

**SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF ROMA PEOPLE –
THE IMPORTANCE AND REMIT OF ROMA MEDIA:
A CASE STUDY**

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Abstract. The improvement of the social status of the Roma as a highly deprived social group is a priority of the countries signatories of the *Roma inclusion 2005–2015*. The Roma population, outstandingly more than all others, faces numerous problems. The state institutions in the Republic of Serbia have been actively involved in the process of social integration of the Roma through numerous actions and measures of positive discrimination, exclusively aimed at the Roma (employment, education etc.). Special attention is paid to developing and supporting the media in the Roma language. As the researches have shown, the media using Roma language contribute significantly to building up and maintaining the cultural identity of the Roma, as well as to promoting an improved image of this social group.

Keywords: Roma population, decade of Roma inclusion, readmission, Roma integration, Roma media

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1. Decade of Roma inclusion

For the Roma, who are spread all over Europe as transnational minority, the last two decades have been marked with processes of their economic, political and cultural emancipation, adjustment and over adjustment (Sapir 1974) in the environments where they live. The Republic of Serbia has accepted numerous Roma families from other republics affected by wars on the territory of the former Yugoslavia from the 1990s, as well as those who suffered the ethnic exile from Kosovo. Therefore, Serbia is making great efforts to *integrate* them in a normal, civilian life. These processes are complex and sensitive and it is difficult to implement them only by the state political decisions and the decisions of European institutions, including significant resistance among non-Roma, as well as among the Roma population themselves, still closed up in their pawn cultural heritage.

Pole Polanski, the winner of the Weimar human rights prize, a historian specializing in genocide over the Roma population and activist for their rights, has stated that in 1999, around 90 thousand of the Roma people were expelled from Kosovo and over 14 thousand of their houses were burned. The remaining Roma in Kosovo do not want their children to go to Albanian schools or serve in the Kosovo army, but even if they did not express such attitude, they would not be able to get employment in institutions in Kosovo. Many of them declare themselves as Serbs, Bosnians or Muslims. They are mainly unemployed, illiterate, live in severe poverty, and often face physical abuse. Many Roma families found refuge in Central Serbia when they left Kosovo and have not regulated their formal and legal status. The Roma claim that they cannot stay in Kosovo after the declaration of independence. The reasons are, obviously, numerous.¹

The promotion of the social position of the Roma as a highly deprived social group (Jaksic 2002) is a priority of the countries signatories of the *Roma inclusion 2005–2015*. That process was started by the Fond for open society, World Bank and EU, which require that the governments of central and south-east European countries promote the situation of the Roma by their strategies and action plans, and to integrate them in all social, economic and political trends in their countries. The joint declaration (Sofia, Bulgaria, 2 February 2005) was signed by the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia² and Montenegro, which are obliged to show concrete results in the forthcoming years and to establish the improvement of the social position of the Roma. Many years of marginalization, segregation and discrimination have caused their difficult situation in the whole of Europe. The Roma, according to their socio-demographic indicators (education, employment, social respect, living standard, etc.) are at the lowest social level. Extremely poor educational structure of the Roma is one of the major causes of their non-integration in the society, and it affects existence and deepening of the socio-economic gap between the Roma and other population (Raduski 2009).

European programme *readmission* (the action of returning and accepting the persons which do not fulfill or no longer fulfill the conditions for staying on the territory of other countries) forces the Roma to go back to Serbia against their will from the countries of Western Europe. The returnees are citizens of one of the

¹ The debate in the European Parliament on the devastating position of the Romanies in Kosovo, especially the position of more than 100,000 members of this national minority violently exiled from Kosovo, held in early March 2006. On this occasion, the officials of the European Romani organizations requested that the Romani community should be involved in solving the problems in Kosovo and enable the return of the Romanies. The President of European Romani and Travelling Forum (ERTF) Rudek Kavcinski stated that they experienced this exile as 'a Second Holocaust'.

