | 1 | 100 |
| WILLING, BUT NOT POSSESSING INFORMATION | 6 | 6 | 18 | 29 | 41 | | 100 |

Per cent per line

The effects of affirmative action are also encountered at community level. Those who choose this road and go on with their studies become role models within their native communities. This mostly happens when, after finishing their studies, graduates find a job. Ever since, they are examples of success within their community and a reason to be proud of. The power of such examples brings about value changes and prompts others to continue their studies.

Within one of our programs, some three years ago, in Tulcea, we asked the children what they wanted to be when they grew up. The rogue typology, I won't give any names, in the Roma communities: money, women, police at their feet. 90 per cent wanted to be rogues. Then I found Andrei, who was preparing for admission to a faculty, I took him to the agency and asked him to implement some projects within his gypsy group, his community. Few years later, after this guy had been noticed, I asked the children again "what would you like to be when you grow up: the rogue typology or do you want to be like Andrei?" The number of kids who said they wanted to be like Andrei had grown fantastically, because he was a role model children knew about, he was one of them. They knew where he had gone, he was like me, he was one of them. (beneficiary, university graduate, Bucharest, FG-2)

A strong point would be access to education. I am somehow inflexible about these matters and I believe these actions mainly provide role models. (beneficiary, university, Bucharest, FG-2)

Besides this imitation effect, there is also a series of positive indirect effects of affirmative action which materialize at community level: beneficiaries become leaders of their communities and facilitate the communication with the respective community, they may promote the needs and problems of the community and may find solutions adapted to their culture and traditions, because they know these elements thoroughly. Often their admission on these reserved places is accompanied by their “employment” within a non-governmental organization managing various problems of Roma people. Hence beneficiaries act as links between the communities and the civil society, facilitating the solution of certain problems within the community.

If some change occurs, then the change of these traditions is only possible through dialogue with the ones who are able to have such dialogue. Their representative. (university representative, Iași, I-44)

We exploit them for their own good, not for their community's. So use them as what, to increase credibility, to improve the communication relations, man, he is the only chief manager, there, he's one of us, even if he has no managerial value, but the fact that he is recognized, no, so his presence there is welcome. (university representative, Bucharest, I-40)

Beneficiaries keep in touch with the community through their families, the non-governmental organizations they work for. However, they do not return to their native community, first of all because they cannot meet their expectations within such communities. They are aware of the fact that their success must be beneficial to the community as well, that they have a moral duty to those people there but this does not imply their return to the community.

You have some moral obligation, because you were supported, but in the end you apply your training also to support the citizen. (beneficiary, university graduate, Bucharest, FG-2)

I see things otherwise, namely I left from the neighbourhood, I am from Bucharest, I went to the University, isolated a little from my neighbourhood, didn't go out with the boys anymore, I started to have higher expectations, then I realized I had to go back to the neighbourhood, to be a role model for the little ones. (beneficiary, university graduate, Bucharest, FG-2)

The use of these role models depends greatly upon the type of community. There are situations in which, on the contrary, the community tends to reject such models whom they consider do not observe the specific traditions of Roma people. Those who further

their studies are no longer accepted by the community. This happens especially in the most traditional communities. Therefore, sometimes furthering their studies is associated with a deep deterioration of the relations with the community.

You are no longer accepted by the community. Namely, you are no longer a part of their life. They see you as a Romanian, some guy, an intruder. To you, young people will no longer be as sincere as before. Since I went to the faculty I have already lost some of my friends. I was seen as a Romanian. This was how old people saw things as well. But I couldn't find my place among Romanians as well. I was living in between two worlds. (beneficiary, university graduate, Cluj, FG-8)

13. AFFIRMATIVE ACTION, IDENTITY AND SELF-ESTEEM

Although all subjects are or were beneficiaries of reserved places for Roma students, 10 per cent of the total secondary cycle sample said they were not Roma students and three per cent refused to declare their ethnic affiliation. In higher education, 11 per cent declared that they are not Roma.

The ethnic identity was analyzed within the quantitative phase of the survey, by means of two dimensions:

- » Knowledge and use of the Romani language.
- » Observance of the community traditions both by respondents and their families.

The quantitative data show that young beneficiaries of affirmative action become distanced from the community from which they came; more than half of those who declare themselves as Roma cannot mention the branch they belong to. **The Romani language is the mother tongue for less than a quarter of the beneficiaries who declared they were Roma (22 per cent of the vocational school beneficiaries, 7 per cent of the high-school beneficiaries and 17 per cent of the university beneficiaries).** Most of them speak Romanian at home and a major part of the beneficiaries of all education forms (37 per cent) cannot speak Romani at all.

