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The efficiency of the measures taken to improve the situation of Hungary's Roma population

In line with the international trends, in the activities of the State Audit Office (SAO) more and more weight is given to the advisory services provided to the National Assembly and the government. The work conducted in the Research Institute of the State Audit Office, earlier in SAO's Development and Methodology Institute, has an important role in founding this advisory role. It was at the initiative of the National Assembly that the institute prepared a study on how the public funds that were used for the improvement of the situation of Hungary's Roma population have been utilized since the Berlin wall came down. In lack of appropriate data, this question could not be answered by using a classical efficiency analysis. This is why the authors have tried to draw conclusions regarding efficiency on the basis of the multilateral analysis of the circumstances of making the decisions on using the funds.

In the course of the National Assembly harmonization of the 2007 audit plan of the State Audit Office, it came up as a proposal that an audit should be conducted with regard to the extent and efficiency of the subsidies used for the improvement of the situation of Hungary's Roma population. As a result of the nature of the topic, it made sense to perform this task by research efforts rather than the traditional audit performed by the audit institution. The

research was carried out by the legal predecessor of the Research Institute of the State Audit Office, i.e. SAO's Development and Methodology Institute (hereinafter referred to as: the Institute). The resources of the Institute did not allow that independent research be done on the situation of the Roma population. This is why the Institute ventured to prepare a summary, investigative study, which primarily describes the magnitude and utilization of the subsidies but which fails to touch upon several issues which are important for the Roma.

The living conditions and social status of Hungary's Roma population count as an area which is researched and analyzed in detail. It is an opinion shared by researchers, politicians and legal aid experts that the situation of the Roma population is significantly worse than the national average. The majority of the Roma do not get employed and they are in an unstable, exposed situation, concentrated in the crisis-hit regions of the country, in small villages that provide unfavorable living conditions. The problems listed here, which also affect the majority population in these regions, mostly appear jointly and they jointly contribute to the marginalization of the Roma population. Being aware of all these, it is legitimate to ask the question what extent the subsidies used for the improvement of the situation of the Roma

population have reached in the past fifteen years and how efficient they have proven to be.

PURPOSE AND METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

In the period since the collapse of communism, the efficiency of the subsidies used for the improvement and rising of Hungary's Roma population can only be assessed with scientific thoroughness if we are able to measure the results and we can compare these with the extent of the subsidies. Of course, we have to examine, even in this case, whether the subsidies and the results have been in a causal relationship with each other.

This is why we have set ourselves the goal of answering the following questions at the beginning of our research.

► Are there any such data or analyses available which objectively describe the living conditions (demographic, health care, employment, education characteristics, housing situation, etc.) of the Roma population, and the changes thereof?

► What shifts (into the positive, or negative direction) are indicated by the available data and analyses in the demographic, health care, education and employment characteristics, as well as housing conditions of the Roma population?

► What major state measures have been taken since 1990 with a view to improving the circumstances of the Roma population?

► What amount of public funds, including the subsidies received from the European Union, have been allocated to the financing of these programs?

► In what form were the representatives of the Roma involved in the preparation, execution, monitoring and evaluation of the state measures aimed at improving the living conditions of the Roma population?

► Have the state measures taken with a view to improving the living conditions of the Roma population reached their goal?

In order to answer these questions,

- we have evaluated the situation by reviewing the state publications, government proposals, ministry reports and scientific publications in which the living conditions of the Roma population are described;
- we have studied the programs of the government and the various government organs which are aimed at improving the living conditions of the Roma population, as well as the reports and evaluations thereof;
- we have reviewed the conclusions and proposals of the SAO reports related to the subject;
- based on these documents and the budgetary and final accounts acts, we have attempted to sort and summarize the budgetary appropriations and utilizations aimed at the improvement of the living conditions of the Roma population.

We did not obtain the necessary documents and information in the framework of a traditional audit but we requested the affected ministries to present the relevant documents that are at their disposal.

As a result of the research, we planned to prepare a study which

- based on the available data, gives detailed and objective answers to the questions, or, if this is not possible, then
- presents the limits of giving objective answers to these questions;
- formulates proposals:
 - ◆ on facilitating the monitoring of the spending of public expenses meant to improve the living conditions of the Roma population,
 - ◆ on increasing the efficiency, effectiveness and success of the state measures aimed at improving the living conditions of the Roma population.

After the start of the research, it became clear that no comprehensive situational assessment objectively depicting the circumstances of the Roma population was prepared either in the early 1990's, or ever since. Since 1993, no official minority data have been recorded, with reference to the data protection rights.¹ It is only inconsistent data from small sample recordings of approximate accuracy prepared by researchers that are available about the situation and living conditions of the Roma. In judging the key social-economic characteristics of the Roma population, there is no complete professional consensus because of the differences in the data recordings, calculations and estimates prepared for various purposes. In lack of information of appropriate detail, which is also capable of measuring slight changes, it is impossible to accurately quantify the changes that have taken place in the situation of the Roma since the collapse of communism, or in a shorter period of time.

Consequently, *the efficiency of subsidies meant to improve the living conditions of the Roma cannot be judged by using the traditional tools of economic analysis*. This is not changed by the fact that the changes in certain aspects of the living conditions of the Roma population, or the lifepaths of certain groups of the Roma are analyzed by several high-standard studies, on the basis of which the general state of affairs can be outlined. However, the latter was not in the scope of this research.

Due to the lack of objective data necessary for the quantification of *the efficiency of the subsidies, the efficiency of the subsidies could only be examined indirectly*. In economics, we use an approach according to which, once the outcome of a process cannot be projected, then the process itself will be analyzed for whether or not it satisfies certain (*expediency, fairness, efficiency, etc.*) requirements. For example, if it cannot be measured due to the lack of data whether the distribution of the food aid has

been fair, then it will be examined whether the distribution rules themselves have been just, reasonable and fair, i.e. the reasonability of the result and the procedure are distinguished. We assume that the same approach is applicable in the case of efficiency as well: if we are not able to measure the result, then the procedure has to be measured against the requirements of efficiency. This is why, *somewhat modifying the original objective of the study, in our research we have paid special attention to assessing what the subsidy system aimed at improving the situation of the Roma population was like, i.e. to what extent it was able to ensure the efficiency of the subsidies on the basis of its target-setting, decision-making procedures, control and monitoring methods, etc.*

Based on the above, according to our partially modified objectives, we sought answers to the following questions:

- what the key characteristics of the Roma policy have been, how its goals, tools and institutions have changed over time;
- how the Roma population participated in the definition and implementation of the Roma policy;
- funds of what size and what composition were used in supporting the implementation of the Roma policy;
- how the utilization of the subsidies was tracked (control, reporting, monitoring).

