

Comments on the Second Draft for Consultations of the World Bank Report “Diagnostics and Policy Advice for Supporting Roma Inclusion in Romania”

The report aims to present a comprehensive representation of the situation of Roma in Romania nowadays based on both quantitative and qualitative data. However, a critical lecture of the second draft reveals significant departures from the norms of producing scientific knowledge, remarkable flaws in the literature review, and dangerous recommendations. In addition, critical issues, such as combating discrimination against Roma, remain insufficiently developed and not properly supported with proposals for effective implementation mechanism. It is the purpose of this paper to point out some of the shortcomings of the report and to contribute to its improvement by proposing amendments to the current policy recommendations.

The novelty of this study is the three social dimension of Roma exclusion proposed: skills development, earning opportunities, and basic service and living conditions. However, even though it is mentioned that these dimension should be approached in an integrated manner still there are is not clear how this should be done. There are some recommendations similar with all the recommendations from previous studies. Policies on Roma focused only on social inclusion without measure for promoting Roma identity and without serious measure for empowering Roma can increase the social exclusion. The most useful and sustainable investment is the empowerment of the people from community. If is done properly, the Roma become active and involved in developing their communities, speaking for themselves. In other words, they become autonomous, partners of institutions and NGOs instead of clients of social measures and policies.

In contrast with the majority of studies done so far, which present Roma as a problem for the entire society, the WB study insist on something positive; the potential economic benefits of Roma inclusion for Romania. Also, our organizations appreciate the fact that the study insists on early childhood development. However, there is a risk on insisting too much on these aspects. Firstly, it started to become a trend to present Roma population as the youngest population in Romania which will become in 20150 almost 40 % of the Romanian population, the payers of our pensions. Insisting too much on this in a time of crises can raise the phenomena of anthitigansim. Secondly, it seems to us that you consider as main target group preschool children (0-6). The other target groups are secondary and the fact that you insist so much on early childhood development, in an unbalanced way, make us to believe that you consider the other target groups are lo(t)-26 aTt(r)-rupsdera recognize Measures and policies (they should be EC promote) for social inclusion without any investment for promoting Roma identity will contribute even more to the assimilation of Roma. Our organizations combat such policies which have no measure for promoting Roma identity.

When it comes to education, there is little written about the Rromani language, history and culture teaching in schools, about the role of ethnic identity in education, as if the Rroma are not a national minority, but a disadvantaged social group.

In order to ensure the treatment of the Rroma as a recognized national minority and to build up the ethnic self-esteem of Rroma children, there is a fundamental need to add measures / interventions aiming to extend the teaching of Rromani language, history and culture in schools,

to extend / develop the teaching in Rromani language in schools, to develop cultural production in Rromani language and about Roma (books, magazines, documentaries, movies, cartoons etc.) and to establish public institutions aiming to develop and to promote Rromani ethno-culture.

Shortcomings of the second draft

Unsubstantiated claims. The report is replete with claims for which no evidence is provided, or the evidence is presented elusively. To give a random example from the chapter on Education (p. 14): "...the quality of teaching and learning is of even greater concern in areas with significant share of Roma population. School and classroom level segregation have had negative impact on both teaching and learning and recent studies conducted in 2008 and 2010 suggest that segregation affects between 31 and 60 percent of the schools in areas with higher share of Roma population in Romania." There is no reference here to the studies from which percentages have been taken, the ways of coming to these values (i.e. the methodological choices), and the limitation of the data. **As such, refutability of the claims is made impossible and the reader is prevented from consulting the original data sources.**

The situation above might appear as a negligence of the authors that can be easily addressed by providing quotes and references of the primary sources of data. In other instances, unsubstantiated claims are coupled with logical flaws, seriously altering the approach. For example, there are numerous references to the alleged skill gap between Roma and non-Roma. On page 5, the authors compare the poverty of Roma and non-Roma living in their proximity. After controlling for key variables such as age and education level, they observe that the disparity continues to exist; Roma are more prone than non-Roma neighbors to be exposed to poverty, all others things being equal. How do the authors make sense of the situation? By inferring that "This maybe [sic!] a reflection of a myriad of factors, including lower skiai20()-102(

behavior. **The refusal to present data on controversial topics such as the placement of Roma children in special schools violates the ethics of scientific research and has the potential of hindering adequate intervention measures from policy-makers.**

Also,

legislator aimed to prevent people shortcutting the educational trajectory by leaving mainstream education, with its more rigid requirements and higher standards, for the remedial education, a less strict, considerably more flexible route. The authors also fail to note that removing the

In order to ensure the treatment of the Roma as a recognized national minority and to build up the ethnic self-esteem of Roma children, there is a fundamental need to add measures / interventions aiming to develop, extend and ensure an intercultural preschool education, among them the intercultural training of teachers, intercultural educational objectives and activities and, when needed, the teaching in Rromani language with bilingual methods in kindergartens, this last measure aiming to teach the Romanian language to the Roma children who are native speakers of Rromani language.

2.2.1 POLICY GOAL 2: PREVENTING SCHOOL DROPOUT RATHER THAN WAITING FOR COMPENSATION MEASURES

To add to the POLICY MEASURE 2B: MAKING SCHOOLS MORE FRIENDLY FOR ALL CHILDREN the following measures:

- Extending the Rromani language, history and culture teaching in schools;
- Increasing the number of schools / classes where Rromani is the teaching language;
- Introduce minorities' history and culture and intercultural education among the disciplines of the school compulsory curriculum;
- Endow the school libraries with books and magazines about Roma history and culture, cultural diversity and intercultural education;

To add to the POLICY MEASURE 3C: REVISING THE INITIAL AND CONTINUOUS TRAINING SYSTEM FOR TEACHERS IN THE VIEW OF PROMOTING INCLUSIVE AND INTERACTIVE LEARNING APPROACHES the following measure:

- Introducing specific modules on minorities' history and culture, cultural diversity and intercultural education both in the initial and in service training for teachers.

report to such initiatives. Overlooking what is arguably one of the most effective initiatives in Romania for combating discrimination against Roma casts shadow also on the professionalism of the report.

A substantive revision of the report is needed with the aim of ensuring, at the very least the following goals: (a) following minimal scientific standards in terms of substantial claims with actual means of proof rather than mere statement or rumors; (b) ensure impartiality; (c) establish criteria for proposing positive-practice examples; (d) eliminate bias of authors who tend to over quote their own previous works; (e) include relevant areas which are currently ignore/underdressed, such as combating discrimination or culturally relevant education.

In order to discuss this we ask you for an urgent meeting with a delegation of our organizations.

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