

Marginalized Minorities in Higher Education in Spain: Policies and Practice

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Summary points:

- There are no affirmative action practices in Spanish higher education system targeting Roma or any other ethnic group. Quota system is only available for adult students and for students with disabilities.
- Despite the increase in ratios of the population with higher education in Spain over time, access remains reduced for several categories of disadvantaged groups, including migrants and children with working class parents or with parents with low levels of formal education.
- However, the most underrepresented group in higher education is the Roma community, with only 2% of Roma having higher education degrees, compared to about 32% in the total population.
- The reasons for the low representation of Roma in higher education include poverty and unemployment faced disproportionately higher by Roma communities in Spain, relatively lower completion rates of secondary education among Roma, as well as lack of information about enrolment and education process at tertiary level or benefits of higher education.
- The Spanish higher education system has put in place several possibilities for alternative access routes to higher education, including recognition of work experience as substitute for an upper secondary school diploma, and special examination system for adult university applicants who have not completed upper secondary school. Some of these practices could certainly inspire future reforms in higher education in Eastern Europe, where alternative routes to higher education are still relatively rare.
- The existence of part-time studies, distance learning, as well as the lack of restrictions on employment for students, also help students from socio-economically difficult backgrounds in Spain to study in higher education.
- However, what does constitute a barrier in studying in higher education in Spain is the financial cost associated with university studies, specifically in the context of the economic recession in the last years. About 70% of students in Spain pay tuition fees and only around 26% receive financial support. While tuition fee amounts are relatively low compared to median wages, the economic recession has resulted in high unemployment rates and in a decrease in families' incomes, making these amounts significant for the most vulnerable part of the population.
- For Roma these financial implications constitute a particularly significant barrier, keeping in mind that the Roma population face high unemployment rates and even when employed are in relatively low skilled jobs with lowest wages.

Briefing Paper 1

Social Dimension of Higher Education in Spain: Policies and Practice

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Introduction

For a long time, higher education has been accessible only to a few. But during the 20th century and notably starting with the 1960s the number of people enrolling in universities expanded. By 2012 in the OECD countries 40% of adults aged between 25 and 34 attained higher education (OECD 2014). This

Roma, but that implements comprehensive policy measures for widening access for socio-economically disadvantaged students, and/or for first generation students, and/or for students whose parents are blue collar workers, and/or for students coming from regions facing economic and social deprivation, etc., may constitute effective alternatives. Therefore, the focus of this briefing paper is precisely on analyzing the existing policy alternatives in Spain and their potential in widening participation implicitly for Roma.

The paper is structured in three sections. The first section analyses the representation of socio-economically disadvantaged groups in higher education in Spain based on available statistical data, with the goal to determine which groups are underrepresented and what the extent of their under-representation is. The second section describes the access to higher education in Spain in terms of the available entry routes and flexibility of studies. The third section focuses on the financial costs of higher education in Spain and the existing financial support schemes. The concluding section summarizes the findings.

1. Disadvantaged groups and their Representation in Higher Education in Spain

Generally speaking, the attainment rate of higher education in Spain is close to the average in other EU countries or to the non-EU developed countries. According to the data collected in 2012 by OECD, within the total population of Spain aged between 25 and 64 the ratio of those who attained higher education was 32%, similar to the OECD average (32%) and slightly higher than the average for EU-21 (30%)². Among the EU-21 countries, ten had respective ratios smaller than in Spain (OECD 2014, p. 44). The fact that the ratio of the population who attained higher education is even higher among the youngest cohorts (i.e. 39% for the population aged between 25 and 34) suggests that the tendency is towards having more and more individuals with higher education degrees in Spain (OECD 2014). But to what extent do the disadvantaged social groups benefit from this expansion of higher education? Are they fairly represented in the total student population? These are the questions that this section seeks to address.

In order to improve the access to higher education, countries should first be aware of the social groups that are underrepresented. For this, there should be a mechanism for systematic data collection on the social composition of the student body. According to the 2015 Spanish Report for Bologna Process implementation, the Spanish Ministry of Education has such a mechanism in place, obliging higher education institutions to participate in a systematic monitoring of the composition of the student body. Within this mechanism, Spanish universities collect figures on students' age, gender, type and level of qualification achieved prior to entering higher education, and since recently also on socio-economic background. At the same time, the Ministry does not require universities to collect data on students' ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious minority status, on religion, on the migrant status (migrants or migrants' children), on labor market status, or on students' disabilities (European Higher Education Area 2015). Therefore, the data presented below are retrieved both from available national reports and from international surveys.

² OECD defines EU-21 region as the region composed of All EU countries prior to the accession of the 10 candidate countries on 1 May 2004, plus the four eastern European member countries of the OECD, namely Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovak Republic. <https://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=7020>

1.1. Roma minorities

Throughout the centuries, Spain evolved as a nation composed of diverse autonomous regions with different cultural and historical heritages. Nowadays the largest regions in Spain, according to the number of inhabitants, are Andalusia and Catalonia, but there are others like Madrid, Castilla-León, Castilla-La Mancha, Basque Country, Comunidad Valenciana, Aragón, Galicia, Extremadura, etc.

Roma people entered the country in the 15th century and although they have been prosecuted and marginalized as an ethnic group along the history, the current Constitution does not formally permit their discrimination. Traditionally, Roma have lived in some regions more than in others. This is the case of Andalusia where Roma people is estimated to be close to 300.000 people. Other regions with large Roma communities are Catalonia (80.000 people estimated) and Comunidad Valenciana (65.000 estimated).

Though stereotypes among the different regional communities or groups (Andalusians, Basques, Catalans, Galicians and others) persist, normally in a negative or pejorative sense, from all these groups the only one perceived as being socio-economically marginalized is Roma (Gitanos), as the monitoring documents on ethnic minorities in Spain published by Council of Europe suggest (Council of Europe 2010 and 2014).

