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# **Racial Discrimination and Public Policies on Roma**

The Case of Rumania

# Minorities

- Ethnic/National (old, new etc.)
- Religious, sexual (gay, lesbian etc.)
- Linguistic, politic, local/regional
- Economic (very rich, very poor, agriculture, industry, incl. sex industry etc.)
- Other (like: tall/short, old, left-handed, stutters, homeless, AIDS/HIV positive, Alzheimer, prostitutes, prisoners, nomadic, people with glasses, terrorists, cannibals etc.)

# Minorities

- Disadvantaged (Roma, homeless, drug addicts, AIDS/HIV positive, very poor, very short, prostitutes, convicts, old, sick etc.)
- Advantaged/Dominant (very rich, Chinese in S-E Asia, German speaking in Habsburg Empire etc.) – difference between *reality vs. perception* (e.g. Jews)
- “Neuter” (left-handed, bald people – sometime, brown eyed)

# Decreasing levels of any public policy

- **Doctrine** (= theory, “philosophy”): on Roma, there are mainly two:
  1. *Social Inclusion Theory* (SIT) and/or
  2. *Racial Discrimination Theory* (RDT)
- **Strategy**
- **Master-plan** of measures (or action plan)
- **Programs** (sectorial: education, labor, health-care, housing, gender etc.)
- **Projects** – grassroots level, real people

# Social Inclusion Theory (SIT)

- Originating in 18<sup>th</sup> Century (Enlightenment)
- Optimistic, progressive, dynamic
- Roma are considered as human beings, but ...
- ... they are supposed to be just “uncivilized”, because they were not able to benefit from the novelties of civilization (literacy, soap etc.)
- The goal is to transform Roma into full humans (= “civilized” human beings); as such, anyone (= local and central government) will need to act upon the following techniques:

# Main Techniques

- Capturing the nomads and settling them down
- Disinfection, new dwellings, new clothes, ID cards, even new names; sometime, to use force is “required”
- Children and youth to be put into schools (any variety of SIT is viewing **education** as the key element); education not *per se*, but for best preparation to **work**
- Religion (Christianity, Islam), as a disciplinary ideology (Communism will do, too, in certain circumstances)
- In some extreme cases: take children from their natural parents and put them into foster (non-Roma) homes
- Adults: to be put to **work**, new and useful occupations (begging is not work); punishment for non-working
- Combating Roma’s “impulsive and irresponsible” hedonism through the example of an elite (propaganda) <sup>6</sup>

# History of SIT

## 18<sup>th</sup> Century (Enlightenment):

- Spain – kings Fernando VI and Carlos III (see July 1746, the arrest of all Gitanos etc.)
- Habsburg Empire – Maria Terezia and Joseph II (no “Gypsy”, but “Uj Magyar” etc.)

20<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, Switzerland, Soviet Union etc.): Communism, Social-Democracy – following the Enlightenment paradigm; later on, the same with World Bank, European Commission, George Soros, Decade of Roma Inclusion, national strategies (incl. early 21<sup>st</sup> Century), COM recommendations (of 2011 and May 2013), academic experts etc.

# In Rumania

- Transylvania: 18<sup>th</sup> Century
- Moldova and Walachia: mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century
- Neglect until 1942/1943 (Transdnistria) – 10% of Roma (= nomadic + 3 penal convictions = approx.. 25 K Roma)
- After 1948: sedentarisation, education, work (toward assimilation)
- After December 1989: national debate (Catalin Zamfir, Nicolae Gheorghe), Roma as a European issue, migration Westward (taboo issue), several Roma NGOs (community development and racial discrimination); local violence (villages)
- 1998-2001: First National Strategy on Roma (2001-2010)
- 2005: Decade of Roma Inclusion (until 2015)
- January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007: Rumania became member of European Union
- December 2011: New Roma Strategy (2012-2020)
- 2013: Revision of the New Roma Strategy (duration: until 2020), in line with COM recommendations (May 2013)



# History of RDT

- Romanticism of 19<sup>th</sup> Century (coming from J.-J. Rousseau's theory of *le bon sauvage*)
- Definitive essences, immutability (as prescribed by Romanipen): facts, history, costumes, customs, life-style, beliefs etc.
- “Roma issue” not as a problem of Roma themselves, but as a problem of racist non-Roma (= the all majorities of all populations, everywhere and anytime)
- Roma only as victims – never perpetrators; a few “taboo issues” (early marriages, status of women, domestic violence etc.)

# RDT (continuation)

- For RDT believers, Roma were/are essentially an unpopular minority because of the “innate racism” of majorities; eradicate this racism, and Roma will be highly valued everywhere for their (mostly innate) talents (dance, music, business, life-styles, craftsmanship etc.)
- Currently, the lack of Roma self-esteem is caused by a widespread stigmata (*stimă* vs. *stigmă*, in Rumanian), causing lots of trouble for Roma (from national censuses to political representation at local and central levels)

# Conclusion

- **Diversity** – as a mixed blessing *and* a curse; human capital issues in ethnically and culturally diverse local/regional communities (cf. Robert D. Putnam, *E Pluribus Unum*, 2007)
- Roma rights *and* Human rights. And the law (local, national, European etc.); limits of tolerance & Co.
- On prejudices/stereotypes: are they only wrong perceptions of reality *or*, sometime, real “statistical truths” (cf. Aristotle – the individual as the intersection of several generalities ...)
- Effects of certain public policies (RDT and SIT): the dangers of *apartheid* (= separate development) and of *assimilation*

# The Way Forward

- Importance of the report between **a.** the **majority** of the population (i.e.: practically, its democratically elected representatives, in local and central administration) and **b.** an unpopular ethnic **minority** (Roma)
- No sustainability of any project/strategy/public policy without the real participation of **a.** Roma themselves (including Roma NGOs, traditional leaders, elected Roma representatives etc.) and **b.** the authorities (especially at local/regional level, as elected representatives of the majority)<sub>12</sub>