² Serbia is a member of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and the *International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights of the UN*, as well as the *European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*, the *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* and the *European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages*.

countries in which they lost the right of residence and in accordance with the readmission agreement, have been returned or are being returned to the home country. The return of at least 100,000 Roma, who reside mainly illegally in these countries, is expected.

2. Legally invisible Roma

It has been estimated that between 12 and 14 million of Roma people from different Roma groups live in Europe. Almost half of all Roma people live in the central and south-east part of Europe. In Serbia, Roma people represent one of the larger ethnic communities.³ Estimations about the number of Roma people in Serbia differ. According to the official statistics (2002), in Serbia 108,193 people declared themselves as Roma: in Central Serbia 79,136, and in Autonomous Province of Voivodina 29,057. That is 1.44% of the population in Serbia. In the Serbian Province Voivodina that represents 1.43% of the population of this region, but that percentage is higher because a great number of the Roma people still declare themselves as other nationalities, most often in accordance with the language of the area they live in, i.e. according to the dominant ethnic group. Most often, they declare themselves as Serbs, Hungarians or Romanians.⁴

However, according to the unofficial data (Ackovic 1997), the real number is between 450,000 and 800,000. In reports coming from Roma non-government organizations (in Serbia until February 2010 even 116 Roma non-government organizations were registered), it is stated that in Voivodina there are between 100,000 and 150,000 Roma people, which is, again, four to five times more than according to the official statistics. Many of them live in non-registered settlements or are not registered, they often move and it is difficult to cover them with the official census so it is said that they are *legally invisible Roma*. Apart from that, there is no exact evidence of the Roma coming back from western countries following readmission agreements.

An expert in this problem Jovanović (2003) states that according to different results of the 1981 and 1991 census the number of the Roma people decreased from 168,099 to 143,519 people, and in the census from 2002 their number dropped for another 60 thousand people. Jovanović asks the following questions: “What happened in the period between the two censuses? What happened with

³ In Serbia, there are four different groups of Romanies: Turkish Romanies (Muslim religion, they speak Serbian, Romani and Turkish); White Gypsies (a part of Turkish Romanies of the Muslim religion, they speak only Serbian), German or Banat Romanies (originating from Banat, they speak Serbian and Romani), and Vlach Romanies (came from Romania, Orthodox religion, speak Serbian, Vlach and Romani. In Serbia they are called Vlach Romanies, in Bosnia are called Karavlas, and in Croatia – Koritari).

⁴ In the village of Conoplja (Voivodina), for example, some Romanies state that their mother tongue is Hungarian; they feel and declare themselves as Hungarians, and they have Hungarian surnames – Kolompar, Lakatos, Smith Heka, Burai (Marjanovic, Marjanovic 1998).

60,000 people in 20 years? Did they all die? Did they leave the country? No children were born?”. Jovanovic stated that all the questions may sound absurd, but also “they are the first `logical` reaction to the census results”. There have not been any answers to these questions.

3. Common problems of Roma people

The Roma population, outstandingly more than all others, faces numerous problems. They are, mainly, chronic poverty, high unemployment rate, discrimination, ethnic distance, low level of education, alarming situation in health protection. All these are followed by particular cultural and social way of life and a number of negative stereotypes (loud, argumentative, dirty, lazy; Marjanovic 2001). Only 27.2% of Roma are (officially) economically active, that is, almost 70% of them are unemployed. As opposed to other ethnic groups, where the average life expectancy is around 75 years, life expectancy of Roma population is 55 for men and 48 for women. Apart from that, around 75–80 % of the Roma are functionally illiterate; only 0.3% show some level of literacy. Almost 60% of the Roma children never finish primary school, and only 0.9% continues further education (in Voivodina there are currently 36 elementary schools in which the Romani language is learned).