In Spain universities do not collect data concerning students' ethnic affiliation, therefore there is no official statistics revealing the access to higher education for various ethnic groups living in Spain. Respectively, very little information exists concerning higher education level attainment among Roma. The 2010 Action Plan mentions an estimation of 200 Roma with higher education degrees in Spain. If correct, this estimate would imply that less than 0.5% of Roma population in Spain had higher education by the time the estimate was calculated. To put this figure in perspective, among the total population of Spain aged between 25 and 64 years old, 32% graduated at least the first cycle of higher education (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development 2014). The 2010 Action Plan also specifies that in the 2014-2015 academic year among the 1,462,771 university students there were not even 1,000 Roma students, while in terms of percentage of Roma population in Spain this number should have been 28,468 (Action Plan 2010-2012).

Another estimate for the attainment of higher education among Roma is included in the Spanish progress report from 2013 for the Decade for Roma Inclusion. The Report mentions that there is a significant difference in post-compulsory education attainments between Roma and the general population in Spain within the age group between 20 and 24, with only 8.9% of Roma having completed upper secondary or vocational education compared to 40% among the general population. At the same time, the report mentions that only 2.2% of Roma in the respective age group completed higher education, compared to 22% among the general population (Decade for Roma Inclusion, 2013). Hence, Roma in Spain constitute a particularly underrepresented ethnic group in the Spanish higher education system.

1.2. Students with migrant background

In the case of Spain, it is also relevant to analyze the representativeness of students with migrant background in higher education, because migrants constitute a significant part of the Spanish population and are also one of the potentially disadvantaged social groups in Spain. Data show that both first and

widened the access for children of families with low parental education as well.

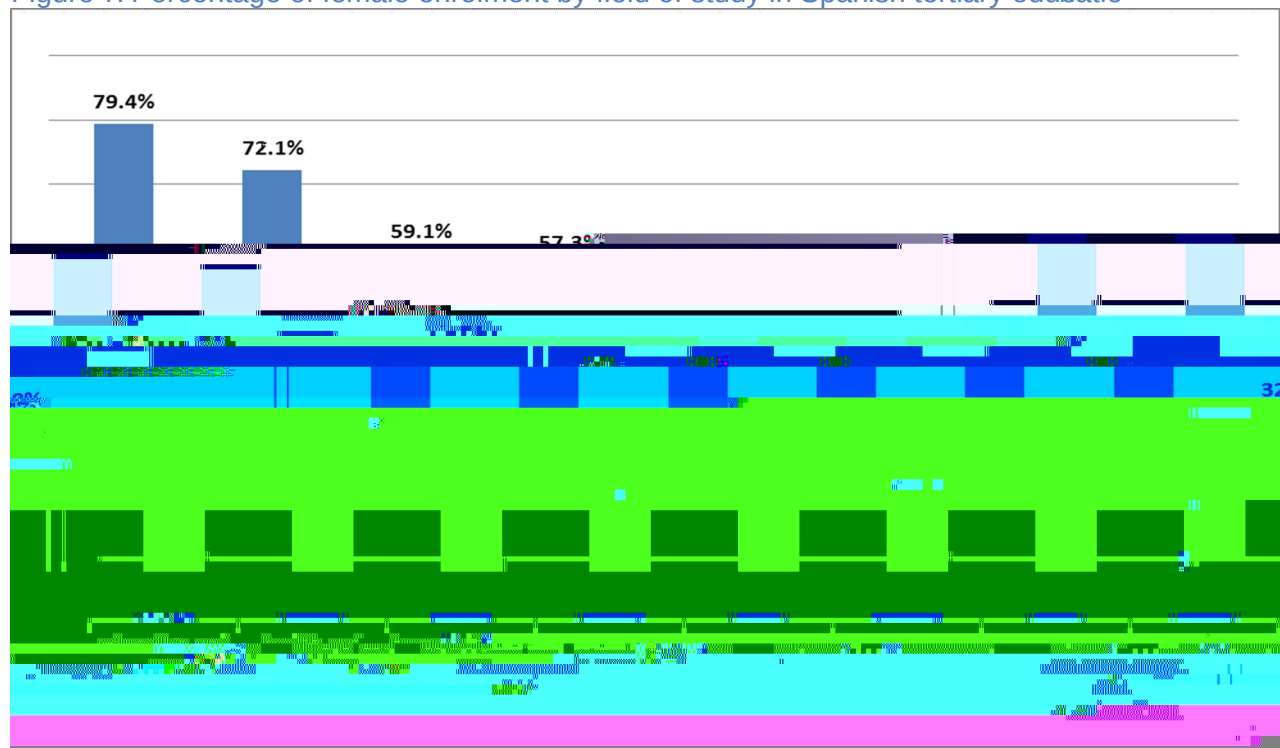
Figure 4. Level of Education of those in the “status quo” (25 year

Figure 6 suggest that students with blue-collar family background are underrepresented in Spanish higher

According to UNESCO data in 2013 53.5% of tertiary level students in Spain were female, which was close to the female ratio among tertiary level students of North America and Western Europe countries (55.2%), as well as to the female ratio among tertiary level students in the region of Central and Eastern Europe (52.9%) (UNESCO data 1999-2015). Among the EU countries for which UNESCO have available data on student gender composition, only in Germany men outnumbered women in the gender composition of the tertiary student body (2013 data); but even in the case of Germany the ratio of female students was close to gender balance (47.1%).

Although the general gender composition of university student bodies is generally equilibrated, a closer look reveals important gender discrepancies with regards to choice of study programs. Women are generally overrepresented in humanities and social sciences and underrepresented in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) programs. Figure 7 illustrates the ratio of female students in Spain across different fields of studies, based on UNESCO 2013 data. It reveals that in Spanish higher education women are particularly underrepresented in engineering, manufacturing, and construction and particularly overrepresented in education and pedagogy.

Figure 7. Percentage of female enrolment by field of study in Spanish tertiary education



Source: UNESCO data 1999-2015

These discrepancies in gender balance within various fields of studies may be problematic when it comes to employability of university graduates, since research suggests that graduates' competitiveness on the job market may be determined, besides other things, by the graduated field (Allen and Velden, 2009). For this reason, the more balanced the gender distribution across various field of studies, the less the risk that female graduates would find themselves in a disadvantaged position on the employment market upon graduation.

