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RESTORE

PROVIDE SOCIAL PATHWAYS FOR ROMA PEOPLE

**PR1: IDENTIFICATION OF CIVIC EDUCATIONAL MODELS FOR DEMOCRATIC
PARTICIPATION OF ROMA ADULTS**

NATIONAL REPORT - AUSTRIA

Erasmus+ Programme

KA220-ADU - Cooperation partnerships in adult education



VAEV – Vienna Association of Education Volunteers



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1. DESK RESEARCH

1.1 Main characteristics of the Roma in Austria

Tens of thousands of Roma live in Austria today. "Austrian Roma" refers to all Roma living on Austrian territory, regardless of their socio-political status. Conservative estimates speak of at least 25,000 although far higher numbers are often stated. The quantitative demography of stigmatised and marginalised minorities in democratic systems is fundamentally problematic because there is (thankfully) no obligation or compulsion to publicly "confess" to membership of a disadvantaged group. Therefore it can be generally assumed that the conservative estimates are at the lower end of the spectrum. In the case of the Austrian Roma the population may number around 50,000.

The Austrian Roma are by no means a homogeneous group. The situation in Austria is similar to that in many, primarily western, European countries where the Roma population is generally composed of three groups with different socio-historical backgrounds arising from the three "waves of migration" with pan-European impact. These three individual groups are in turn heterogeneous:

- 1st Migration/Initial Immigration: indigenous Roma population, mostly living in the respective areas since the 15th or early 16th century;
- 2nd Migration/Vlach Migration: Vlach Roma who have spread around the world from the mid-19th century starting from Wallachia, Moldavia and adjacent areas as a result of socio-political changes such as abolition of serfdom and slavery in these countries;
- 3rd Migration/(South-)East-West Migration: labour migrants and refugees who from the 1950s have moved from east and south-east Europe to economically more developed and socio-politically stable western Europe.

1.2 Policies targeting Roma in Austria

For several years now the City of Vienna has been implementing a general integration oriented diversity policy, which regards the diversity of Vienna's population as an asset, without underestimating the challenges that such diversity brings. It implements numerous measures, considering in each case whether there is a need for the City Council itself to change and develop and asking to what extent the facilities and services provided by the City Council are accessible in equal measure by all Viennese citizens



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irrespective of their origin and are appropriate and tailored to individual requirements, and to what extent they need to be adapted to the needs, lives and social status of those with a migration background (integration oriented diversity management strategy). Implicit also is the objective of freedom from discrimination.

The division of responsibilities for this new strategy was defined and the necessary structures were created in 2004. Diversity management is a cross-sectional task which involves all business divisions, departments and units. A department dedicated to this task (Municipal Department 17, Integration and Diversity) was however created which, as well as performing integration tasks in its capacity as a centre of excellence, also supports the City Council in developing this area still further. In recent years, a huge amount of effort has been invested in creating a more diversity oriented administration.

In previous years the following priorities in particular were set:

StartWien immigrant coaching project

At the heart of Vienna City Council's integration measures is the comprehensive startup package offered to new immigrants arriving in Vienna. Municipal Department 17 has been offering this startup package under the auspices of the StartWien [Start coaching] project since 1 October 2008. The coaching project StartWien is part of the City of Vienna's welcome package. It includes initial coaching in the mother tongue, talks in the mother tongue on the structure of the Austrian education and healthcare systems, the Viennese labour and housing markets, residency requirements and living together, an education/training booklet and language vouchers. StartWien was developed and implemented in conjunction with Municipal Department 35 (Immigration, Citizenship and Registry Offices), the Migrant Advice Centre [Beratungszentrum für Migrant/innen], the Vienna Employment Promotion Fund [Wiener ArbeitnehmerInnenförderungsfonds], the Vienna Employment Service [Arbeitsmarktservice Wien], the Austrian chambers of commerce (WKO) and the Vienna Chamber of Labour [Arbeiterkammer Wien] <http://www.startwien.at/>.

Viennese Integration and Diversity Monitoring

At the end of 2007, at the international Making Integration Measurable [Integration messbar machen] conference, Municipal Department 17 presented the concept of Viennese Integration and Diversity Monitoring. Together with national and international partners, the Department examined the issue of the measurability of integration and diversity from a number of different technical and institutional perspectives. Integration monitoring enables the ongoing observation of areas where integration is taking place and can be measured, such as, for example, education and training, access to the labour market, level of income and housing supply. It describes the social status quo of the Viennese population from an integration perspective using selective indicators. It provides a springboard for strategic developments in the City of Vienna's policies and organisation. Diversity monitoring analyses the progress that the City of Vienna has made in implementing its diversity policy. It evaluates the extent to which the administration has achieved its objectives in terms of adapting its services and personnel development and identifies any future development needs. This is based on the policy objectives and on the social needs that emerged from integration monitoring. On 9 April 2010, the results were presented to the public. The next



monitoring statement, which will contain initial information on changes that have occurred over this period, is due to be published in the summer of 2012.