Table 1. Information on the number of pupils in the first year of primary school who learn the Romani language with elements of national culture, since the subject was introduced (Autonomous Province of Voivodina)

| School year | Number of pupils |
|-------------|------------------|
| 1997/1998 | 9 |
| 1998/1999 | 19 |
| 1999/2000 | 28 |
| 2000/2001 | 16 |
| 2001/2002 | 33 |
| 2002/2003 | 100 |
| 2003/2004 | 90 |
| 2004/2005 | 99 |
| 2005/2006 | 135 |
| 2006/2007 | 137 |

The results from the last census held in Serbia (2002) show that 32% of the Roma have no school education or completed fewer than four years of primary school, and only 0.3% study in higher education schools or universities. As a direct consequence of their illiteracy, there is absence of any personal and social prospective for most Roma. In order to mitigate this situation, in the past couple of years many educational centers, internet centers, etc. for the Roma have been opened, in which they can get various advice and help.

The state institutions have been actively involved in the process of social integration of the Roma through numerous actions and measures of positive discrimination, which is exclusively aimed at the Roma (employment, education etc.)⁵. For the first time in the legislation of Serbia (*Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities* 2002, art. 4) there is an institute of *affirmative discrimination*, i.e. affirmative action of the authorities to adopt regulations and individual legal acts in order to ensure full and effective equality, which are applied exclusively to the Roma. After the *Law on protection of rights and freedom of national minorities* (2002) had been passed, the *National Council of Roma* (2003) was formed. It takes care of exercising the collective rights of the Roma in the area of information, education, language and culture. The National Council of the Roma minority is in its organization one of the biggest national councils of national minorities in Serbia and it has 35 members. It was chosen in accordance with the Founders' Electoral Assembly of 418 electors, who had the support of 100 members of the Roma national community each or who represented non-government Roma organizations.⁶ Besides the National Council, other bodies can take care of these and other rights, e.g. local self-government, regional bodies and the bodies of the Republic, organizations (non-political and political citizens' associations) and institutions (public information services, cultural institutes). However, the National Council can be considered, and this is how the state treats it, as a *representative* body of the Roma national minority.

It is clear that apart from the aid coming from the state, the Roma people have to, within their own community, define a concrete programme of how to resolve their own problems in the direction of integration of various Roma communities in the given cultural environment, as well as into more active engagement in political life⁷, and to offer all that to national governments and European institutions.

⁵ Within the institutions responsible for human and minority rights since 2003 there has been the Secretariat that operates for the Romani National Strategy (SRNS), whose work is supported by international organizations – the UN Development Programme and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the Open Society Fund, the OSCE Mission in Serbia, the European Agency for Reconstruction, the Council of Europe, and UNHCR. The Secretariat activities relate primarily to the initiation, coordination, monitoring and implementation of activities aimed at improving the position of the Romani national minority. Representatives of the Romani national minority are actively involved in planning, implementing and monitoring the realization of initiated activities.

⁶ National Councils represent a specific form of institutionalized participation of national minorities in the political life of Serbia. The National Councils are bodies that help minorities to preserve their uniqueness, the rights acquired and guaranteed by legislation. *The Council is a national minority in the field of official use of a language, education, information on minority language and culture, and it participates in decision-making or decides on issues in these fields and establishes institutions in these fields.* Councils are established on the principles of willingness, election, proportionality and democracy and each national community decides *independently* on the formation of its national council.

⁷ There are two Roma parties in the highest legislative body.

4. Roma media and media in Romani language

Sastimasa Romalen! Majmistoro Romalen! Laco djes! – Greetings to the Roma! Hello Roma people! Welcome! – these are introductory words on twenty TV and radio stations in Serbia which broadcast programmes in Roma language and enable this ethnic minority to listen to programmes in their own language. However, representatives from Roma associations claim that their rights in the area of information in their own language are insufficient and limited in various ways, and that constitutional and legislative regulations about the rights and freedom of the Roma people are mainly of the declarative nature.⁸ Their representatives, as well as representatives of the cultural elite of other national minorities in Serbia are not on the whole (65.8%) satisfied with the way the public media service of Serbia serves the communication needs of their communities (Radojkovic 2007). The Roma, however, see the possibility to establish a larger number of local media in the Roma language.