1.6. Students coming from rural areas

According to World Bank data for 2014, the population of Spain mainly lives in urban areas, with only 21% living in rural areas. This demographic characteristic has not changed significantly in the last 10 years, since by 2005 the ratio of the Spanish population living in rural areas was 23% (World Bank data 1981-2015). To know whether the rural population is equally represented in higher education, data on students' rural/urban origin are needed, which unfortunately are not available for the entire student population of Spain. Nevertheless, Eurostudent IV report contains an estimate based on student survey, according to which by the time the survey was conducted (2011), 21% of university students in Spain graduated from secondary education in rural areas (Eurostudent IV (a)).

This suggests that the representation of students coming from rural areas is equitable in the higher education system of Spain. The reason the rural area population is well represented in the Spanish student population might be related to the fact that starting with the 1960s until the end of the Socialist Government at the end of the 1990s, Government that promoted the access to higher education, the number of universities in Spain increased (Laus I. 2006), while many of the new universities have been placed in smaller cities and towns, which brought higher education physically closer to the rural population.

1.7. Students with disabilities

A 2008 report by National Institute of Statistics of Spain highlighted that only 10.5% of the population with disabilities in Spain aged between 25 and 44 had a higher education degree, compared to 24.1% in the total population of the respective age group (National Statistics Institute of Spain, 2008). The situation seems to have improved since then, since a more recent report identifies that by 2012 14.7% of people with disabilities had a university degree, which was nevertheless still low compared to the respective ratio among people without disabilities (32%) (Spanish National Statistics Institute of Spain 2012, quoted in Solera et. al. 2015).

The improvement in access to higher education for people with disabilities may result from policies that the Spanish government implemented, such as the quota system at enrollment for disabled students, as well as the improvement in the support provided to disabled students during their university studies (Solera et. al. 2015). Available data also suggest that the possibility for online learning available in Spain facilitates access to higher education for students with disabilities, since the ratio of students with disabilities enrolled in online programs is three times higher than the ratio of students with disabilities in on-site university (Solera et. al. 2015).

Despite the positive measures to facilitate access to higher education for students with disabilities, various studies point to the fact that Spanish universities differ in the extent and quality of the services they provide for students with disabilities. Based on survey research, a recent study highlights that 46% of Spanish universities do not have scholarships for people with disabilities that would cover living costs during the studies; 25% do not have programs for students with disabilities that would make easier the access to higher education; 31% do not have programs for tutoring or tracking of students with disabilities; finally, one third of surveyed students with disabilities highlight still-existing accessibility barriers to Spanish universities, while two thirds highlight that lecturers do not know their educational needs (Solera et. al. 2015).

Section Summary

The following sub-sections describe the situation in the Spanish higher education system with regards to the entry routes and flexibility of studies.

2.1. The traditional entry route

According to the 2015 Spain National Report on Bologna process implementation, the majority of higher education students in Spain (73%) accessed higher education by graduating higher secondary school and by passing higher education entrance examination (European Higher Education Area 2015, p. 19).

The secondary school process in Spain is divided into two phases. The first is the compulsory phase called *gymnasium* that lasts for four years usually between age 12 and age 16 and that is the equivalent to the lower secondary education. The successful graduates of lower secondary education receive a Secondary Education Certificate (*Graduado en Educación Secundaria*), which is necessary for those who

62 and 161 since 2010 and with an acceptance ratio of 29 and 72% depending on the year¹⁰, the system seems to be best used by relatively young adults.

Each of the above listed alternative routes is further described below.

2.2.1. Adult applicants with no previous education

In Spain adults aged 25 and above may apply for university studies without the requirement of having a certain level of complete formal education prior to applying, but subject to a testing process. The test consists of a general part and a subject specific part. To be enrolled, examinees need to have at least four

applicator or agricultural worker of industrial crops, can have his/her work experience validated for studying agriculture engineering, biotechnology, or chemistry at the university. Similarly, somebody who worked as an office receptionist or secretary can study law, economy, or a variety of other disciplines related to humanities and social sciences. Therefore, the system is quite flexible in the type of work experience it considers eligible and in the number of possible specializations with which individual work experience can be matched.

2.3. Quota system for students with disabilities

Since 2008 there has been a quota system in the Spanish higher education system for students with disabilities. Based on this system, there is a 5% quota for disabled students' admission in all university degrees of any public university. The system also provides exemption from tuition fee payment for students with disability degree of 33% of any type (see SWING report). The quota is still below the representation of people with disabilities in the total population of Spain which is about 15.8%. However, according to various data the quota has nevertheless contributed to improving access to higher education for disabled students (see for instance Solera et. al. 2015). Furthermore, the quota system guarantees a tuition-free university place, but it does not necessarily imply financial help for covering living and other study-related costs, since there are still 46% of Spanish universities that do not have special scholarship schemes for people with disabilities (Solera et. al. 2015).

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Furthermore, studying in part-time mode in Spain does not imply higher tuition fees for students (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015). Tuition fees are calculated based on the number of credits taken in an academic year¹⁸. At the same time, students are eligible for financial support in the form of grants, although certain grant components such as residence costs and academic performance bonuses were not accessible for part-timers, by the time these components were still available (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014). Available statistical data reveal that in the last years the ratio of part time students in Spain increased. The Eurostat data suggest that by 2008 there were 11% of Spanish students enrolled in part-time mode of studies (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2011), while in 2013 the respective ratio was 27% (Eurostat 2013).

As for distance learning and e-learning, various international reports suggest that provision of this form of learning in higher education is still relatively rare in Europe. However, provisions currently exist in 12 European countries including Spain. In some of these countries distance learning is provided by small private institutions, while in others, such as Spain, providers count among the key players in the education system (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2011). The highest concentration of distance learning providers is in Southern Europe, with the National University of Distance Education in Spain being the oldest (created in the 1970s) and biggest (having currently over 200 000 students) institution of this kind in the region. The National University of Distance Education is run by the central government of Spain and offers undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, as well as various non-degree programmes¹⁹. Programmes in the respective university are around the country average (see Figure 8). There are no statistics available on the ratio of tertiary level students enrolled in distance learning and e-learning programs in Spain.