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ROMA POLICY

In the course of formulating the individual government concepts and plans, the issue of the rising of the Roma population was approached from various angles. The main dilemma is how the state should handle the matter of the Roma: whether it should be treated as a human rights-minority issue, or as a social-employment question. In the latter case,

there are again two perspectives, namely whether the state should pursue a uniform poverty policy, or a specific Roma policy, i.e. whether the situation of the Roma population should be attempted to be improved by using the general tools of social policy, or whether the state should also apply targeted programs and subsidies which are only available for the Roma.

The expressly ethnical-minority approach was typical for the Roma policies of two governments that ruled between 1990 and 1994. Since the issuance of the first government decree (1995) aimed at the comprehensive improvement of the situation of the Roma population, the Hungarian governments have been treating the problems of the Roma population both as a minority and social issue. By doing so, they follow the European approach.²

None of the governments have been able to consistently resolve the dilemma of Roma policy versus poverty policy. It was defined as a long-term goal that the social and minority policy issues should be clearly separated from each other in the course of taking measures that affect the Roma minority. In the short- and mid-term, however, this clear separation could not be realized. The fact that the dilemma has not been resolved and the changes in the shades of the various approaches are well indicated by that in the government decrees aimed at the improvement of the situation of the Roma population approved between 1998 and 2005, the wording “underprivileged, including Roma” is used the most frequently, while in the government decree passed on this subject in 2007, the order “Roma and underprivileged” is consistently applied.

The sharp contrast between the different approaches, as well as the often partial solutions that also change by time, have often hindered the continuity and sustainability of the government measures, and have deteriorated their effectiveness.

GOVERNMENT MEASURES, PROGRAMS, FINANCING

This twofold approach has been reflected in regulation and financing as well. As opposed to that of the other minorities, the treatment of the situation of the Roma population has mainly required a social approach besides the ethnic one, so Act LXXVII of 1993 on the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities (hereinafter referred to as: the Minority Act) did not offer a solution to the problems of the largest minority. According to the government that took office in 1995, “The crisis situation of the Roma ethnic group has made it critically important for the government to take crisis management measures. The unique and complex problems of the Roma minority cannot be treated within the framework of the general minority policy.”³

The measures aimed at improving the situation of the Roma developed gradually. Up to 1995, individual programs were typical. In 1995, a short-term government program was drafted. By July 1997, the first package of measures was developed, in which the tasks required to be performed for the social integration of the Roma were defined. This was followed by further government measures up until 2005. The package of measures ordered by the government decree was the government control tool that the governments at any time considered to be the most suitable for improving the situation of the Roma. The mid-term programs were usually broken down to annual action plans. In this respect, we may come across a high level of similarity in the Roma policies of the individual governments. At the same time, it is also noteworthy that neither of the governments ventured to commit itself to the solution of the problem in a more “time-proof” form of regulation, i.e. in a law.

It is a common feature of the packages of measures that the individual ministries, quite

often on the basis of the residual principle, used to determine absolutely by themselves what kind of programs, also available to the Roma, they wished to implement, and how much of the budget of the ministry they would assign to this purpose. *It can be concluded for the entire period under review that the total funds were not provided for this purpose, the concentration of the funds was not resolved, and what is more, not even the appropriate coordination of the funds was realized.*

As regards the mid-term packages of measures, we can state that a high number of tasks was determined in these but

- the definition of numerous tasks is too general, so those responsible for them are difficult to be called to account;
- there are several ministries responsible for certain tasks, no partial tasks are defined. The complex responsibilities defined in the government decrees (the main ownership of a certain ministry and the joint responsibility of several ministries affected by this topic) were not fulfilled in practice. The main responsible ministry had no genuine control and coordination opportunities, financial influence, especially for joint implementation, so each ministry tried to contribute something to the performance of the task in their own ways and competences;
- the size and source of the funds required for the fulfillment of the goals are not indicated, all these responsibilities are assigned to the individual ministries, this is why the budget resources have dispersed between the individual ministries, the ministries have planned and used notional amounts for certain partial tasks in several cases;
- the use of funds is not transparent, difficult to control, there are certain tasks whose resources are defined but there are others which are to be performed from the minority budget. No methods were developed for

the use of funds for actual Roma support purposes and the control thereof, and the implementation of the programs was especially non-transparent in the eyes of the Roma social organizations;

- in spite of the measures taken in order to realize uniform reporting, no progress resulting in a genuine change was made in the efficient and controllable use of budget resources;
- no indicators were applied.

After examining the results of the realization of short- and mid-term programs, it also becomes obvious that *a genuine improvement in the circumstances of the Roma population can only be achieved by harmonized developments going on for several years and pointing in the same direction.* In the late nineties, the development of long-term social and minority political strategies commenced. The draft strategy defined milestones for the Roma policy. However, the issue of financing the integration of the Roma population continued to remain an open one. The coordination of the draft strategy was protracted, and it was finally not approved.

In 2003, at an international initiative, the preparation of a new strategic program began. The document called the Strategic Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion Program, which was developed as a result, was accepted by the National Assembly in 2007.⁴ The government approved a two-year action plan to execute this strategy.⁵

The government decree No. 1105/2007. (XII. 27.) on the government action plan for 2008–2009 related to the Strategic Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion Program contains more specific, and due to the more accurate deadlines, more accountable tasks than the earlier government measures, with a view to executing the strategy. In principle, it can be regarded as a leap forward that the resources for the execution of the individual measures are

also specified in the decree. In the decree, the development of a monitoring system is also prescribed, with the participation of the Roma Integration Council and the Roma Governing and Monitoring Board, which works within the framework of the former body.