However, one can state that there are also some good examples which show that it is possible to overcome these shortages or at least lessen them, in this case without media. It is about media in the Romani language (there is a division on the Roma media which were started by Roma people and the media started by non-Roma, and made for the Roma), which in Serbia are given much attention due to their significance in creating and preserving cultural identity of the Roma population. Although we are not dealing with the visibility of the Roma in the majority of media, literature (Radojkovic and Stojkovic 2004) reminds us that it is necessary to see the difference between the presence of minorities in major media and the media of the minorities. The first refers to the presence of the minorities and their social (in)visibility in major media. In that case representing media in media has triple mediation: in the field of media production, in the field of perception and in the field of reference, actually an existential situation of minorities. In the second case we are talking about the media of the minorities themselves, then about the minority edition within the national RTV system and local and private media. Unfortunately, in practice, in reporting about the Roma there is a great difference

⁸ According to *the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia* in 2006, Serbia is the state of the Serbian people and all citizens who live in it, so the ethnic communities are an integral part of political decision-making. Therefore, the ethnic question in the Republic raised the level of constituent elements of the state. In the Constitution (Article 75), it is stated that persons belonging to national minorities, in addition to the rights that the Constitution guaranteed to all the citizens, shall be guaranteed additional, individual or collective rights too. Individual rights are achieved individually and collectively in the community with others. Through the collective rights of national minorities, either directly or through their representatives, they participate in decision-making or decide on certain issues related to their culture, education, information and official use of language and script. In order to achieve the right to self-government in culture, education, information and official use of languages and scripts of national minorities their national councils may be elected.

between the mainstream and Roma media to which Andzej Mirga points saying that “The Roma media and the non-Roma media are two nonintersecting circles”⁹.

For the Roma the right to information in their mother tongue has triple significance: it widens their civil competence, contributes to their social integration and is a significant resource of information. The media have an important role in including the Roma community in the society and this is why their representatives must be well informed and trained to report about the problematic issues of this group. However, the unsatisfactory qualification structure of the employees in the mass media is particularly expressed in the Roma media, since this population has the least favorable educational structure in comparison to all national communities in Serbia. Therefore, the state bodies got included in solving these problems.

The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia has started the project called *The Roma representatives for media* which is being implemented together with the National Council of the Roma National Minority (the project value is around 12 thousand Euros). The project is going to encompass the Roma who deal with the media, and who live and work in the environments with the majority Roma population. It has been envisaged that 18 Roma representatives go through the training for acquiring communicational and journalistic skills. After the training, they are going to be engaged within local communities to edit programmes and reports, as well as to release the information important for the Roma community.

In that context, the National Council of the Roma has adopted the strategy for improvement of the performance of the Roma media, which includes the following tasks:

- to act on elimination of any kind of ideas based on racial or national superiority, racial hatred and urge of any kind of discrimination and violence over the Roma in media;
- to enhance awareness among professional staff of all media about the special responsibility for prevention of spreading prejudice and avoid reporting incidents in which individuals from the Roma population are involved in the way which blames the Roma community in general;
- to develop educational and media campaigns to educate the public about the life of the Roma, about their society and culture and the importance of building one inclusive society where human rights and identity of the Roma is respected;
- to encourage and ease the approach to Roma media, including newspapers and television and radio programmes, establish their own media and train Roma journalists;
- to encourage methods which will monitor and control their work themselves, develop codes of ethics for media organizations in order to avoid racial, discriminatory or biased language.

⁹ “The Media and the Roma in Contemporary Europe: Facts and Fictions”. Prague: *Project on Ethnic Relations* (1996). Downloaded on 24th June 2010, from: <http://www.per-usa.org/1997-2007/rommedia.htm>.