2.5. Student employment

In Spain there are no formal restrictions for students to be employed in parallel with their studies. Specifically, there is no restriction on the maximum number of hours or on the maximum wages students may earn while enrolled in full or part time studies. In practice many working students in Spain are employed based on unofficial arrangements with their employers, i.e. without a working contract and consequently without paying taxes²⁰.

According to the Eurostudent IV survey that collected data between 2008 and 2011 on the social dimension of higher education in various European countries, by 2009 about 53% of Spanish higher education students were employed at least in occasional or term break jobs. About 17% had regular jobs during term and term break, involving a minimum 5 hours of work per week. Surveyed students generally assessed that 26-29% of their monthly income was self-earned (Eurostudent IV (b)). A more recent data source dating from 2014 points to a smaller ratio of working students, with 5.7% engaged in full time employment, 2.7% in part time work, and 1.7% in “part time involuntary work” (Finkel-Barañano 2014, quoted in González-Monteagudo J. et. al. 2015).

Section Summary

Hence, when it comes to entry routes to higher education and flexibility of studies, the Spanish higher education system seems to provide a variety of possibilities that have the potential to open access to

¹⁸ Information provided by Dr. Mayte Padilla-Carmona, at author's request.

¹⁹ National University of Distance Education, facts and data. Available at http://portal.uned.es/portal/page?_pageid=93,24305391&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

²⁰ Information provided by Dr. Mayte Padilla-Carmona, at author's request.

3.2. Costs of Higher Education in Spain – Living Costs

potentially hinders access to higher education for students coming from socio-economically disadvantaged communities.

The means through which countries address this issue generally include loan schemes and grant schemes for students. The financial support schemes available in the Spanish system of higher education are described in the next section.

3.4. State-Funded Grants and Financial Support

In Spain there is no system of publicly subsidized or guaranteed student loans to cover expenses during

Figure 11. Evolution of available funds for student financial support, in EUR (2004-2013)



Source: same as for figure 10.

As can be seen in Figure 10, in the 2013-2014 academic year the average amount of a state funded grant was 2,562 EUR. Keeping in mind the data presented in the previous sections, this amount is not sufficient for covering living costs. Hence, even for the students receiving state financial support a significant part of the costs related to their studies need to be covered from alternative resources, particularly in the case of students living outside their family residence.

In the past Spanish students could benefit from a scholarship based on their economic status and conditioned upon their completion of 60-80% of university courses. Scholarships were not distributed based on competition. There was also a grant supplement for awarding academic performance. Since the reform of the university grant system initiated in 2012, students' scholarships are not only based on their economic situation, but also on their academic results, while the distribution of scholarships, as well as the actual amounts, is determined by the academic results of all grant recipients and also by the available funds allocated by the government in an academic year. Therefore, the grade point average required for receiving a scholarship, as well as the relative number of courses passed, may change from year to year, which makes it impossible for students to know in advance the amount of money they are going to receive. This is believed to hinder the access to higher education for economically needy students (Río-Ruiz et. al. 2015).

Section Summary

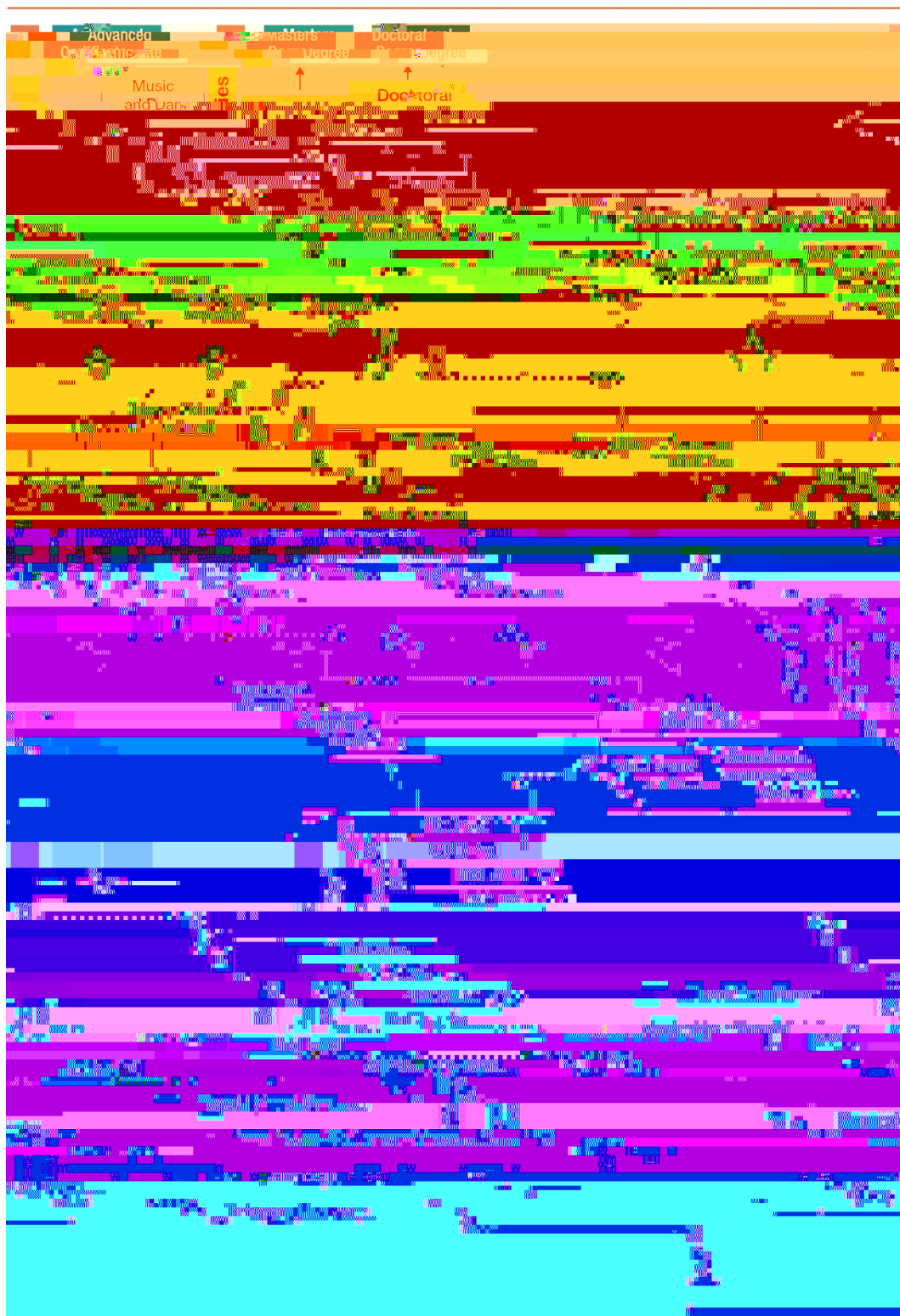
Hence, the financial costs of higher education in Spain required to be covered by students and their families can be significant, especially for students coming from families with unemployed parents or with parents receiving relatively low wages, and especially for students living outside their home. Tuition fee amounts together with the living costs may therefore constitute a significant barrier for socio-economically needy students to access higher education. Only 30% of students are exempted from paying