Table 13.1 Distribution of beneficiaries according to the declared mother tongue

| | MOTHER TONGUE | | | | Total |
|-------------------|---------------|--------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| | Romanian | Romani | Hungarian | No answer | |
| HIGH-SCHOOL | 88 | 5 | | 7 | 100 |
| VOCATIONAL SCHOOL | 72 | 20 | 4 | 4 | 100 |
| UNIVERSITY | 80 | 15 | 1 | 4 | 100 |

Per cent per line out of the total respondents, irrespective of their declared ethnic affiliation

The knowledge of Romani and belonging to a Roma branch are tightly linked. Those who self identify as members of a certain branch also tend to speak Romani better. 27 per cent of all beneficiaries are separated from the Roma community cannot speak their language and say they belong to no Roma branch.

Table 13.2 Distribution of beneficiaries according to their declared branch and their Romani skills level

| | | AFFILIATION TO A BRANCH | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|-------------------------|-----------|--------------|------------|
| | | Mention a branch | None | Doesn't know | Total |
| HOW WELL CAN YOU SPEAK ROMANI | I can speak fluently | 11 | 2 | 4 | 17 |
| | I can speak fairly well | 7 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| | I understand everything, but I can't speak very well | 7 | 2 | 6 | 15 |
| | I understand a little, but I cannot speak | 7 | 3 | 11 | 21 |
| | I have no such language skills | 10 | 8 | 19 | 37 |
| | Total | 41 | 17 | 42 | 100 |

Per cent of all interviewed beneficiaries

Beneficiaries of vocational schools mention a branch their families are affiliated to most often. High-school beneficiaries are least connected to the history of the group they come from, only 38 per cent of them mentioned a branch they belonged to.

Table 13.4 Distribution of self declared Roma beneficiaries, according to the branch they belong to, by education level

| BRANCH | HIGH-SCHOOL | VOCATIONAL SCHOOL | UNIVERSITY |
|------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|------------|
| Zavragii | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Ursari | 11 | 17 | 19 |
| Caldarari | 1 | 3 | 1 |
| Vatrari | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| Romanianized Roma | 3 | 8 | 3 |
| Tigani de matase | | 1 | 1 |
| Rudari | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Carpatici | | | 1 |
| Lautari | 3 | 2 | 7 |
| Laiesi | 4 | 5 | 1 |
| Ciubotari | 4 | | |
| Spoitori | 3 | | |
| Other | 5 | 8 | 4 |
| Subtotal – mention a branch | 38 | 47 | 42 |
| None | 19 | 19 | 9 |
| Doesn't know | 43 | 34 | 48 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Per cent per column

Fifteen per cent of the interviewed beneficiaries say that the members of their families largely observe and apply the tradition of the Roma ethnic group. In high-schools the frequency of beneficiaries coming families with a strong Roma identity is lower.

Table 13.5 Distribution of beneficiaries according to their level of use of Romani within their families and the observance of traditions

| | THE FAMILY SPEAKS ROMANI – TO A LARGE EXTENT | FAMILY MEMBER WEAR TRADITIONAL CLOTHES – TO A LARGE EXTENT | FAMILY MEMBERS OBSERVE AND APPLY THE TRADITIONS OF THE ROMA ETHNIC GROUP – TO A LARGE EXTENT |
|--------------------|--|--|--|
| HIGH-SCHOOL | 10 | 1 | 8 |
| VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS | 23 | 1 | 16 |
| UNIVERSITY | 17 | 2 | 15 |

Per cent per line

In the secondary cycle, **only 65 per cent of the respondents stated their colleagues knew they had been admitted on the places for Roma students.** The most frequently mentioned way for their colleagues finding out about the fact that the respondent is admitted on reserved places is the straightforward statement of their ethnic affiliation by the respondent (60 per cent), in 15 per cent of the cases the colleagues found out from the display board with the list of admitted students and in 15 per cent of the cases such information was disclosed by a teacher.

Table 13.6 Distribution of beneficiaries according to the declared ethnic affiliation and such statement in the classroom

| | | WHAT IS YOUR ETHNIC AFFILIATION? | | | | |
|--|--------------|----------------------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|------------|
| | | Romanian | Roma | Other | No answer | Total |
| YOUR CLASSMATES KNOW/KNEW YOU HAVE BEEN ADMITTED ON A SPECIAL PLACE FOR ROMA STUDENTS? | Yes | 4 | 59 | 1 | 1 | 65 |
| | No | 5 | 22 | 1 | 1 | 29 |
| | No answer | 1 | 5 | | 0 | 6 |
| | Total | 10 | 86 | 2 | 2 | 100 |

Per cent of the total respondents in the secondary education system

In universities, **70 per cent of the beneficiaries state that their colleagues are aware they are beneficiaries of affirmative action, but the ways of finding this out differ.** Thus, the most frequent way is the display of the list of admitted students highlighting those who were admitted on reserved places (50 per cent). The second most frequent way is the straightforward communication: 42 per cent of the respondents have told their colleagues about it.