The I. National Development Plan (Hungarian acronym: NFT) offered a further opportunity for defining the strategic tasks related to the rising of the Roma population, then the same was done by the drafting of the New Hungary Development Plan (Hungarian acronym: ÚMFT), in which tasks for the development-aimed cooperation between the European Union and Hungary for the period between 2004 and 2006, as well as government tasks for the period between 2007 and 2013 were defined. The Roma population as a target group was mentioned in several contexts such as employment, health care, regional development, education, etc. but almost exclusively in the already familiar form of “underprivileged, including the Roma”, in the same line as the disabled, and the equal opportunities for men and women. The development plans have no special Roma chapters, this priority has to be enforced as a “horizontal” goal in the individual development areas.

THE INSTITUTIONS OF ROMA POLICY

In the past nearly two decades the intermediary system of the assistance aimed at improving the situation of the Roma has continuously increased and changed. Before the Minority Act took effect, the support of tasks related to the national and ethnic minorities had been ensured in the budgets of two chapters, this support appeared in a decentralized but systematic form in the budgets of as many as 7 chapters in the period between 2001 and 2004, and in a further 2 chapters in 2003–2004. When the Union funds also came to be

involved, the National Development Agency (Hungarian acronym: NFH) also joined the ranks of the “supporting” organizations. In our view, the frequent changes usually had an adverse effect on the evolution of the efficiency of the assistance aimed at improving the situation of the Roma population.

Similarly, the system in charge of managing and coordinating the integration of the Roma also changed, almost continuously. Since the change in the political system, the management tasks have been owned by 6 organizations or persons in turn, while coordination was done by as many as 5 organizations. Up to 2004, the institutions responsible for Roma integration were characterized by the separation of the management and coordination responsibilities. After 1995, the facilitation of the rise of the Roma population was not regarded as a strictly minority issue any longer. This change, however, was not followed by the modification of the government coordination. The latter task continued to be performed by the Office for National and Ethnic Minorities in Hungary (Hungarian acronym: NEKH), which lacked the competence and capacities to perform this task. In 2002, after the change in the government, significant strategic and organizational changes took place in the organizational system of managing and financing the Roma policy. The Roma integration tasks and programs came to be handled by the Office of Roma Affairs managed by the newly appointed Political State Secretary responsible for Roma Affairs, by which step the coordination tasks of the Roma integration were ultimately separated from NEKH. After 2004, the management and coordination of Roma-related tasks first belonged to the Ministry of Youth, Family, Social Affairs and Health (Hungarian acronym: ICSSZEM), then to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (Hungarian acronym: SZMM), i.e. these tasks came to be handled by one and the same organization.

It is a common feature of the Roma policy of the governments to date that they have established interministerial committees for the coordination of execution such as the Roma Affairs Coordination Committee, the Roma Affairs Interministerial Committee, the Roma Integration Council). However, these were not given significant administrative competence. Consequently, they were not able to exert strong pressure on the affected ministries when they did not perform their tasks, or performed them with delay, or when they used lower than planned funds for the purposes of Roma integration. No political intentions could be seen either for exerting strong pressure, or for demanding the complete performance of the tasks.

The representation of the Roma, and their participation in the coordination bodies was realized through the President of the National Roma Self-Government, and the person delegated by the latter. From 2006, by the establishment of the Roma Integration Council, the direct representation of the Roma was increased by seven members, who are requested to be the members of the Council by the competent minister, at the proposal of the organizations that represent the Roma communities.

After the change in the political system, the trade union system of the Roma has developed, although the representation of the minorities, including the Roma, in the Parliament, is still not a resolved issue. However, by now every ministry has an apparatus involved in Roma affairs, with managers and staff of Roma origin in more and more places.

RESOURCES OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ROMA POLICY, AS WELL AS THE STRUCTURE OF SUBSIDIES

The financing of Roma integration has several channels. Besides the state, the private sector and certain international organizations also contribute to funding. State financing is also

characterized by a multichannel solution, with the participation of many organizations. The public foundations and funds established by the state also play an important role. The funds from the European Union that flow through the public finance system also play an ever increasing part in financing.

The governments assigned the task of financing the implementation of the action plans drafted for the improvement of the situation of the Roma population to the individual ministries but they failed to demand that the resources be specified. The ministries then planned and financed the obligations that they were meant to fulfill from resources that were partially earmarked but mostly unspecified. The unspecified funds generally meant the appropriations earmarked for minority purposes, or certain underprivileged target groups. The financing system that evolved in such a way did not only become a multichannel one but one that was also unclear. The financing system meant to improve the living conditions of the Roma population was not compliant with the requirements of a modern and transparent management of public funds.

In its 2005 audit, the SAO⁶ collected the opinions of the minority governments on the financing system of the national and ethnic minorities, and they thought that the assistance system was too complicated, bureaucratic, difficult to understand and one whose management takes extra efforts.

The subsidies aimed at supporting Roma integration are contained by the budgetary acts of any time. We should distinguish between the following types of subsidies:

- the subsidies specifically aimed at Roma integration in the budgetary act, and not those where the basis of eligibility rests on the minority laws,
- the budgetary resources that jointly support the national and ethnic minorities,
- the funds that affect the underprivileged stratum of society (including the Roma),

- resources obtained, mostly through tenders, from international organizations (PHARE programs, NFT (the National Development Plan), ÚMFT (the New Hungary Development Plan), the World Bank, the Council of Europe Development Bank, donor countries).

The funds received from the four groups of resources can basically reach those affected in three forms:

- as subsidy appropriations earmarked individually,
- through per capita support,
- through tenders (sometimes in the form of individual applications).

The legal titles for earmarked subsidies aimed at Roma integration have frequently changed during the years. These funds were usually part of the budget of the ministry in charge of Roma integration, the amount of which did not even reach 3 billion Forints at its highest, in 2004. The most important appropriations, which existed for several years, were the following: the National Roma (Minority) Self-Government and its institutions, the Public Foundation for the Hungarian Roma (Hungarian acronym: MCKA), the Roma coordination and intervention budget, the Roma Cultural Fund, the Roma Training Fund and the Roma Conflict Management and Legal Aid Fund.