tuition fees and only about 26% receive financial support; at the same time, there is no system of student loan. This means that for an absolute majority of students the economic situation of their families is determinant on the decision to study in higher education or not. Considering that the Roma population faces particularly high poverty rates, low incomes, and high levels of unemployment in Spain, it results

residence. For Roma these financial implications constitute a particularly significant barrier, keeping in mind that the Roma population face high unemployment rates and even when employed are in relatively low skilled jobs with lowest wages.

Hence, marginalized groups including Roma in Spain face institutional barriers in accessing higher education. If the system does not decrease the costs of university studies for the entire population, or does not provide financial assistance to all socio-economically disadvantaged enrolled students, or does not institute a quota system specific for Roma that would also be coupled with an effective outreach campaign and financial support during the studies, Roma will continue being underrepresented in higher education in future as well.

Annex 1. The Structure of Spanish Education System



Source: Ministry of Education, Social Policy and Sport, quoted in Oriol Homs (2009)

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Briefing Paper 2

Roma's Access to Higher Education in Spain: Enablers and Barriers

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Introduction

In this report I present a general view about the Roma from Spain, more exactly the Roma from

several anthropological methods. I conducted structured and unstructured interviews across Spain, especially in Andalusia (Córdoba, Cádiz, Sevilla, Málaga).

The Methodology of the Research

The structured interviews for this report were based on put-up questionnaires, as well as on free discussions with the interviewees. The interviewees were two Roma students studying in the higher education, one PhD student (social scientist) who was also an NGO worker and activist. We also made personal and group interviews with 12 workers of three NGOs, three professors of the Sevilla University, and one researcher who conducted research on Roma in Malaga. Along with the theoretic research work (analyzing and organizing the bibliography) I paid particular attention to the field work. I visited the different areas of Sevilla living among very humble economic situations, the segregated Roma "districts", I also visited the public education institution (vocational school in Mira Flores), and one of the ghettos having the "worst reputation" next to which there is the home of the Roma Theatre. Moreover, I joined for several days the street life of local musician gitanos, thus finding out even more about their difficulties, culture, tradition and family structure as well as their inner motivation, outside pressures, self-definition and inner struggles.

On the other hand I tried to find out more about the Flamenco²⁸ culture, obviously not as a tourist, but using the "snow ball method" to get to those authentic places which are basically family-supported traditional Roma music and dancing places. This visit was extremely useful for me to understand the role of the family in the life of Roma people, the importance of music and its very deep roots. It also highlighted that apparently contradictory fact, that in spite of all the prejudices existing in Spain, the Flamenco, the traditional dance of the Roma ethnic group, has become an integral part of Spanish history and present.

During the four weeks of 26(laga).6ing .391 72 176.16 Tm [(During)-91(the)-104(four)-95(weeks)-88(of)-10

where I had the chance to experience the fact that the same city incorporated two different worlds in two streets located near each other. In one street comfort, cleanliness and wealth could be found, while in the

(Charo Rosalio Caraballo Roma- Seville University, Researcher)

During the interview with the above mentioned researcher, she pointed out the fact that the name itself (roma, gipsy) is not enough for the people to consider it that way. Nobody supposes that she is a Gitana, even though she uses in her name the word others call the ethnic group. The name is used to stigmatize, so if the signs connected to the "stigmatized being" do not correspond to the person (racial signs, dressing, traditions...), he/she can "drop out" of the Roma ethnic group, in case he/she belonged to it before. Unfortunately from the point of view of education system this can lead to a very strong stigmatization and discrimination. The difference between the Roma in Spain and other European countries is that being a Gitano has nothing to do with looks. Many Gitanos have lighter skin than the Spanish, the markers of race are not significant. Gitano university students that we interviewed all used this strategy in order to become Spanish, or to be accepted as Gitanos. This meant that they hid their culture, their traditions, habits and their language (Calle

The third group is made of up the most disadvantaged. These people live in segregated areas, in houses with tin roofs, in very bad condition. Many wear traditional long dresses and handkerchiefs and come from Romania. They still do not speak the language, despite having come ten years ago if not even more, but given that they live in segregated areas, they prefer to use their own language, the Romani in their everyday interactions. They live mostly of trade, do not have jobs and are not registered. Their children, will most certainly end up as drop-outs, will look for jobs or start a family, as they have no alternatives.

The Roma women who came from Romania about 9 years ago

Identity

During my field work I talked to many Roma families, who are first, second or third generation Roma in Spain, and to those, as well, whose parents belong to different ethnic groups. In Spain Roma people are in a special situation, because if they "want to" or they are open to the pressure of the society they can "disappear" among the majority, because due to their racial signs they are very similar to Spanish people. I had the experience to see that the picture of a Spanish woman is very similar to the picture of a modern Roma woman, who wears the clothes worn by the women belonging to the majority.