This did not affect the self esteem of beneficiaries, according to the distribution of scores on the Rosenberg scale.²⁶ Only 5 per cent of the respondents in secondary units and 7 per cent from higher education units have a score less than 15 which indicates low self esteem level. Most of them had scores over 25, which indicates a positive self-image. **Their ethnic affiliation is not one of the characteristics by which beneficiaries define themselves spontaneously. The most frequently mentioned characteristics are honesty, sincerity, diligence, pride, sociability, politeness etc. None of the respondents spontaneously mentioned their ethnic affiliation among the first three things that characterize them most.** However, the main attitude towards their Roma origin is a positive one, only 18 per cent consider that being a Roma may be a disadvantage, and more than half being proud of their Roma origin.

Table 13.7 Student perceptions of the extent of their affiliation with the Roma ethnic group

| TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS? "BEING ROMA ..." | | |
|---|----------------|-----------------|
| | I rather agree | I totally agree |
| ... makes my life easier | 19 | 6 |
| ... makes me proud | 33 | 27 |
| ... may be a benefit | 32 | 15 |
| ... does not interest me | 25 | 21 |
| ... makes me feel ashamed | 8 | 1 |
| ... is a disadvantage | 16 | 2 |

Per cent of all interviewed beneficiaries

The framework in which beneficiaries perceive themselves and their non Roma colleagues is circumscribed to the set of stereotypes associated generally to the two ethnic groups: Roma and Romanian. The stereotypes regarding the qualities/flaws of Romanian mainly focus on attributes concerning the networking ways: proud, civilized/clean, decent, egotistic and welcoming. The beneficiaries of higher education also have a social and spiritual dimension: selfish, decent, proud, welcoming, disunited, as well as religious and superstitious. The ethnic stereotype includes the following attributes: united, welcoming, negligent, proud and superstitious. As for the higher education level, negative features such as negligence, retardation or laziness are more often mentioned.

²⁶ The Rosenberg scale targets self esteem and consists of a set of 10 items which the respondent agrees or disagrees with. Initially, the scale was used for measuring the self esteem of adolescents, however later on its implementation for the adult population in general was validated. The scores calculated on the basis of the 10 items may vary from 0 to 30 points, as the score is higher, the self esteem is also higher. A score less than 15 points represents a low self esteem level.

Out of all interviewed beneficiaries, over 94 per cent of all respondents consider that affirmative action must be enforced both in high-schools and faculties, only that the extent of these actions is perceived differently: 39 per cent consider that all Roma should be able to benefit of reserved places in high-schools and 36 per cent believe that all Roma should be awarded reserved places in faculties. Thirty-nine per cent believe affirmative action should be enforced in high-schools proportionally to the number of Roma population and 41 per cent have the same opinion concerning such places in universities. Sixteen per cent consider there should be at least few places in high-schools and 19 per cent consider there should be several places in faculties so as some Roma children may have the chance to go to school.

E. Zamfir and C. Zamfir point out three types of attitudes of Roma people regarding their own identity: “acceptance of the Roma identity, the wish to assimilate with the majority population and updating their life style by promoting new forms of their own ethnic identity.” (1993, 39)²⁷ These patterns have also been observed among the beneficiaries of affirmative action, however some of them also tend to hide their identity to avoid possible cases of discrimination, stigmatization.

Certain surveys show that “...for both Romanians and Roma “being Romanian or Roma provides “a feeling of pride”. We may note that Romanians show such feelings more often than Romas.” (Gabriel Jderu, 2002, 113).²⁸ Affirmative action, have often an indirect role of stimulating such “feelings of pride” within beneficiaries and the assumption of the Roma identity. The mechanism is simple: beneficiaries become more self confident and more confident of their own abilities and develop skills of fighting stigmatization. In these positive situations, the Roma identity is assumed, affirmed and sustained.

As noted, affirmative action does not always lead to such results and there are cases when the Roma identity is not revealed. For some beneficiaries, their affiliation with the Roma ethnic group is a “source of problems” which may cause numerous annoyances. What leads some respondents to hide their Roma identity is the assessment process of the external context (colleagues, teachers etc.) and the prediction of the reactions triggered by the statement of their Roma identity.

As noted above, for beneficiaries affirmative action policies are first of all an assurance of being able to continue their studies. Along with the facilitation of access to education for young Roma, affirmative action contributed indirectly to forming a new self image as well, which is reflected by the positive self esteem and increased self confidence. Beneficiaries change the way they perceive their own social, cognitive and physical features. Their admission to high-school, to professional school or to faculty is often associated with elements of improvement of self esteem.