Diversity management at Vienna City Council

Diversity management deals with the issue of how a city can approach the cultural, linguistic and social diversity of its population in such a way as to ensure that as many people as possible benefit from this diversity and how it can manage the challenges that this diversity brings more effectively.

The City of Vienna, as service provider and employer, has set itself the following two main objectives:

- Equal quality of services for all Viennese citizens (use of diversity skills when providing services), optimization of services so that all customers are reached.
- Equal opportunities and equal treatment when recruiting staff and equal development opportunities for staff working for Vienna City Council; increase in the percentage of staff with a migration background.

1.3 Conclusion

Although based on insufficient empirical data – the difficulties and sometimes the impossibility of obtaining such were indicated in the introduction – this description provides a realistic image of the situation of the Austrian Roma population. The fact that, as is the rule in such descriptions, it is only a "limited" part of reality, has less to do with the primarily anecdotal data base which is "only" based on experiences, observations, generalisations etc., but rather with the fact that population groups – particularly heterogeneous, marginalised populations – are subjected to constant change. This fact is to some degree even more complicated by the fact that social changes are not really predictable. Apart from the chance that the composition of each group may well change due to the on-going east-west migration, the outlined historical, cultural and emotional parameters do have significance beyond the current situation. They enable not only the recording of the situation in Austria, but are also paradigmatic of the Roma populations of central and western European countries. These countries are all affected in the same or at least similar manner by the three waves of migration described above with a pan-European impact and have therefore also the same or similarly structured Roma populations. In this context it should be noted that the plural 'peoples' is appropriate only in the national context, as there is still one, although heterogeneous, Roma population in Europe.

2. Brief summary of the key findings reached through the online survey

2.1 Methodology

The research was in the form of the online survey and aimed at Roma people and professionals who work with Roma people within Austria. The research was distributed to organizations for target groups and also shared among Roma people in Austria. In general, we received 17 responses, 7 for Roma people and 10 for professionals respectively.



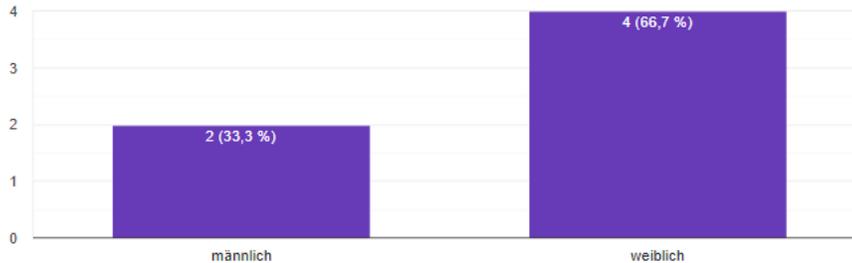
The purpose of the online poll was to learn firsthand about the issues and obstacles that Roma populations encounter when it comes to civic engagement and participation in their communities. The survey consists of twenty-three questions, with a mix of closed and open questions, with the purpose of obtaining direct answers about the skill gaps and training needs of Roma populations. Also, the questions aim at finding out to which extent Roma people are familiar with possibilities to get more civic engagement, and if they are not, then why?

Table 1 and 2

Welches ist Ihr Geschlecht? Wenn Sie nicht antworten möchten, können Sie diese Frage überspringen.

 Kopieren

6 Antworten



Welche Nationalität haben Sie?

7 Antworten

serbien

RUMÄNIARIN

kroatisch

spanisch

österreichisch

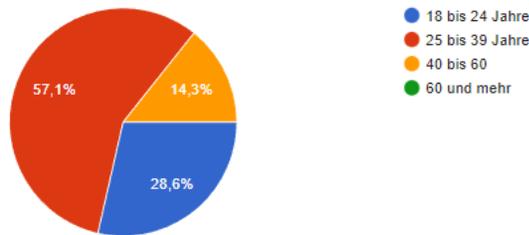
österreichische

Rumänian

Zu welcher Altersgruppe gehören Sie?