The project of Roma to start Internet network organizations and associations from central, east and south-east Europe *Rrommedia.net*, which represents the Roma media of this region, is also significant.¹⁰ The programme goals for organizing this network have been specified as follows:

- to give support for establishing professional Roma media and productions which will be competitive to non-Roma media with regard to quality;
- to establish and strengthen independent and professional Roma media;
- to promote Roma culture, history, tradition, values, customs and the Romani language;
- to raise the level of awareness and knowledge about the situation in which the Roma are among the players on non-Roma political scene in the society, as well as the questions related to the situation of the Roma people in political agenda;
- to connect Roma media with non-Roma media and non-Roma population;
- protection and promotion of human rights for the Roma community on European level;
- to eliminate discrimination, marginalization, segregation, stereotypes and prejudice that non-Roma have towards the Roma people.

5. Learning the Romani language through media

The Roma do not have a standardized language and it is difficult to codify it without a decisive state policy in the areas of education, culture, and mass media. *European Charter for Regional or Minority of the Council of Europe* (1992) recognizes the Romani language as non-territorial language. In the first Congress of the Roma in London 1971 it was said that “there is no dialect that is better than other dialects, but we need a codified language which we would speak at congresses and write in it in international journals”. In the standardization of the Romani language there are two tendencies: the first builds the basic principles of standardization on integration level so that all Roma dialects should be joined, and the second is used in certain countries where the Roma live (for example: for Macedonia Šaip and Kepeski, for Bulgaria Kucukov, for Hungary Regel, for Austria Halvaks, for Czech Republic Humbasmanova).

The particularity of the Romani language and primarily oral literature of this ethnic group have created the need to use this language in media, schools and everyday communication. Since there is no possibility that all the Roma in Serbia are included in learning their mother tongue in schools or other places (out of around 800 thousand Roma in Serbia, only 7% knows the Romani language), a great importance is given to written and electronic media in the Romani language.

¹⁰ The decision on the establishment of *the Network* was passed by representatives of Romani Media and Romani Media Programmes at a meeting in Ohrid, Macedonia, on 26th and 27th October, 2003.

Therefore, “in one moment a large part of population can learn the same word or a group of same words, which is, of course, very difficult to do in classrooms and at school desks”, claims P. Nikolic, the editor of the Roma programme at the regional Radio Television Novi Sad. Nikolic points out that media in the Romani language speed up education, and the basic success of the media in the Romani language is in the fact that “they have urged the increase of students of the Roma nationality at the University of Novi Sad, and there are 30 of them now, which is a great success”. However, in the electronic media, the literary Romani language is looked after, as are the two most common dialects in communication – Arlia and Gurbet, but other dialects are also present, depending on participants in a programme.

6. Roma programmes in electronic media

The Roma programmes in electronic media are mostly broadcast within the programmes of the regional public media service of Radio Television Voivodina, and to a lesser extent in programmes of the national Radio Television Service of Radio Television of Serbia. Apart from these, programmes in the Romani language are broadcast by the Regional RTV Pančevo (twice a week, half an hour programmes), and in central Serbia *TV Nišava* (Niš), *TV Leskovac* (Leskovac) and *TV Belle Amie* (Niš).

Programmes in the Romani language are also offered by local radio stations. For instance, Radio Sombor broadcasts daily one and a half hours of this programme, *Radio Odžaci* two hours per week, and radio stations in bigger towns in Vojvodina (*Radio Bela Crkva*, *Radio Kikinda*, *Radio Novi Bečej* i *Radio Srbobran*). For central Serbia, programmes for the Roma are broadcast by *Radio Khrlo E Romengo* (Beograd), *Radio Nišava* (Niš) and *Radio romsko srce* (Pirot).

In recent years, several TV stations were established which broadcast programmes in the Romani language, the most famous being *Krlo Romengo* (*Voice of Roma*), *Amaro Drom* (*Roma Way*) from Belgrade, RTV *Nišava* from Niš and *Radio Rom* from Obrenovac. Also, some radio stations which broadcast programmes in the Serbian language, have started programmes in the Romani language: Radio Beograd I, Radio Šid.