²⁷ Elena, Zamfir and Cătălin Zamfir (coordinators) – *Țigani, între ignorare și îngrijorare*, 1993, Bucharest, Alternative Publishing House.

²⁸ Gabriel Jderu – *Românii despre romi, romii despre români* in the Social Work Magazine, no. 4-5/2002.

Carrying on with my studies means a lot to me. Through these studies I can reach my objectives... to get along by myself. I am able to learn and become somebody. (high-school beneficiary, pencil-paper exercise, FG, Iași)

When I decided to go on with my studies, I felt more self confident, stronger and more determined than ever to finish them. (faculty beneficiary, pencil-paper exercise, FG, Cluj)

For the beneficiaries of affirmative action, education becomes a means to “succeed” but also a way of contradicting certain existing stereotypes and of fighting against discrimination. The continuation of studies makes most beneficiaries feel capable, feel the same as all other students, makes them integrate with new circles of friends and reduce a major reason of social exclusion. Beneficiaries, both in high-schools and university students or graduates perceive the continuation of studies as a strategy of reducing the social gap between the majority population and the Roma ethnic groups.

To me, the continuation of studies is a chance for the future, the chance to build an honorable and decent career, the integration in the society, the opportunity to enrich my cultural knowledge, so that future generations may be proud to acknowledge their affiliation to the Roma ethnic group, to promote the our ethnic traditions and customs. (high-school beneficiary, pencil-paper exercise, FG, Iași)

To me, the continuation of studies means a better life and proving to myself and the others that I can be somebody and I am not inferior to the majority. (high-school beneficiary, pencil-paper exercise, FG, Iași)

Of course this is a change because I am seen differently by the society, I am more appreciated, but I am not appreciated to my true value now. I am certain that, if a gypsy has 2 faculties and a Romanian has 12 grades or 10 grades, the Romanian is better than the gypsy. (beneficiary, faculty graduate, I- 59)

Beneficiaries say that the main features according to which the others identify them as Roma people refer to the colour of their skin, accent and clothes. These are sometimes associated to another life style which the “majority” label as unwanted. Most often, the specific characteristics of Roma people are used by the others in a negative, pejorative and stigmatizing manner.

The third definition for a “gypsy” is: “blackish skinned person, displaying an antisocial behavior or “an epithet attributed to a person with bad habits”. This is the definition in the current DEX (Romanian Explicative Dictionary n.a.). And when you look and see, for example, that that gypsy stole the same thing, the same does not apply to Antal the Hungarian, who has stolen, does not apply to Ion the Romanian as well, who did the same antisocial deed, however it applies only to our Paradalian. This means that many times, if you are not dressed too well, if you smell, if you behave like a gypsy, you start looking like one, be almost

one. It is very hard to be a gypsy if you're blond, although there are very many of them and when you say you're gypsy, they answer: "Come on man, get out of here!". "I swear, I took a bath this morning!". But the man acts according to stereotypes. (university beneficiary, Bucharest, FG-2)

All these elements sometimes determine them to hide the Roma identity and give up, forget about the traditional life style or some characteristics of this style such as the Romani language.

For example, the only thing I kept from Roma people is my blood, 100 per cent, otherwise I have no culture, civilization, I have no specific customs. In my family, not even my grandparents, who are still alive, speak the language of the gypsies. So you can see, for so many generations, I, who am 100 per cent of their blood, know about no traditions, no customs. (university beneficiary, Bucharest, FG-2).

For some university students or graduates, the admission on these reserved places and continuation of studies meant a stronger assumption of the Roma identity (now having a series of arguments acquired through study, for fighting eventual discrimination circumstances), the awareness of the fact they can do something for their community. Therefore, the continuation of studies sometimes brings up the awareness of the Roma ethnic values.

When I decided to go on with my studies, I felt more self confident, and at the same time as an asset for my community. (faculty beneficiary, Cluj)

Of course, there are also opposite examples, as exceptions from this. There are cases in which the ethnic affiliation is hidden or denied. Such situations depend a lot upon the context: teachers, colleagues, previous experiences of discrimination etc. The reasons for this attitude of the beneficiaries are largely explained by the fear of rejection, social stigma within the group where they have to integrate. We noted that "...the social stigma associated to the affiliation with the Roma community is less important for Roma people who adopt the traditional life style, but it may become more difficult to bear for those who want to integrate within a modern life style, we will understand that those who want to live at the level of modern society are rather tempted to abandon the Roma culture, assimilating the cultural patterns and the way of life of the majority community, detaching themselves from the culture of the ethnic community they come from" (E. Zamfir, C. Zamfir, 1993, 39-40).²⁹

I didn't tell my colleagues, because I am certain that three quarters of my group wouldn't talk to me anymore, they would automatically turn their backs on me. I want them to know me first as I am, for my results. In high-school, they found out only after four years on the internet that I had been admitted on reserved places and only 3-4 friends of the entire class remained. (university beneficiary, Bucharest, FG-2)

²⁹ Elena, Zamfir and Cătălin Zamfir (coordinators) – *Țigani, între ignorare și îngrijorare*, 1993, Bucharest, Alternative Publishing House.