Of these, MCKA fulfilled a key role (between 1999 and 2004) in the intermediation of state subsidies provided to the Roma. Since its foundation, MCKA received budgetary assistance of more than 4 billion forints until 2006. The amount of annual subsidies increased from 275 million forints in 1999 to 1,135 million forints in 2003 and it also amounted to 1,105 million forints in 2004. The amount of subsidies fell significantly to 459 million forints, then to 125 million forints in 2005 and 2006, respectively.

The key elements of the *unspecified* subsidies (those granted to the Roma and the national

and ethnic minorities) were, among others, the appropriation to cover for the annual operating expenses of the local minority governments, the subsidy budget of the takeover and maintenance of minority institutions, the minority coordination and intervention budget, as well as the subsidy appropriations of the Public Foundation for the Hungarian National and Ethnic Minorities (Hungarian acronym: MNEKK). From these appropriations, the Roma received assistance of a varying extent each year, usually amounts proportionate to their weight (although in the case of certain appropriations, it cannot be precisely determined to what extent the utilization affected the Roma). The magnitudes are shown by two appropriations as an example.

► The normative support aimed at the general support of the operation of the local minority governments per one minority government was 396 thousand forints in 1997, while 640 thousand forints in 2006. The estimated share of the Roma minority governments increased from 164 million forints in 1997 to 660 million forints in 2006.

► In the relevant chapter of the National Assembly, the budgetary limit of the annual operational support to be provided to the national and ethnic minority organizations and associations is awarded on the basis of tenders. The limit has been 110 million forints for several years. Of these, the share of the Roma organizations was 39 million forints both in 2005 and 2006.

Furthermore, in the budgets of the individual chapters, appropriations which contributed to Roma integration to a significant extent were regularly planned, but *these were also specified only partially, or not at all*. Of these, on the basis of their significance and magnitude, we will highlight the subsidies aimed at employment and training.

In the financing of Roma integration, *the subsidies facilitating employment have played a*

critical role (some 70–75 percent) for several years.⁷ The initiatives aimed at increasing employment and the reintegration of those who have been pushed out from the labor force increased year by year, as well as the service network developments that ensure these, along with the support provided to the Roma enterprises and the businesses that employ Roma. The funds that facilitated reintegration into the labor force belonged to different ministries. The subsidies aimed at such purposes already exceeded 3.6 billion forints back in 2002, 10.4 billion forints in 2004 and 18.4 billion forints in 2005, while 17.6 billion forints in 2006. According to the estimated data, a total amount of 74.7 billion forints was used for this purpose between 1997 and 2006.

Since 2003, the Ministry of Economy and Transport (Hungarian acronym: GKM) has been supporting the technical and technological developments and investments of micro- and mid-size companies that are owned by, or that employ Roma, in the framework of the tender program for increasing entrepreneurial competitiveness. In four years, more than 200 businesses have received an approximate grant of one billion forints.

Equal opportunities and talent management are in the center of the *educational support provided to the Roma*. These tasks were meant to be performed by supporting the schools on the one hand, and by providing scholarship to the Roma students on the other hand. (In an annual average, 10–15 percent of the funds were used for these purposes between 2000 and 2006.)

For the maintenance of the public education institutions for the minorities, the state provides supplementary per capita financial assistance besides the general per capita support in accordance with Note a), Paragraph (2), Section 55 of the Minority Act, and they also provide subsidies in the framework of tenders to the minority government sponsors of the

institutions in line with Paragraph (14), Section 47 of the same act.

The financing system of minority education is difficult to follow, it is a multichannel system, in which the elements of per capita education funding are mixed with those of separate minority program financing. In this system, the financing and subsidizing of the education of Roma students is not separated from the education-related expenses of the educational spending for all the minorities. According to the SAO report prepared in 2006, the system of per capita state contributions and subsidies that help provide public education services has changed in the recent years, the annually modified requirements of the legal titles for eligibility of the normative support, as well as the conditions of using and accounting for these subsidies make up a system which is non-transparent with regard to application, accounting and control.⁸

Supporting students of Roma origin by granting scholarships counts as one of the most successful areas of the Roma integration programs, which system has worked since 1996 but the multichannel solution is typical for this area as well. The majority of the scholarship tenders was conducted by MCKA up to 2004, however, they were managed by the Public Foundation for National and Ethnic Minorities in Hungary (Hungarian acronym: MNEKK) from the academic year 2005/2006. In the academic year 2005/2006 and in the preceding two school years, some 18 thousand students received scholarships for their primary school studies, about 12–13 thousand for their secondary school studies, while 4–5 thousand for their higher education studies, in an annual average. The number of scholarship students was the highest in the academic year 2003/2004, it exceeded 35,600, while the period since then has seen a fluctuation between 32 and 33 thousand. The budgetary expenses grew from 591 million forints in 2001 to 1,102 mil-

lion forints by 2004, while they reached an amount of 1,095 million forints by 2005.

The magnitude of PHARE-funds supporting Roma integration between 1999 and 2006 was significant, i.e. a total of 34.5 million euros, which was supplemented by a co-funding of 26.6 million euros, thus the total amount approached 15 billion forints, which came from two different groups of funds.

The first budget to improve the situation of the Roma minority was provided by the European Union in the period between 1999 and 2002 for the pre-accession Central-European countries.⁹ Of this, Hungary's share was the highest (17.5 million euros), which means that it became possible to use 30.7 million euros, including co-funding. Actual utilization thus came to be 32.3 million euros. The 6 projects that were launched (whose average size was 5.2 million euros) served the improvement of the employment and education situation of the Roma and treated anti-discrimination efforts as a high priority.

Besides the Central-European projects, there was another PHARE-project that was meant to improve the situation of the Roma. The purpose of the program called 'Fight against exclusion from the world of labor' (No.'s 2002/000-315.01.04 and 2002/004-347.05.03) was to employ those persons who were out of jobs permanently (with special regard to the Roma), their complex labor market (re)integration, as well as to support the endeavors aimed at extending the capacities of the local and regional social and community services co-funded by the European Community and the Ministry of Employment and Labor (Hungarian acronym: FMM). The total budget of the program was 28.8 million euros (7.4 billion forints), 44.44 percent of which came from co-funding, and 55.56 percent was PHARE-support. In 2003, an amount of 10.1 million euros, while in 2004, a sum of 18 million euros could be applied for. The first (so-called social)

element of the program wished to provide assistance for the development of the social supply system by involving those who are permanently unemployed, while the second component was aimed at the employment of the Roma and the improvement of their living conditions.