 Kopieren

7 Antworten



Here, you can see the demographic characteristics of the respondents of Roma people and professionals who work with them. As for the Roma people, more than half of the interviewed are female, whereas one-third is female. The age group of the respondents which prevails is 25 till 39 old years. All the respondents have nationalities of different countries: 2 Austrians, 2 Romanians, 1 Serbian, 1 Croatian and 1 Spaniard. As for education, most of the interviewees have finished secondary education, but also some people have graduated with bachelor's, and some reached the master's level.

2.3. Data analyzing of Roma people

The first series of questions reflects the Roma's broad knowledge and understanding of the Austrian civic training program. It is notable that Roma people are not fully familiar with the possibilities and have hardly participated in any initiatives which could be of great help and foster their inclusion. However, the most part of the respondents believes that such projects and workshops would help.

Why didn't they try to participate – is the focus of the next questions. Some people say it is because of the lack of motivation. They do believe it is beneficial, however, they have some other problems in their everyday life which fall into more prioritization than civic engagement, for instance, how to get better chances work-wise or how to get through everyday problems. The other obstacles, according to respondents, also include not enough time and not enough information concerning the initiatives in Austria.

In general, a big part of the respondents considers participation in the pieces of training of a great value in terms of their civic engagement. It could boost their chances career-wise and help them to get more included in society.

Some of the respondents are unemployed now, and it may also be an issue for Roma adults. The lack of civil engagement does cause problems with employment, which makes it also difficult for them to be active in society. It seems that this is an endless circle, however, there are many possibilities how we can tackle it, which was discussed during the focus group with professionals, and can be found later in the report.



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As for the technological approach, Roma adults understand the efficiency of using them while learning important practices, because technology plays an important and innovative role in improving civic participation training for Roma, as many people already use digital technologies, and it allows for more flexibility in the time schedule. This must be considered while developing programs for the Roma community, particularly if there are employed.

Overall, there is a low degree of involvement in civic training programs, which is consistent with the findings of many other scholars. In contrast to the current low level of involvement, the next question about readiness to participate if given the opportunity reveals a high degree of motivation among the respondents.

In general, Roma adults, who have conducted the survey, have not participated in any trainings so far, and the reasons for that are clear, and correlate with the responses from professionals who work with Roma. It is essential to mention such reasons: a lack of information about training options among Roma; a lack of motivation to participate; a language barrier; time constraints; a lower educational level; and a different set of priorities.

3. Brief summary of the key findings reached through the online survey with Professionals

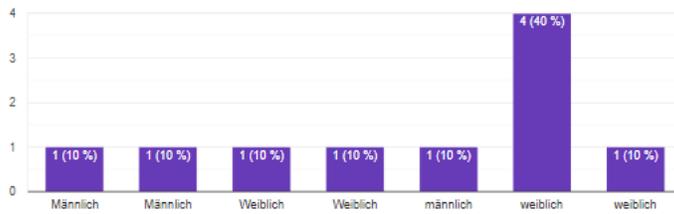
The demographic elements of the respondents are explained in the next chart:



Welches ist Ihr Geschlecht? Wenn Sie nicht antworten möchten, dann bitte überspringen Sie diese Frage.

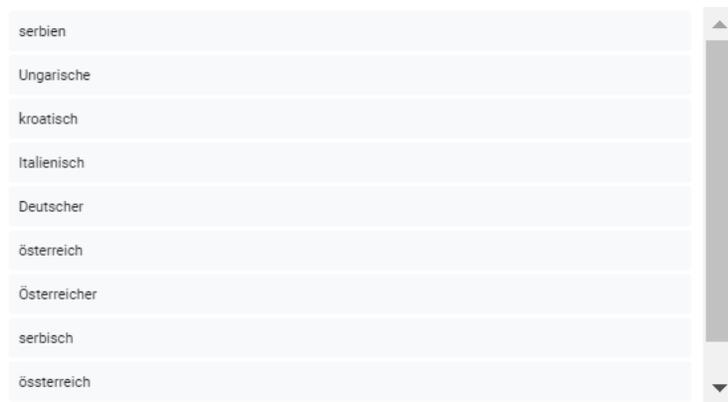
Kopieren

10 Antworten



Welche Nationalität haben Sie?

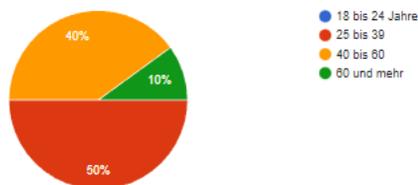
10 Antworten



Welcher Altersgruppe gehören Sie an?