We noted that such cases occurred more often for the beneficiaries of secondary studies. Students are afraid of discrimination, isolation and repercussions from the teachers.

Moreover, a major consequence of the continuation of studies due to affirmative action is the adoption of a new life style by the beneficiaries, who try to mix the values, traditions specific to the Roma ethnic group with the modern life patterns and those oriented towards professional growth and a career.

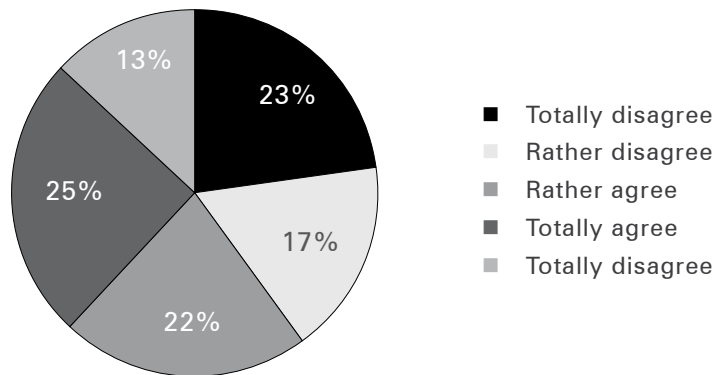
Beneficiaries consider that, by continuing their studies, they are regarded differently; their status changes and they are appreciated by both their community and the majority population.

In my family, I am the only one with faculty studies, I mean on my father's side, as for my mother's there no need to talk about it. And you realize that there is another type of respect, they look at me differently and this makes you proud, happier. (university beneficiary, Bucharest, FG-2)

14. ASSESSMENT OF THE PUBLIC OPINION CONCERNING AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

The opinions of the general public concerning the reserved places for Roma are a major element considered by potential beneficiaries (as mentioned above under the chapter dealing with the enrollment process). Although the general public was not included among the target groups of the survey, the results of other surveys provide evidence of their views. The survey “Attitudes towards work” performed in June 2008 by Gallup Romania for the Open Society Foundation included a question referring to the necessity of reserved places for Roma students for the admission to high-schools: 47 per cent consider that these places are necessary, whereas 40 per cent did not agree with this statement.

Figure 14.1 To what extent do you consider that there should be reserved places for Roma students in high schools?



Moreover, there are previous surveys performed for the public institutions which approached the issue of Roma ethnic group’s discrimination. Thus, according to the results of the survey performed in 2005 by CURS upon the request of the National Council for Fighting against Discrimination, Roma people occupy the third place on the list of the most discriminated categories in Romania, after HIV infected persons and homosexuals.³⁰ Discrimination against Roma people is mostly felt during job interviews and at work (68 per cent and 61 per cent of the interviewed subjects respectively), than in public places (51 per cent), in the relations with the authorities (48 per cent), at school and in court (40 per cent and 39 per cent respectively), and the least in the family (23 per cent). As for the tolerance towards a

³⁰ Positions according to the Dominant Personal Opinion Index (IODP).

minority group, most respondents agreed or totally agreed with the statement “Most Roma people violate the laws”, and little over half of them stated they were afraid when meeting a group of Roma people in the street.

Figure 14.2 How often do you think that in every day life a person is treated differently because he/she is Roma?