EVOLUTION OF THE MAGNITUDE OF BUDGETARY SUBSIDIES USED FOR THE INTEGRATION OF THE ROMA

No accurate data are available on the funds that have been used for improving the situation of the Roma since 1990. No such data collection took place at all at the beginning of the 1990's. The reporting system for such purposes was only developed by 2000 and has been finetuned ever since. In spite of this, the extent of the subsidies used for Roma integration can mostly be determined by estimates even today, which is due to the structure of the budgetary appropriations and the nature of the individual programs. The thing is that the vast majority of the Roma programs are not financed from separated funds, as the ministries do not have budgetary appropriations especially defined (planned) for the implementation of the tasks specified in the government measure packages. Roma integration is mostly financed from appropriations and funds for broader purposes (hereinafter referred to as: unspecified funds). Unspecified funds come from the appropriations planned for the entirety of the minorities on the one hand, and from those earmarked for supporting the underprivileged, on the other hand. When the unspecified funds are planned and used, the amounts used for supporting the Roma are estimated by the ministries. From the budgetary appropriations earmarked for them, the ministries provide assistance for the voluntarily undertaken tasks as well, besides the implementation of the measures determined by

the government. This practice has been described by the reports prepared for the government for several years.¹⁰

The fact that *the definitions of the target groups for the programs to be implemented by the ministries were rather different* does not allow the accurate determination of the extent of the subsidies either. For example, while the OKM (Ministry of Education and Culture) provided support to underprivileged children and those with multiple handicaps, the GKM (Ministry of Economy and Transport) invited tenders expressly to support the Roma. In the latter case, a certificate issued by the National Roma Minority Self-Government had to be attached to the tender application. In the employment programs, the tenders were first of all invited for the underprivileged, the permanently unemployed and those with low qualifications. In these, a high number of Roma took part, which is also due to the fact that those responsible for implementing the programs involved the Roma minority self-governments and Roma NGO's in the process of selecting the participants. The health care programs also primarily focused on the underprivileged. It can be concluded from the reports of the ministries that in almost all the areas (except, for instance, culture and anti-discrimination), the target groups were determined on the basis of regional and social viewpoints in the first place rather than along ethnic lines. The minority self-governments and/or the Roma grassroots organizations took part in the implementation of a part of the programs in some way, or another.¹¹

We can get the most accurate picture of the budgetary subsidies aimed at improving the situation of the Roma population if we distinguish between

- the subsidies earmarked to support the Roma,
- the assistance provided to the Roma minority through the subsidy system of the national and ethnic minorities,

- the subsidies that serve the integration of the Roma but not specifically earmarked for supporting the Roma population.

The Hungarian budget has contained appropriations expressly aimed at supporting the national and ethnic minorities since 1992. The information on the utilization of these was contained by the laws on final accounts, thus the information on the extent of the actual annual financial support can be gathered from here. However, what we do not have reliable data on is the proportion of these appropriations that reached the institutions of the Roma and the persons that belong to the Roma minority.

The annual amount of the public funds used for supporting the Roma could be concluded from the data of the final accounts laws in the case of those appropriations where the usage for Roma support is also indicated by the name of the appropriation (earmarked appropriations). The evolution of these broken down to years is summarized in *Table 1*. The Hungarian budget has contained appropriations earmarked for supporting the Roma since 1996.

The amount of earmarked subsidies did not reach 3 billion forints even at its highest in 2004, the evolution of their size was determined by the scholarships and the funds provided to the MCKA.

The aggregation of those subsidies which are not earmarked for supporting the Roma but in the target group of which the Roma represent a higher proportion has meant greater difficulty. In the case of these appropriations, we could only rely on the data of the government reports, which, in turn, had used the estimates made by the ministries that control the appropriations. Unspecified Roma-aimed appropriations serving the integration of the Roma population have existed since the government decisions related to the integration of the Roma were passed. However, no reporting system was linked to the first action packages.

This is why only estimated data in a national aggregation are available with regard to the subsidies provided between 1996 and 1999. Unfortunately, it has not been clarified either whether at the time, these estimates had or had not contained the appropriations specifically earmarked for Roma support. (Probably they had.) This means that in the period between 1996 and 1997, an amount of 3 billion was used for the integration of the Roma, the relevant amount was 4.3 billion in 1998, while it amounted to 5.5 billion forints in 1999.

The reports prepared for the government on the implementation of the government

decisions on Roma integration have contained detailed information since 2000, based on which we have compiled the following *Table 2*.

Utilization was 24.4 billion forints in 2006. The increase in funds was especially strong between 2002 and 2005. In this period, the expenses grew from 7.6 billion to 21.8 billion forints, mainly as a result of the rise in the amounts of EU subsidies in both 2003 and 2004, and also, due to the rapid increase in the funds aimed at facilitating employment. One can conclude that in the past few years, the evolution of the size of, and increase in the

Table 1

EVOLUTION OF BUDGETARY SUBSIDIES EARMARKED FOR SUPPORTING THE ROMA BETWEEN 1996 AND 2006

(million HUF)

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total
OC(K)Ö(National Roma Minority Self-Government) Institutions of OC(K)Ö		96	120	135	149	171	188	215	215	203	226	1,718
National Roma Information and Cultural Center Kht.			180		35	35	35	35	34			354
Scholarships received by Roma students			88	88	86	591	710	938	1,102	1,095	378	5,076
MCKA* (Public Foundation for the Hungarian Roma Roma Coordination and Action Budget)	150	170	250	272	273	350	349	1,135	1,105	459	125	4,638
Roma Cultural Fund								69	69	54	30	222
Roma Education Fund								165	134	80	60	439
Roma Education Fund											20	20
Development of institutions facilitating Roma integration								175	59	173	173	580
Roma Conflict Management and Legal Aid Fund								56	60	68	58	242
Housing program for those living in Roma Settlements										177	627	804
100-Member Budapest Gypsy Orchestra									34	26		60
Total	150	266	638	495	543	1,147	1,282	2,788	2,812	2,335	1,767	14,223

*The MCKA assistance includes some of the scholarships given to Roma students.