She does not wear a handkerchief

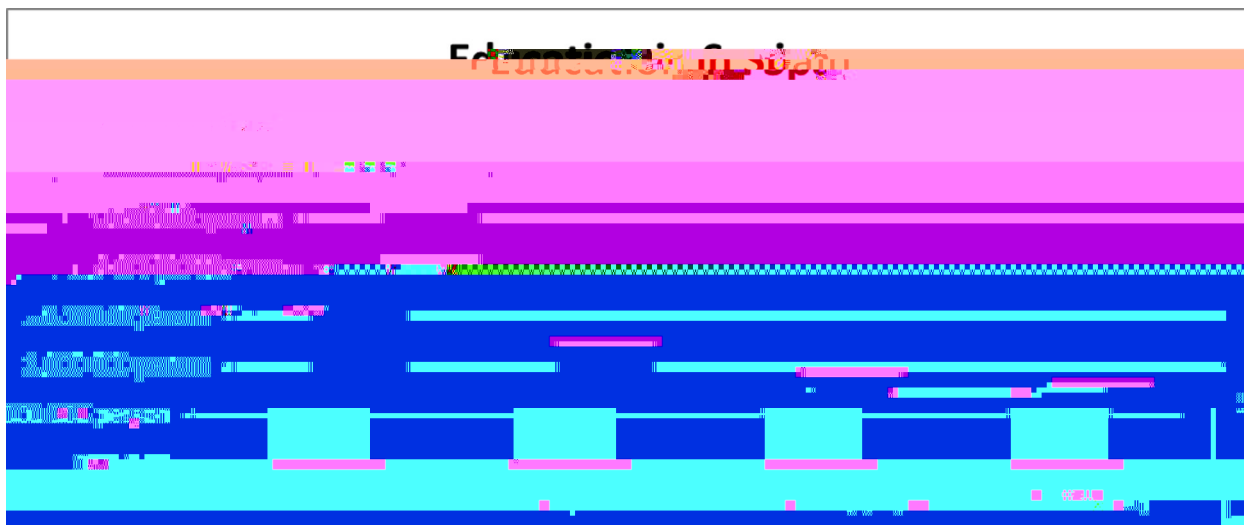
graduation and to help more and more young Romas to reach higher education level. That is why nationality studies and strengthening their identity should have an especially strong attention.

I would also like to talk about the Roma woman who migrated from Romania and ~~with~~ whom I made a

Pedro³⁵, the third year Roma student at the University of Sevilla had difficulty in understanding our question:

I am Spanish. Gitano. Spanish.- and he changed from one identity to another, then he said that it depends on the situation which identity is more important. And no conflicts at the university, I received help all the time. It didn't matter if I was a Gitano or not.

But you told us, they didn't even know you are a Gitano. - I said



OECD Education and Glance 2002

The EU and its member states established a series of key competences for personal fulfillment, and include abilities that contribute to improving social inclusion and improving the employment rate. The key competences are shared by knowledge, skills and attitudes that are stimulated during compulsory education. EU Member States are committed to ensure that all children have equal and unhindered access to mainstream, inclusive schools, as Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights establishes. Besides ratifying the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child, which guarantees right to education for all children, the Member States also ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Measuring Progress in the Case of Roma Inclusion: a Mission Made Possible

Since 2001 important steps have been made in providing statistical data on the situation of the Roma in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. These data show that the Roma live in more severely disadvantaged circumstances and that this is closely related to the rate of illiteracy, infant mortality and malnutrition. In terms of education, the Roma have very bad results. Education levels were of dramatically low and thus, competitiveness on the labour market is also low.

These results triggered a series of other research which focused on evaluating the deprivation the Roma are facing. Thus, in 2004, UNDP conducted a comprehensive and comparative study on the situation of the Roma and compared it to the situation of their Roma neighbours in Central and Southern European countries. The retrieved data is used as a reference when measuring progress on Roma inclusion, especially progress made.

In 2006, the FRA predecessor, the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), published a comprehensive and comparative report on the participation of Roma in public education, based on available secondary data.⁴⁰

⁴⁰FRA in 2006 European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC)

According to this report, there is direct and systemic discrimination towards the Roma within the educational system, which manifests itself also in the form of exclusion from the educational system. This is the case for a number of Member States. This is caused by interrelated factors of poverty, high unemployment, substandard housing conditions and limited access to healthcare services.

The report revealed that there is few data on Roma enrollment to the education system, and that the level and performance of the Roma incorporated within the educational system was not examined, ethnicity was not considered a category of research.

It could be said that the system has enough flexibility in order to make it possible for "those who want to study to be able to do it so", but in reality this is not like this because many Roma students do not get even closer to this chance. They are not able to pass the exam which is needed to apply to the universities.

The Spanish higher education is available for everybody who wants to learn further and can afford to pay all the taxes, moreover who accept to be enrolled to the less demanding specializations. Researches done by us and by others prove these facts to be true:

„In the higher education there is no discrimination, I was always accepted” - said a Roma medical student colleagues and teachers of whom do not know that she is Roma. She lives in good conditions, her mother is a teacher, and her extended family is able to support her. She does not live segregated and her friends and acquaintances are not Roma.

„Higher education? That the skilled worker, isn't it? No. Then I don't know what that is.” This was said by a second-generation market seller Roma woman at the Vacie ghetto.

The most important experience of my visit at the Triana market was that while I was doing the research on how Roma people could enroll in the higher education, and why they are represented in a very low number, I found that my interviewees did not even know what higher education was. They do not know about the universities and colleges. The only alternative reachable for them is the vocational school which many times they do not even finish.

I consider that the reasons are the following:

in the ghettos and Roma districts people do not get an elementary and general education of quality and do not have the chance to do an exam and to enter the higher education;

£ There is a serious lack of information because of the segregation and stigmatization, which is why Roma living in humble conditions do not know the process and possibilities of getting in the higher education.

£ The lack of information leads to the fear that they do not have and will not ever have the chance and the capability to enroll in the system, to meet challenges and to pay the fees. This is because they do not know how and what kind of scholarships they should ask from the state.

£ The higher education system helps mostly the young adults (between the ages 18-24), but forgets about very vulnerable group of people (those between 16 and 18 years) and their financial problems. There exist an identity and economic crisis, because similar to other European countries the education system loses many young people belonging to this age group, and they will not be able later to get back to school. So there is no serious program for these young people neither from the part of the society neither from the part of the government.