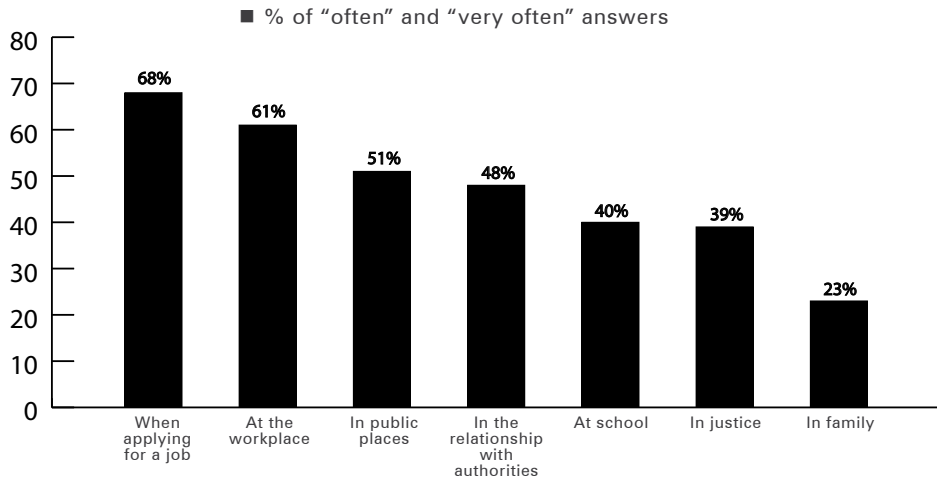
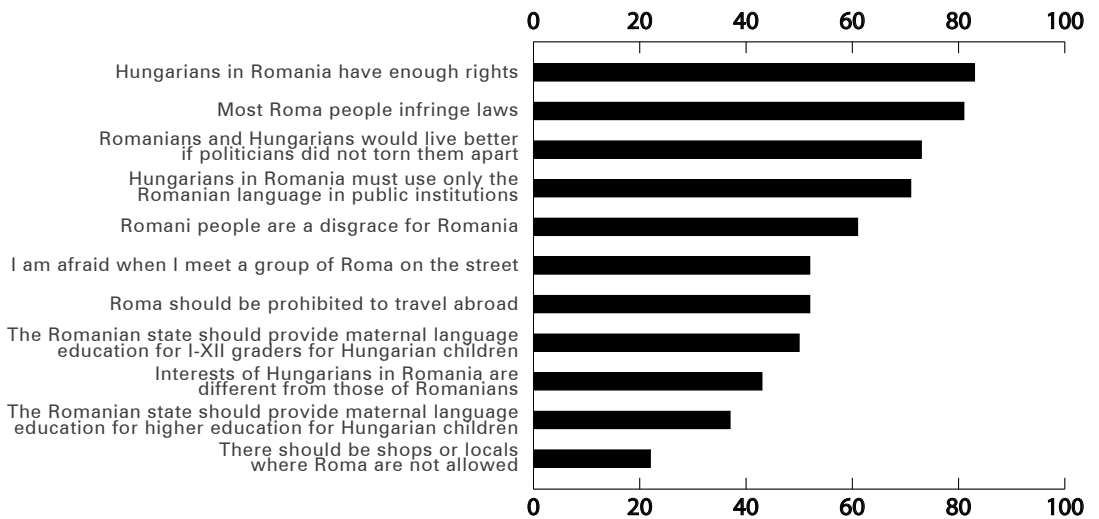


Figure 14.3 Tolerance towards minorities. To what extent do you agree with the following statements...?



Another perception about Roma refers to the fact that they abuse the social assistance system (77 per cent of the Romanian and Hungarian respondents). As for the acceptance of the Roma people, according to the scale of social distance, more respondents agree that a Roma person should have the same citizenship (21 per cent), be their friend (23 per cent) or neighbour (24 per cent), than marry such a person (8 per cent) or be hired at the same work place (13 per cent). According to this data, the attitude towards Roma people is preponderantly discriminatory and Roma are usually labelled in a negative manner associated to crime.

15. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The social actors involved in the process of affirmative actions generally have, verbally, a positive attitude towards such actions, although they show some reserve or even reticence concerning the discriminating character of such actions. The affirmative actions are a legitimate mean of redressing centuries of institutional discrimination against Roma (Roma slavery as an institution ceased only 150 years ago) as well as current discriminatory practices or effects (Roma as a group who lost in the post-communist transition in terms of education and employment). Affirmative actions also are relatively easy to implement and directly address two hurdles facing young Roma: institutional racism in the selection process for enrolment during their school career; and the low education aspiration of Roma from parents with poor educational attainment. Added to the benefits brought by this educational policy of affirmative action are the societal gains represented by an increase in diversity of educational environment at secondary and tertiary level and the positive effect of a better educated workforce for the competitiveness of Romanian economy. The costs of affirmative measures for Roma in education are presumably low because of using the existing educational infrastructure which may indicate a highly cost-effective educational policy.

The current research provides, for the first time, systematic data about the impact of a well-established educational policy of affirmative action for Roma in Romania. Over a period of 17 years since the first pilot measure at university level at Bucharest University, the policy of affirmative action in education contributed to a significant increase to the number of Roma pupils graduating secondary and higher education. Yet, this contribution is hard to quantify and therefore it is also hard to estimate the contribution to reducing the gap between Roma and non Roma for these educational cycles. The last census data are not a reliable comparison baseline for the Roma population and a baseline survey data was not conducted prior of the introduction of affirmative measures. However, in order to have an illustration of the contribution, we can compare the official number of Roma graduates of higher education recorded by the 2002 census – which was 684 persons – with the number of beneficiaries of positive discrimination in higher education in the period 2000-2006 – a total of 1,420 persons. Regarding upper secondary education, while the 2002 census provides a figure of 24,505 Roma persons who attained this educational level, the affirmative measures contributed to the enrolment of 10,300 pupils only in the period 2000-2006. It is likely that the affirmative action in education for Roma contributed to an increased retention of Roma pupils in education during higher secondary and tertiary education. However, the extent of this

increase cannot be precisely calculated because no baseline survey was conducted prior of launching of affirmative measures.³¹

If there is a significant impact in regard with the quantitative achievements of affirmative measures there are also a number of shortcomings related with the design, the overall logic of the intervention and the added value of this policy as well as concerns related with the appropriate targeting.