Kopieren

10 Antworten



As for workers who contact Roma people, there are 10 respondents, who come from different countries, including Austria, Serbia, Croatia, Italy, Germany, and Italy. Most of them are social workers who work with Roma people, and one-fifth of the interviewed are teachers who also worked with Roma people, but all of them specialize in different fields: a little bit less than the half focus on social and cultural support of the Roma, and the rest fall in all different categories: each at the rate of 10%.

Concerning the technological approach, respondents have not employed it in trainings so far. However, most of them think that it would be beneficial because technology is an integral part of the developed society. Moreover, in terms of studying, it is very helpful to use platforms, such as Zoom, Skype, video





presentations, and so on. Respondents indicated that adopting e-learning platforms helps with distant education and allows Roma adults more freedom, but it also increases the chance of Roma adults being unable to follow the course owing to a lack of IT skills.

Language barriers are also frequent stumbling block. Not all Roma adults, according to respondents, speak German, and mostly, all opportunities for them in Austria are in German, which makes it difficult to even start participating.

In general, most of the respondents rated Roma civic involvement as low, even though there are many possibilities in Austria that aim at raising awareness on Roma democratic participation. The following key impediments were identified: a lack of information about training options among Roma; a lack of motivation to participate; a language barrier; time constraints; a lower educational level; the different set of priorities.

4. A brief summary of the important findings from the organized focus groups/interviews with adults Roma adults in each nation.

In the interview, we managed to tackle current issues with the Roma person. The majority of Roma live in cities, and many have integrated. The majority of Gurbet and Arlije, as well as the majority of second-generation Kalderas, are Austrian citizens. Many people work for themselves in secondhand stores and other companies. The Burgenland Roma, the most impoverished group, are the focus of government policy for the Roma community, yet they make up a small percentage of the entire Roma population.

The first topic we discussed was education. The Roma face educational disadvantages and perform at a lower level than the overall population. Only a small percentage of students complete higher secondary education, and even fewer continue to further education. However, according to the interviewee, for children born after 1980, the situation has improved slightly.

The Roma people also mentions the importance of better chances for education as the main aspect of helping the Roma to be more engaged in society. The interviewee confirms that the problem lies also in the lack of motivation due to some cultural and religious habits. However, the need to adopt in Europe, for instance, should be considered by the Roma people. As mentioned, for new generations the situation may be different, since everything has in general improved, and now, these kids have much more chances to get a proper education, so the real problem may only concern Roma adults.

It may be difficult to persuade Roma to participate in political processes and civic engagement programs. Most of them are curious about how it might assist them in dealing with their most pressing issues, and training programs may appear to be a waste of time at first glance. On the other hand, meaningful and deep participation takes time for participants to improve their communication and other skills.

Concerning the EU right and civic engagement in more detail, the Roma appear to be aware of core EU rights, European values, and the principles of unity and diversity, according to their responses to a series



of questions about EU rights. The issues of freedom of movement, health insurance, and the right to vote in European elections were all raised. Austria is welcoming towards different nationalities and tries to help everybody get more adjusted and more included in the society. Everybody agreed upon the fact that possibilities for Roma people in Austria allow them to do so, however, again, the lack of participation is the problem.

5. Brief overview of major findings from focus groups/interviews with educators, professionals, and volunteers working with adult Roma adults in each nation.

Interviewers have conducted the interview with 4 people who work with the Roma professionals trying to understand the core problem of the low civic engagement, and how to raise awareness of special practices among Roma people. As previously mentioned, these two problems are considered to be two stumbling blocks when it comes to their participation in society. During the interview, more things were revealed, which is very helpful in terms of a better understanding of the matter.

Common difficulties they face are limited access to quality education and difficulty integrating into the labour market, leading to further poverty and social exclusion, lack of quality healthcare and poor living conditions were all mentioned during the interview.

As stated by the Roma professionals, Roma, traditional market segments are dwindling. Heritage of low educational attainment is rather high (irrespective of gradual improvements made during the last two decades), resulting in above-average labour market problems also for young people of Roma origin. The financial situation of many Roma may not be explicitly precarious (with the exception of asylum seekers and of people coming to Austria for short-term begging) in the sense of extreme poverty, but many of them apparently have to live from low or very low-income. At the same time housing conditions of most Roma in Austria are rather favorable from an international comparative point of view, as segregated and marginalized Roma settlements (with one minor exception, where the situation improved as well to a large degree during the last decade) do not exist.

Public debate and discourse on social integration and social inclusion of Roma is extremely weak in Austria. Overall, the public and political awareness of respective challenges and problems appear to be very low, with the exception of the “problem” of public begging, which attracted considerable political attention during the last two years or so (resulting in bans on public begging in a number of federal provinces).