£ The quota for adults does not provide financial help, but only a position at the university, which is why it is very difficult for the family to provide material support, mainly because these families live under the living wage.⁴⁵

£ Roma vocational colleges and clubs for the Roma intellectuals are very new notions nowadays, that is why many young Roma have to choose the "lonely fight" or they have to assimilate with the values of the majority, because they do not have the supporting power of their community (the community of young Roma intellectuals).

⁴⁵http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/innovacioncienciayempresa/squit/g_busca_titm40_sup.php

Equal Treatment-Segregation

In many EU Member States, many Roma children are enrolled in special educational institutions and programmes, despite the fact that they have no difficulties. Segregation is dominant in education system in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Greece. 58% of Roma children attend a

illiterate Roma is higher than the number of illiterate non-Roma. In Spain this rate at 14%, in Greece at 52%, in France at 25% and in Romania is at 31%

This improvement is particularly worth noting. School drop-out affects boys and girls disproportionately. When girls drop out, their chances in life narrow down significantly, and thus, it is important to maintain the current low rate.

When summing up the data on education within the region, we see an improvement for the situation of Roma in terms of preschool, primary and secondary education enrollment. There is also an improvement in literacy experienced the past decade. Moreover, the difference between the Roma and non-Roma population in terms of school attendance is decreasing, although the gap is still far from being eliminated. This gap possibly grew in the case of education, although the overall situation of the Roma improved.

Still, there is an overrepresentation of the Roma in special schools, and the overall segregation of the Roma in the education system became more pronounced in the past decade.

The number of Roma completing different levels of education is significantly low and the gaps between Roma and non-Roma school attendance are especially in the case of secondary education, where there is a growth in the gap.

This gap is decreasing only

34% fewer Roma complete primary (compulsory) education than overall population			
Secondary Ed.	39	10	No data
29% fewer Roma population secondary school than the majority population			
Tertiary Ed. 10% fewer Roma than majority population complete tertiary education	12	2	No data
Literacy 5% fewer Roma are illiterate. For Romani women the gap is 8%	98	93	90

Source: Roma Inclusion Index 2015

Tradition and Women's Possibilities for Studying Further

In the following I discuss in details Roma organizations and Roma women's rights, but first I concentrate the cultural approach. I take as a starting point Sandra Heredia's words, who is a social scientist of Roma origin and she makes her studies as a PhD student at the Spanish University. She is a Roma rights activist, employee of the Fakali and Amuradi organizations who due to her language knowledge has an important role in the international relations. Sandra helped us to translate Roma women's opinions who

Fakali⁶¹ (2012) states that there is a minority group, but nonetheless, growing group of young Roma who have access to and graduate from higher education. Similarly, there is a more recent study⁶² which focused on the Roma population aged 20 years. Only 8.9% of Roma (compared to 39.9% of the general population) complete vocational training or high school. Only 2.2% of young Roma (21.5% in the general population) graduate from college.

Laparra (2007) warns of the risk of stereotyping the Roma and states that the cases of people experiencing deprivation are much more visible despite the fact that only 20% of them are Roma. According to him, the reality is that many Roma do not live in conditions of marginalization and poverty and that they belong to different social sectors that are not as visible to society. *"These Roma today represent 80% of the Spanish Roma but their appearance of normality does not interest the media"* (p. 78).

The 2010 Action Plan estimates around 200 Spanish Roma having higher education⁶³ degrees. If this is correct, it implies that less than 0.5% of the Spanish Roma had higher education degrees at the time the estimation was done. To put it in perspective, it means, that among the total population of Spain older than 25, about 27% graduated from at least the first cycle of higher education⁶⁴. The 2010 Action Plan also specifies that in the 2014-2015 academic year, among the 162, 771 university students not even 1000 were Roma, whereas if we take into account the percent of the Roma population of Spain, this number should have been at 28,468.

The Spanish Progress Report 2013 gives another estimation for the number of Roma of higher education. The Report mentions that there is a significant difference in the number of graduates from postcompulsory education between Roma and the majority population for the age group of 20 to 24: only 8.9% of Roma will have completed upper secondary or vocational education compared to 40% of the majority population. At the same time, the report mentions that only 2.2% of Roma of the respective age group completed higher education, compared to 22% of the majority population.

⁶¹ <http://www.fakali.org>

⁶² gitanos.org/upload/64/76/RESUMEN_EJECUTIVO._El_alumnado_gitano_en_secundaria__ingles_.pdf

⁶³ The action plan, p 23

⁶⁴

As mentioned, the Roma in Andalusia live mostly in segregated settlements. Almost all of our interviewees grew up similarly to the rest of the society, as integrated, so they did not have to face the difficulty of their Gitano heritage. Pedro did not even mention it to anyone, and Noemi and Maria said that this is not a topic they would talk about, besides their very close friends no one knows about their background. People do not know that they are Roma, which is due to the fact that here people have darker skin color, so there are no specific racial marker that would differentiate them from the other fellows, unless they show specific signs such as traditional jewelry or traditional Gitano dresses, which is not very common in the center of Sevilla nor in any other city.

Maria, who works at a Roma organization called Fakali thinks that there are two main causes behind the lack of access of the Roma to higher education:

Segregation which means that they live in very bad housing conditions, have limited social interaction, high unemployment, experience hunger