At the legislative level, the policy of affirmative measures consists of ministerial orders issued yearly on ad hoc basis. There is no legislative act to stipulate with clarity what are the legitimacy grounds of such measures, what are the objectives of these measures and what it is the time span planned in order to achieve the desired effects. Without a proper communication of arguments for having positive discrimination in education for Roma, there is the risk that this policy to appears, to the non Roma and for the society as large, as an unjustified privilege. In all the cases affirmative action policies are meant to be implemented for a certain period of time until these policies are producing the effect of redressing past discrimination. In our case the legislative frame is not envisaging such time horizon and has no means to measure the effects.

Regarding the logic of the intervention, there are no synergies with the existing policies for Roma in Romania. The affirmative action targets only the top of the educational Roma pyramid without creating a broader base for future participation in secondary and tertiary education. Without an appropriate care for early childhood education and a large coverage in preschool education there will be not an adequate enrolment in primary education. Furthermore, the desegregation legislation is not properly enforced and a significant number of Roma pupils are still attending low quality Roma segregated schools or classes. This means that the number of Roma reaching the end of lower secondary cycle is reduced.

The appropriateness of the targeting is also a critical issue of affirmative measures especially for the high schools but also for tertiary education. Here the lack of a clearly articulated policy objective makes it particularly difficult to assess the success of the policy. We might assert that an appropriate objective is that the affirmative action policy should help those who are qualified for secondary and higher education but would not otherwise have access to places. Against this objective, we would expect larger numbers of beneficiaries to come from rural areas, be from more traditional Roma communities and have lower socio-economic status. Measured against this objective, the affirmative measures do not reach youth from the rural areas. Only one in three beneficiaries comes from rural areas in the case of secondary education and this ratio decreases to one in five in the case of higher education. Clearly there are some

³¹ There are two other possible explanations for the rise in numbers: (a) simply a result of more Roma who were already enrolled now enrolling using the quota system; and (b) the result of a dramatic rise in the number of Roma graduating from primary education. While there is no conclusive empirical evidence, we believe it is extremely unlikely that either explanation is true or of more significance than that the affirmative action programme contributed to the rise in numbers.

structural factors, such as lower quality of infrastructure and poorer educational attainment in the rural areas, which accounts for some of these lower ratios. And these structural features provide a supplementary reason to ensure that a higher number of pupils finishing lower secondary education in rural schools are targeted. But the much lower than expected numbers from rural areas indicates important deficiencies in the program design.

A similar story emerges if one considers targeting on Roma ethnicity and more specifically with the Romanes language marker of the ethnicity. Even there was a cultural assimilation process of Roma (including language) during the Communist period, there is still a significant percentage of native Romanes speakers in Romania – according to the 2002 census, of those declaring themselves Roma, 44.5 per cent are Romanes language speakers.³² By contrast there are only 5 per cent of beneficiaries of high school affirmative measures who are Romanes speakers. This increases to 20 per cent for beneficiaries of vocational schools and it is of 15 per cent for beneficiaries in tertiary education.

There is also room for improvement in regard with targeting on socio economic status. The profile of beneficiaries, especially of those for high school places, is quite far from the socio-economic profile described either by census or by existing national surveys on Roma population. Targeting on socio-economic status is especially important for tertiary education because the places allocated for Roma are places subsidized from the state budget where there are no tuition fees. The financial criterion was mentioned most frequently by higher education beneficiaries: 41 per cent said they sought the places because of the assurance of being admitted on charge-free places.

Overall, therefore, the findings of study are mixed. On the one hand, there has been a significant increase in the number of Roma pupils accessing secondary and tertiary education. On the other hand, the targeting on those populations that would need to assistance of the policy is rather poor. Moreover, more than half of the beneficiaries entered on reserved places for Roma would qualify to enter vocational schools, high schools and universities on their own forces even if these measures would not be in place. For the vast majority of them, the decision to continue with their study would be the same in the absence of affirmative measures. The admission calendar requires Roma students to decide about the option of accessing the places reserved for Roma students before the results of the national tests are published. Thus, the young candidates do not have the possibility to compare themselves with the others and assess their chances objectively. Therefore, a significant proportion – about half – of the places reserved for Roma students are occupied by young Roma who could be admitted on the normal places without the support of affirmative actions.