Programme scheme for Roma of the regional public service RTV Vojvodina has been set as follows:

- a) Daily topics:
 - education – 30 minutes,
 - social policy – 20 minutes,
 - cultural policy – 5 minutes,
 - regional cooperation – 5 minutes,
 - position of ethnic minorities– 10 minutes,
 - constitutional position of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina within Serbia– 5 minutes,
 - functioning of the National Council of the Roma – 5 minutes;

- b) in the programme in the Romani language, there is space for independent radio production, and cooperating with other radio stations in Vojvodina which broadcast some of their programmes in the Romani, is deemed important (Kovačica, Vršac, Bela Crkva, Kikinda, Novi Bečej, Sombor, Srbobran, Novi Sad, Bačka Palanka, Stara Pazova, Indjija, Beočin, Odžaci).

The first regular Roma television serial in the world *svetu Anglunipe (Progress)* was started in Serbia on 9 February 1986. At the beginning, it broadcast programs for the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, later for the whole of Serbia and for the territory of Yugoslav Radio Television (JRT). The first permanent Roma radio programme was started on 23 June 1983 in Belgrade's radio station *Studio B*.

The first TV program in the Romani language was broadcast within the Television Novi Sad in September 1992, and it was a monthly programme (Friday, from 11.30 to 12.00 hours), on channel 3 of TV Novi Sad, and an hour long weekly programme *Amen adjes (We today)*, which is still broadcast on this TV station (30 minutes). As the time passes, the volume and content of the Roma programme has increased, and today there are several different, thematic programs broadcast on Second Channel of TV Novi Sad, which is devoted to making programs in ten minority languages.

That broadcasting organization (over 1400 employees) made radio and television programs in the Romani language. The radio program in the Romani language is broadcast weekly and lasts 19 hours, whereas this daily program is broadcast for 4 hours. The percentage of Roma program in 2009 was 2.3% of the total program supply; in 2009 it was 2.3% of the total program supply of Television of Vojvodina, i.e. 480 hours. In the program, all journalistic forms were present as well as music. It characterized by professional relationships between all participants in the public information sector, which assumes the absence of hatred, violence and discrimination. It equally broadcast informative, cultural-educational, music and religious programs based on multi-confessional and ecumenical principle, and in cooperation with all religious groups among the Roma in Voivodina.

The stress is on the following topics: schools and education (esp. of female population), health culture, culture of living, ecology, employment, residence, development and maintenance of tolerance and dialogue, preservation of customs and traditions of the Roma, working with NGOs, etc. Linguistics and language culture are also examined. The program in the Romani language covers all relevant events from the life of the Roma, traditional manifestations, but is also creates them and initiates them. There is space for independent radio productions as well.

The programs in the Romani language cooperate with other media houses. This supports the multilingual approach and promotes cultures of other nationalities in their environments. It should be pointed out that this programme is bilingual (Romani - Serbian), which represents a step forward in the intercultural sense, and when it hosts guests from other language environments, it is multilingual. The

Roma were the first in Voivodina media to introduce the highest language standard – programs with no subtitles or simultaneous translation, where each participant speaks in his or her mother tongue, and they all more or less understand one another.¹¹

As opposed to the Roma electronic media, *print media* in the Romani language has a longer history. The magazine of science, culture and social issues of the Roma *Romologija*, was started in 1991. It contains original, literary texts of Roma writers, sociology, ethnography and Roma folk dances, follow contemporary happenings and culture of the Roma, has the information about the Roma cultural and artistic societies, unions, etc. Press publishing institution *Them* (operates in the town of Subotica), issues a magazine for children *Chavorrengo Them*.

The biweekly magazine *Them* (the founder is the National Council of the Roma) is a magazine for the Roma and non-Roma. It has been in circulation since 2004 in 3000 copies. The magazine is almost totally financed from the budget (96.93%), which shows that the sales of the magazine earn 3.07% of the costs. A private monthly magazine *Romano lil* (Belgrade) is issued in 5,000 copies.