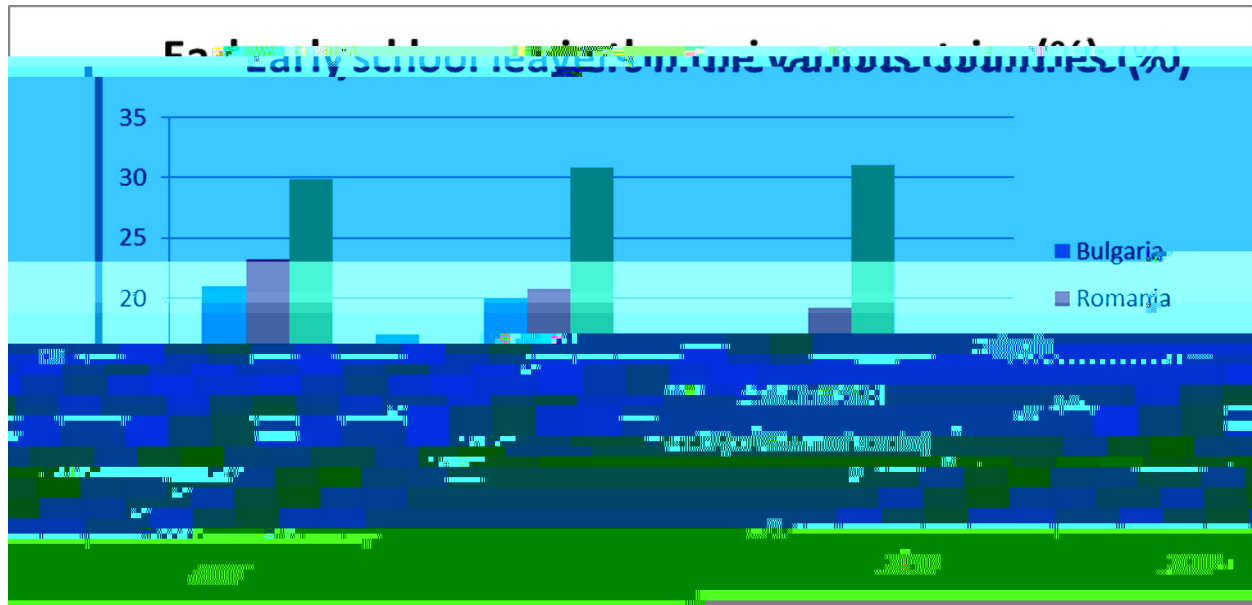
The Spanish have a stereotypical image of the Gitanos.

Education should be key, but studying at the university is not even an option for a Roma person. Their goal is to have a vocation, which is not sufficient in order to have a degree in Spain, the system requires that they also have a graduation exam...

Government Initiatives

The Ministry of Health introduced the program on Social Services and Equality in 2011 as part of the National Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma in Spain for 2011-2020. This program is dedicated to improve the living conditions of the Roma population.

The Plan also specified that facilitating the access to higher education for Roma shall be conferred upon of secondary education and upon successful university entrance exams. For those older than 25 (especially women) academic support programs shall be launched Adult Education Centers, which will also encourage the young Roma, „especially women” to continue their academic careers.



Eurostat Labour Force Survey

There are two countries where the situation is worse Spain and Denmark. But if we look at the adult Danish population, then the results are not that bad. Leaving school stands for an attempt of finding their path, and they provide proper career orientation trainings. For majority of countries there are no changes in terms of dropouts. In Spain the number of dropouts has increased, but not significantly, whereas in Romania, where the number of drop outs was on the rise, we see improvement.

The European solution offers two options

1. There is no need for separate schools. A solution must be found in order to prevent dropouts. (For instance graduating without having theoretical training, only a practical one based on lots of practice of a given profession)
2. There is a need for separate schools, because introducing these youngsters to the educational system and the labor market is a much longer process and it requires a change in the character of a person. This requires more resources, and can be used in countries that have strong economies.

Two decades ago dropout was an issue researched only by sociologists. Today, we know that the reason why there is no possibility on the labor market is because of the very low level of education or the lack of it. If these youngsters are unemployed for a long time, they end up on the peripheries of the society. Reintegrating them is very expensive and also very difficult. Maintaining a strong economy can only be done with proper labor, and thus, rethinking the educational strategy is highly recommended, together with the series of opportunities in training groups and widening the options of vocational schools.

According to the declaration of Copenhagen the most important goal is to eliminate drop-out, to improve

European equal opportunity programs

I would like present some European models which work in Europe, Hungary and Eastern Europe. Me, as well, as a Roma participant, I could participate in a research in Spain, with the support of the Roma Education Fund and the HEIM Project. This program together with the others I present, could be of great help for Roma realignment, gaining for themselves the same rights as the majority and reaching their dreams. Spain could also get inspired from these models.

- CEU-RAP-RELP - Central European University Roma Access Program and Roma Language Program
- Romaversitas
- Jezsuita Szakkollégium
- REF-RMUSP - Roma Education Fund Roma Scholarship Program

These types of programs do not exist in Spain even though it would be of utmost importance. These programs are very useful because there is a strong relationship not only between the tutor and student, but also among students, with a strong community-building power. Moreover they provide professional development.



- CEU Roma Access Program which has the Roma English Language Program, a 9-month English language course for Roma students who will enter BA level, implemented by Central European University in Budapest. Enrolled students come from 20 different countries. The program aims to bring

⁷⁰<http://rap.ceu.edu/>

students from a basic or elementary level to intermediate and upper intermediate level of English,

identity helping Roma students to recognize their values as Roma and to return and help their communities to do the same way.

Conclusions

The one month I have spent in Spain was enough to understand the possibilities Roma have to access higher education. I consider it important to present at the beginning of my paper who are the target group of our research, because we cannot consider „disadvantaged group” denomination only in relation to

One of the most important results of my research is that neither the government, nor civil society organizations have any helpful and meaningful assistance programs for doing proper outreach activities for Roma aged between 15-18, only 2% reach higher education, the rest drop out education.

The situation of women is especially difficult, because we see intersectionality⁷⁵ intersectionality is a

generation to be able to unearth the stereotypes and give voice to questions. It is very important to do this with the involvement of Roma intellectuals, teachers, professors, sociologists, anthropologists.

It is very important that information is exchanged in both directions, towards the majority society in order to help them see the Roma culture as a value, to realize that it is important for them to keep their traditions, because in this way it will be easier for them to believe that they are valuable for the society and can achieve their goals more easily.

Finally, I would like to thank Judit Szira, the director of Roma Education Fund, who believed in me and gave me this opportunity to participate in this research. I can only hope that I can also work in the second part of the project and that I can be useful for fulfilling the project's goals.

I also thank Stela Garaz for being able to work together with her who, with her disciplined work ethic and analytical thinking made me become a better social scientist.

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