Source: Own document compiled from the NEKH reports called 'Minorities in Hungary' and SZMM-data

Table 2

ESTIMATED AMOUNT OF THE BUDGETARY SUBSIDIES USED FOR THE MEASURES AIMED AT THE FINANCING OF ROMA INTEGRATION BETWEEN 2000 AND 2006

(million HUF)

Organization	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total
Ministry of Education and Culture	897	442	765	2,127	1,907	1,032	3,935	11,105
Ministry of Children, Youth and Sports	150	160	107	480				897
Ministry of National Cultural Heritage	98	120	118	99	43	25		503
Ministry of Economy/Ministry of Economy and Transport	280	2150		200	200	218	250	3,298
Ministry of Employment and Labor/ Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor			3,622	8,560	10,464	18,400	17,600	58,646
Ministry of Youth, Family, Social Affairs and Health/Ministry of Social and Family Affairs	2,300	1,720	192	2,975	872	872		8,931
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	330	400	273	281	174	–	100	1,558
Ministry of Environment and Water			10	229	504	831	2,344	3,918
Ministry of the Interior	15	25	602	1 145	61	14	27	1,889
Ministry of Justice	599	790	1,528	56	60	68	72	3,173
Ministry of Health	43	159			38	266	107	613
Office for National and Ethnic Minorities in Hungary	40	176	156	40	16	16		444
Ministry of Foreign Affairs			9	4		1	1	15
Ministry of Defense			0	15	28	28		71
Ministry of Informatics and Telecommunications			189	550	104	–	14	857
National Development Office					5,546			5,546
Supplementary normatives	2,329	3,102						5,431
TOTAL	7,081	9,244	7,571	16,761	20,017	21,771	24,450	106,895

Source: Reports to the government, 1999–2007

funds aimed at Roma integration has been determined by the labor market expenses.

Besides pointing out the above reservations, it can be concluded that, as suggested by the estimated figures, the various governments spent a total amount of appr. 120 billion forints on the improvement of the situation of the Roma between 1996 and 2006. There may be some overlaps between the figures of Tables 1 and 2, and the tables do not comprehensively contain the Hungarian budgetary contributions to the co-funding of the programs realized with the support of the European Union. As compared to the weight of the problem, the budgetary support of 120 billion forints can be

regarded as a low sum, even by taking into account that the sum of 120 billion forints does not automatically include those benefits (such as family allowances, social aid) that the members of the Roma minority received under the general conditions.

There are considerable structural differences between the minority-aimed and Roma integration funds both on the income and the expense sides of the resources, as was concluded by SAO's 2004 report. According to this document, the critical and increasing part of the minority-aimed state subsidies, which was as much as 90 percent in 2003, was distributed directly (on per capita basis and by individual

judgment), while 10 percent was distributed by inviting tenders. The majority of subsidies used for minority purposes (60 percent in 2003) served education purposes, besides which there was a considerable (16 percent) share of expenses used for self-organization and trade union activities.¹²

As opposed to this, the largest part of the funds meant to encourage Roma integration, based on the estimated figures, was used for labor market integration, which meant 70–75 percent in the average of the 2000–2006 data, 10–15 percent went to education, while less than 10 percent was used for the operation of organizations. Among Roma-aimed subsidies, the funds that can be won through tenders are assigned an ever growing role, which has especially been the case since the PHARE-, NFT- and ÚMFT-programs were launched, in 2005, their proportion exceeded 80 percent. As the size of the funds keeps growing and as the scope of support monies that can only be won through tenders is extending, however, grave problems should also be reckoned with, as is suggested by the experience gained from the audits. According to the lessons learnt from the audits to date, *the dominance of tender-won funds may lead to ever more uncertain (or even stopped) financing, especially for those who are underprivileged. The reason for this is simple, as those who are underprivileged are not even aware of the tender opportunities, or they are not able to prepare “winning” applications. This, however, means that the sustainability of financing the individual programs may become doubtful.*

UTILIZATION OF THE ASSISTANCE

The assessment of the efficient utilization of the funds meant to be used for the improvement of the situation of Hungary's Roma population, and the rise of this minority, is mostly prevented by

the lack of the definition of accurate goals and the unclear assignment of the financial resources to the individual goals. In the case of the major elements of the resources such as employment, education, or EU subsidies, it can only be determined by rough estimates what proportion of the the beneficiaries of the financial assistance were of Roma origins. This problem was presented to the government with absolute openness by the report on the implementation of the program meant to facilitate the social integration of the Roma: “The forint amounts mentioned in the report, as well as the affected headcount figures are estimated data in most cases. The reason for this is that the amount actually spent on the Roma cannot be accurately specified as a result of the nature of the individual programs, or the structure of the budget. We can distinguish between two kinds of Roma programs; an earmarked Roma program on the one hand, and a program targeted at the underprivileged, or those living in deep poverty, on the other hand. In the case of the second model, the amount used for the Roma participants involved in the program could of course only be estimated by the competent ministries, so the funds that are indicated should be treated as estimated data. Furthermore, the lack of quantitative data and indicators does not allow comprehensive evaluation in many cases, where the underlying reason is partly that the individual programs were not financed from a separated fund in many cases, i.e. the ministries did not have a separate line in their budgets for the execution of the tasks defined by the Government Program.”¹³

It was established in SAO's report prepared in 2005¹⁴ that at the payment organizations, no uniform monitoring system was linked to the subsidy system. The organizations that provide the budgetary subsidies did not define any performance criteria or efficiency and effectiveness requirements, and the user organizations also failed to measure the effectiveness of the

utilization of the funds. The reports and accounts were mostly about the use of money, which was not followed by any evaluation of the efficiency, effectiveness and economy of the use of the financial resources by the organizations that provided the support. This is why *no conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the use of the funds can be drawn.*

The fact that the extent of the financial assistance cannot even be defined by approximate accuracy does not only deteriorate the transparency of the subsidy system but in such circumstances, there is no real planning and strict accountability. This situation is well illustrated by a table compiled on the basis of the ministries' and other government organizations' own reports. The figures show that planning is random, while actual utilization is absolutely independent from the planned values. It is noteworthy that planning is the least "planned" element of the subsidy procedure. As compared to this, actual utilization shows some system of planning and regularity (see Table 3).