Associations of Roma and Sinti have been established in increasing numbers during the last two decades. These associations – amongst other things – try to lobby for an improvement of the social situation of Roma and Sinti in Austria, they offer advice to Roma and Sinti people, inform the majority population about the history and current situation of Roma and Sinti living in Austria and try to organise and to get public funding for specific programmes and projects likely to improve the social situation of their group. However, it seems fair to say that political response has – at best - been rather limited and that initiatives taken by public authorities themselves are even more rare.

The historical aspect is also very important, according to the interviewed group of people who work with Roma adults. Discrimination against Roma adults has been always a problem, and it should be tackled by



different initiatives. For example, such things were mentioned: the NGO Romano Centro organised a temporary multimedia exhibition entitled “Romane Thana” (“Places of the Roma”) in 2015 at Wien Museum and in 2017 at Vorarlberg Museum. “Romane Thana” explores the history of Roma in Austria and offers teaching material on Roma and the Roma Genocide online. Since 2012, the National Roma Contact Point at the Austrian Federal Ministry organises Dialogue platforms with the Roma civil society on specific subjects. On 2 June 2017 the Dialogue Platform was dedicated entirely to Memorial and Commemoration work.

6. Brief summary of the conclusions reached through the selected good practices

1. A Study of National Policies “Promoting Social Inclusion of Roma” was conducted in order not only to give an overview on the situation of Roma people in Austria, namely, the social situation, geographic distribution, data gaps in the matter and nature of discrimination of Roma people but also to assess existing policy and governance framework.
2. Project “SENSIRO”: it is a project that independently evaluates the resulting national strategy, which was adopted in 2011 and whose continuation was recently decided. The project consists, among other things, of a comprehensive survey of key actors (from civil society) and those responsible and entrusted with the implementation of the strategy.
3. Women's counseling in Romano Centro. Due to the socially difficult situation of many Roma/Romnja and Sinti/Sintize in Austria, Romano Centro started offering counselling on social and legal issues in addition to cultural and educational work as early as the beginning of the 1990s. Over the years, it has become clear that men and women face different, partly gender-specific challenges. In order to meet the need for sensitive counselling that specifically addresses the main problems of women and girls, Romano Centro created a special offer for women in September 2013 with the life and social counselling.
4. Research “Monitoring Cycles for Roma minorities”: The National Roma Integration Strategies' examined key structural preconditions for successful implementation, including anti-discrimination and fighting antigypsyism, governance and overall policy framework (including Roma participation, coordination structures, and use of European Structural and Investment Funds), anti-discrimination and fighting antigypsyism.
5. Viennese Integration and Diversity Monitoring of Roma people implements numerous measures, considering in each case whether there is a need for the City Council itself to change and develop and asking to what extent the facilities and services provided by the City Council are accessible in equal measure by all Viennese citizens irrespective of their origin and are appropriate and tailored to individual requirements, and to what extent they need to be adapted to the needs, lives and social status of those with a migration background (integration oriented diversity management strategy).

8. National level conclusions and recommendations that should be linked with the capacity building programme (O2).



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Antigypsyism is still a big problem in our society which contributes to Roma separation from the society. Discrimination on the basis of race, sect, religious belief, or gender is unfortunately engrained in our human society. Our yearning for exclusivity or our conviction in our superiority force us to distinguish ourselves from the "other." This provides us a false sense of power that we love exercising, even if it is mostly through the infliction of horrific pain and suffering on the "other."

We can't change human nature, but we can help Roma people to overcome such behaviors towards them. Not just for the sake of societal harmony and peace, but also for the increased production and advancement that may be achieved when equality and justice reign supreme.

In general, it seems fair to say that Austria does not show a strong tradition of explicit antidiscrimination policies. For example, trade unions and the Austrian Chamber of Labour run respective programmes and projects, but their public visibility is apparently rather low. NGOs like Zara40 document cases of racist discrimination, provide advice for victims and witnesses of discrimination or as well anti-discrimination trainings and counselling for employers. Roma associations are engaged in awareness-raising and providing information about the history and current situation of Roma and Sinti in Austria to the wider general public but also in schools or to university students. However, these projects, important as they may be, are of rather small scale, given the very limited public funding for such activities.

Overall, further initiatives should be taken in this area, raising awareness for different forms of discriminating practices and making the overall population (and political decisionmakers alike) more familiar with the history and current situation of Roma and Sinti in Austria and in Europe.