One important finding of the research is the relatively low take up rate, with only two-thirds of the places occupied. Moreover there is a decreasing trend in the last two years, which can be explained by an increase on the supply side while the demand has remained

³² Based on our calculation on the official census data. Data available at the address: <http://recensamant.referinte.transindex.ro/?pg=8>.

constant or even decreased. Moreover, in higher education there is an imbalance across subjects: there are many more places available for humanities (social work, sociology, pedagogy, philology etc) than the exact sciences (eg. engineering, medicine and pharmacy). This imbalance could indicate that, while for humanities there is little or no competition for places, for the exact sciences there is a high level of competition. Given that the majority of students applying for affirmative action in higher education could qualify based on their results for mainstream places, this may result in less qualified students being excluded from exact sciences specializations and the overall number of Roma in higher education in these subjects lower than it could be. This has obvious negative consequences for the Roma community as well as the broader society given the shortage of scientifically trained people.

16. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Restructure the policy of affirmative action in order to function as a safety net for the Roma pupils who have graduated successfully from primary (secondary) education and who in the absence of the policy would not be able to access upper secondary (higher) education. In this regard the admission process should take place in two stages. In a first stage all the pupils should be allowed to compete on the mainstream places while in a second stage those Roma pupils who have not entered into the high schools or universities by means of the normal competition process should be supported through affirmative measures.
2. The calendar of admission should be prolonged in order to have the enrolment on these places planned to be after the display of the general results to the national tests in the case of upper secondary education and to be after admission process to universities.
3. The calendar of admission should be also extended in order to allow an effective time frame for information campaigns and for administrative procedures related with the enrolment.
4. The Ministry of Education should elaborate a stand-alone ministerial order with the following aims:
 - » To provide the comprehensive set of reasons of enforcing positive discrimination for Roma in education and the objectives of the affirmative measures in education.
 - » Modalities of monitoring the implementation and of measuring the impact of the affirmative measures.

The methodology and admission calendar could be produced yearly as a follow up to the above specified order.

5. Use the ministry's network of dissemination of information more efficiently to better target in rural areas and in compact, homogenous Roma communities. Teachers of high-schools should have a duty to inform future graduates about the available places for Roma candidates for admission to higher education institutions.
6. Ensure smoother integration of Roma pupils in educational environment by introducing information on Roma history and culture in the mainstream curriculum and by training teachers on tolerance and diversity.
7. Maintain more structured data bases of beneficiaries so that progress over time can be reported. All the personal data should be protected according with existing laws.

8. Complement affirmative action measures with measures to ensure full coverage of Roma in zero grade and an increased participation in pre-school education as a prerequisite for the future school career. Enforce the desegregation measures established by laws in order to have more Roma accessing quality education. Create synergies with existing scholarships programs.
9. Elaborate periodic evaluation reports on the implementation and impact of affirmative measures for Roma.

The Working Paper Series of the Roma Education Fund is designed to explore important issues in the education of Roma, with an emphasis on gathering empirical evidence and providing guidance to policy makers. This is the third paper in the series.

The Roma Education Fund commissioned a comprehensive and multi-dimensional investigation of the long-running quota system in Romanian secondary and higher education. This is the first such evaluation of this program.

Affirmative action seems to have had a significant positive effect overall on the participation of Roma students in secondary and higher education in Romania; and this effect has been achieved without negatively affecting the chances of non-Roma students. This is an important result and a strong signal to policy makers in other countries that they should seriously consider such an approach.

But the study also identified two key lessons for policy-makers. First, only if the policy is carefully designed with appropriate targeting will the policy lead to the intended benefits. In fact, if policy-makers are not careful, poor implementation can actually have some unintended and negative consequences for the target group. The second lesson of this study is the importance of clearly articulated goals and objectives for policy initiatives and of measuring the situation prior to the start of implementing the policy; only in this way can judgments be made about the success of the policy. While the Romania policy appears to be successful, without careful monitoring and evaluation, it is hard to say how successful.

Toby Linden
Director
Roma Education Fund

ROMA EDUCATION FUND

Mark Center ■ Teréz körút 46 ■ H-1066 Budapest, Hungary
Tel. +36-1-235-8030 ■ Fax. +36-1-235-8031
info@romaeducationfund.org ■ www.romaeducationfund.org

GALLUP ROMANIA

6th Londra Street, 1st District ■ 001763 Bucharest, Romania
Tel. +40-21-318-1497 ■ Fax. +40-21-318-5560
office@gallup.ro ■ www.gallup.ro