The transparency of the subsidy system is further deteriorated by that *the target groups of the programs of the individual ministries were defined in different ways. Refusing the data collection on the Roma, the uncertainties about the determination of the target group all made it impossible to define measurable performance requirements and the establishment of a monitoring system on this basis, and this was*

also hindered by the lack of organizational and financial coordination. The lack of quantitative data and indicators does not allow real evaluation.

The other factor that deteriorated the effectiveness of the subsidy programs was weak coordination. Neither NEKH, which was responsible for the coordination of Roma integration programs between 1995 és 2002, nor the Office for Roma Affairs doing the same job between 2002 and 2004, nor the Government Office for Equal Opportunities had the capacities necessary for doing so. The organizations on the level of government offices were not authorized to coordinate the activities of the individual ministries, which were at a higher step of the official hierarchy.

The interministerial bodies established for the implementation of the government action packages were not able to fulfill a real coordinatory role, in lack of a genuine decision-making authority. The related dissatisfaction is well illustrated by the fact that the ensuing governments established ever newer coordinatory bodies (besides terminating the old ones). The authority and composition of these bodies, however, have basically remained intact. Consequently, the standards of coordination did not considerably improve. The coordinatory bodies did not receive the necessary political support from the governments at any time, as these always acknowledged, without any consequences, when the individ-

Table 3

BUDGETARY RESOURCES USED BY THE GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS FOR THE PROGRAMS AIMED AT FACILITATING THE SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF THE ROMA

(estimated figures, million HUF)

	2004		2005		2006	
	planned	actual	planned	actual	planned	actual
Total:	10,571.4	20,984.5	49,132.2	21,770.7	557.2	24,454.2

Source: SZMM (Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor) (2007)

ual ministries did not fulfill, or only partially fulfilled the tasks assigned to them by the government decision. The accountability of mid-term measures, at the same time, was made very difficult by the frequent changes in the government structure as well. As regards the future, we can see two possible solutions. The first one is that the body that currently performs coordination will be given genuine decision-making authority in certain issues. The other one is that one of the departments of the government should regularly take care of the implementation of the measures aimed at the integration of the Roma population, and it should make meaningful decisions in the issues that emerge in the course of the implementation of the program.

The improvement of the situation of the Roma population also required such complex measures whose execution required the close cooperation of several ministries. It was at this point that government coordination practically went bust. The system of responsibilities between the affected ministries was not established, the tasks were interpreted differently by the individual ministries. The individual governments have tried to remedy situation that had evolved by stipulating meticulous rules that do not suit a government decision, or by imposing cooperation between the individual ministries from above. The implementation of complex measures would have required up-to-date project management coupled with a clear allocation of funds and the unambiguous separation of responsibilities. However, modern management was missing from the set of tools of implementing the Roma integration programs.

The task of establishing a uniform reporting and follow-up system was first dealt with by government decree No. 1051/ 2002. (V. 14.). Following in its footsteps, the preparations for the establishment of a Monitoring Office started from May 2003. In March 2004, the govern-

ment ordered that a uniform professional reporting system should be built up for the execution of the government program, furthermore, a uniform professional and financial follow-up system should also be established for the evaluation of the execution of the tasks.¹⁵ The Monitoring Office started its operations in April 2004. The operation of the monitoring system and the development of the indicators were methodologically founded, however, the monitoring system was not comprehensively introduced. The Monitoring Office worked under the aegis of the ministry responsible for government coordination until mid-2006, then it ceased to exist.

There was little continuity between the ensuing action packages, in spite of their similarity in form. *The experimental programs were never evaluated. Rather than spreading the successful programs in a broader context, new programs were launched all the time. The complex small regional and regional sample programs did not become generally valid, the good examples were not followed by continuous and permanent financing, nor by a feasibility plan that could be spread in a wider scope, the experience gained was only disclosed in a few cases. In the lack of these, their long-term sustainability was not realized.* It often happened that some similar programs were financed from various resources in parallel (for example, scholarships, or business development). The budgetary institutions, or those established by relying on international support were not maintained in many cases, this is why some important institutions ceased to exist.

In many cases, the programs aimed at improving the situation of the Roma population failed to reach the very strata of the Roma population in the most disadvantageous position. It is especially true for the programs that can be won through tenders, or those operating with very strict conditions of execution. The majority of the programs which are implemented with the sup-

port of the European Union are executed in this way, and they are trying to appropriately prepare the organizations that represent the Roma for applying for the tenders and conducting the tender procedures. Several organizations were established for this purpose, by using government support. This, however, is only one of the solutions of the problem, which is in many cases not the most expedient one. As attention to this was also called by TÁRKI's ex-ante evaluation¹⁶, there are only a few of ÚMFT's operative programs in which the multi-dimensional nature of the disadvantaged position of the Roma is reckoned with. This is why the one-dimensional tenders that only serve the achievement of a single goal such as training, or the creation of jobs, are not suitable for providing genuine help to the Roma in the most difficult positions. In their case, it is not the tender system but special purpose support which allows the complex management of their situation and which may result in a real solution.

WHAT KINDS OF PROGRAMS ARE NEEDED?

On the basis of the evaluation of the subsidies used for the improvement of the situation of the Roma population, the question arises: when does it make sense to launch such a program whose earmarked target group will be the Roma? One should be able to give a determined answer to this question both on the level of principle and on that of practice. *In principle, it would make sense to launch earmarked Roma programs if the disadvantage that we wish to eliminate has ethnic types of reasons. If, however, the purpose is to mitigate such disadvantages which do not have a causal relationship with ethnic characteristics but at the same time, they affect a high number of Roma inhabitants, then it will not be justified to implement them as a program earmarked for Roma purposes.*

In our opinion, it is practically this principle that is followed by National Assembly resolution No. 68/2007. (VI. 28) on the Strategic Plan of the Decade of Roma Integration Program when anti-discrimination and culture are indicated as areas where it is possible to define the Roma as an independent target group in the individual measures. At the same time, this resolution also argues for the justification of defining tasks based on social viewpoints (such as disadvantaged position, permanent unemployment, low qualifications) with regard to education, employment, housing and health care, as well as on regional aspects (for example, disadvantaged regions and settlements).

However, we have to call your attention to the serious practical threats inherent in this theoretically right approach. Scientific research has confirmed the practical experience that, if the target group of a subsidy is broadly defined, then those members of the target group who are in a relatively advantageous position with regard to access to the subsidy, will push out those members of the target group who are in a more disadvantaged position. It is a further problem that the most disadvantaged groups of the Roma population are not able to use certain forms of support such as training without using supplementary services (for example, organizing travel or babysitting services), consequently, it is generally only those complex programs in which the complexity of their disadvantages is reckoned with that offer an appropriate solution.

It is typical for the Roma to belong to the group of those in the most unfavorable position even within the groups with multiple disadvantages. Consequently, in the case of programs launched for target groups defined on the basis of regional and social aspects, supplementary measures that provide equal access to the Roma are needed, and it should also be systematically monitored whether the subsidies reach the Roma population in the right propor-

tion. In the National Assembly resolution that we have referred to and the related government decree No. 1105/2007.(XII. 27.) that contains a two-year government action plan, such tasks are also defined. Besides, the National Assembly resolution also specifies such indicators as the qualification level of the Roma, the level of special education attained by the Roma, the number of Roma employed in state administration and civil services, the number of Roma women and men who attend health scans, which, in our view, cannot be determined without targeted data collection.

However, the execution of the National Assembly resolution may be hindered by that there is still no uniform government standpoint as to the necessity and method of implementation with regard to the data collection. The ministry in charge of the coordination of Roma integration does not agree, from “professional policy” points of view, with the idea of collecting ethnic data in relation to education, health care and housing. The reason for this is that, on the one hand, in our opinion, the linking of the data collection to a specific purpose is questionable in the areas mentioned above, i.e. getting the subsidies and developments to the target group does not require any data collection on the Roma. In other words, there are no Roma normatives or programs in social policy and employment policy. On the other hand, starting out, for instance, from the census data, in which only 193 thousand people declared themselves Roma, even in spite of the anonymity of the data collection, as opposed to the 600–700 thousand headcount that turns out from the sociological surveys, we would probably receive an inaccurate picture of the number of Roma involved in the programs. The participants of the employment, social, health care, etc. programs will probably declare themselves to be Roma in a similar proportion as in the course of the census, this is why these data will not be suitable for realistic planning.

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

The assistance to be used for the improvement of the situation of Hungary's Roma population and the rise of this minority has multiplied since the collapse of communism, and the subsidy system and the support programs have become ever more complex. However, this change did not go hand in hand with the evolution of the system of subsidy planning, execution and monitoring. The traditional tools of government coordination were, in turn, not suitable for the efficient management of the comprehensive government programs. The resources that can be indirectly used for the improvement of the Roma minority are again multiplied as a result of the assistance received from the European Union. The efficient use of these requires that the subsidy system and the form of government coordination should be reconsidered.

Based on our status assessment, we can identify two serious risks about the future.

■ The assistance addressed to the most disadvantaged regions and settlements and the groups with multiple disadvantages, which can most often be won in the form of a tender application, will not reach the most disadvantaged groups of the Roma population, or, in lack of appropriate complexity, they will not achieve a meaningful improvement in their situation.

■ The government coordination of the measures aimed at the social integration of the Roma by the use of traditional tools will not be suitable for the efficient management of these problems whose handling requires a highly complex approach.

Based on the above, we proposed that the realization of the programs aimed at supporting the disadvantaged strata of society should be evaluated by the involvement of independent researchers, with regard to whether these subsidies have reached the needy groups of the Roma population. It should also be assessed

what coordination mechanisms, forms of support and supplementary services have best ensured that the support had indeed reached the right targets, in the case of the successful programs, what factors have led to the failures of certain programs; and how the factors that lead to success can be extended to as broad a range of the programs as possible.

Complex programs that reckon with the multi-dimensional nature of the disadvantages and which provide targeted support should be launched in order to improve the situation of the most disadvantaged groups of the Roma popula-

tion. The conditions of official data collection on the Roma persons who are affected in the various programs should be created, by taking data protection norms into account. A planning, reporting and control system which earmarks, and allows the monitoring of, the public funds that are used for the improvement of the situation of the Roma population, as well as their route and utilization, should be established. In the implementation of the government measures that affect several ministries, it would make sense to apply the tools of project management.

NOTES

¹ According to benchmark opinions, an anonymous data collection aimed at statistical purposes and public policy objectives would not violate the data protection act (Report on the Activity of the National Assembly Commissioner for the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities, 2005).

² The relevant draft EU-recommendation also highlights that “the Roma population has a double minority status: they represent an ethnic minority and a socially underprivileged community” (Tabajdi, 2004).

³ Constat (1996), p. 17

⁴ National Assembly resolution No. 68/2007. (VI. 28)

⁵ Government decree No. 1105/2007. (XII. 27)

⁶ Report on the Audit of the Subsidy System of the National and Ethnic Minorities of Hungary (0468)

⁷ In the average of the data of 2000–2006

⁸ SAO, 2006, p. 19

⁹ Source: Review of the European Union Phare Assistance to Roma Minorities, December 2004, p. 4

¹⁰ SZMM (Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor), 2007, p. 9

¹¹ SZMM (Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor), 2007, p. 10

¹² SAO, 2005, p. 27

¹³ SZMM, 2007, p. 9

¹⁴ SAO (Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor), 2005, p. 16

¹⁵ Section 5 of government decree No. 1021/2004. (III. 18.) on the government program facilitating the social integration of the Roma and the related measures

¹⁶ TÁRKI (Social Research Institute) (2007): Horizontal ex-ante evaluation of the Operative Programs of the New Hungary Development Plan, Budapest 2007, <http://www.tarki.hu/adatbank-h/kutjel/pdf/b006.pdf>

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