7. Research results

The audience research service of the regional public broadcasting company (RTV) has continually analyzed the habits, attitudes and preferences of the Roma population in Voivodina concerning radio and television programs in the Romani language. The first research in the Romani was carried out in April 1993 in order to establish the first reactions of the Roma to these programs (only six months after it had been launched; Cakan 1996).

Due to the significance of this research we point out its main results. The research was done on the sample of 235 respondents older than 15 years of age from ten bigger settlements in Voivodina. The criterion for the choice of a settlement was double: regional coverage of the territory of Voivodina and the presence of the Roma population in the population structure of these settlements (according to the *Census* from 1991). The analysis of the data about the respondents gives a telling overview of work and conditions of life of the interviewed Roma, so we can see outstanding grouping in several categories of professions: workers (10%), artists (5%), housewives (40%), and others (around 40%) in which there are the Roma without a specific profession, but mainly work active in permanent legal jobs (10%) and temporary jobs of the grey economy (30%).

The research, the results of which are presented in this study, was conducted in May 2008, as a field survey among 300 Romas who can follow TV programs in

¹¹ Over 90% of Romani media in the world use the language of the majority of the nations. About 7% of Romani media in the world are bilingual.

seven towns and villages with a higher concentration of this population.¹² The research, among other, was to determine:

- the ratio of the total program of the Television of Novi Sad, especially of the program is in the Romani language;
- following particular TV shows in the Romani language;
- interest in particular contents of the TV program, as well as in specific contents in the Romani language;
- the importance of the Roma media in informing and educating the population, as a contribution to the change of lifestyle of the Roma and their faster social integration.

The majority of the respondents were supported people (33.8%), followed by those who earn independently and constantly (27%), plus owners of private enterprises (5.1%). According to academic qualifications, the sample included mostly Romas who had completed primary school, i.e. eight grades of compulsory education (39.2%), a quarter of the respondents (25.5%) have not completed primary school, 30.4% have not completed secondary school, and 3.8% have not completed college or university. There were 5.1% of illiterate people. According to the age of the respondents, most people were between 20 and 29 years old, and the sample included slightly more women – 53.1% (Table 2).

Table 2. Personal characteristics of respondents

| Employment status | Academic qualifications | | Age | | Gender | | |
|--|-------------------------|---------------------------|------|---------|--------|--------|------|
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | |
| Employed in a company (public or private) | 16.7 | Illiterate | 5.1 | 15–19 | 11.2 | Male | 46.9 |
| Private entrepreneur, business owner | 5.1 | Incomplete primary school | 25.5 | 20–29 | 26.4 | Female | 53.1 |
| Earns independently and constantly, but not permanently employed | 27 | Primary school | 39.2 | 30–39 | 20.7 | | |
| Earns independently, but not constantly, and is not permanently employed | 17.4 | Secondary school | 30.4 | 40–49 | 20.7 | | |
| Supported person | 33.8 | College, university | 3.8 | 50–59 | 15.9 | | |
| | | | | over 60 | 5.1 | | |

¹² The research was based on a standardized questionnaire with closed, semi-closed and open questions. The basic socio-demographic characteristics of survey participants were registered by the questionnaire, too. Interviewers were Romani students of the University of Novi Sad. The sample survey consisted of 300 persons of Romani nationality in the following towns in Voivodina. The scope and purpose of this study provoked its realization in Romani settlements which residents can follow the TV program. The sample was completely implemented.

(1) The attitudes about the practice of the bilingual program. One part of the Roma program is mainly broadcast in Serbian. The majority of Roma respondents (70%) believe that it is a good practice, and as an argument supporting this program it is often cited the possibility for the members of other ethnic communities to explore the life and problems of the Romas. The second reason for supporting bilingual programs is the ignorance of the Romani language among the Romas (61%). A smaller number of participants in the survey (5%) believe that the practice of bilingual broadcast television program is not good, and that the entire program should be only in the Romani language, as it is for other ethnic minorities. About 1% of the respondents told that all the Romanies should have spoken the Romani language.¹³

(2) The interest in some broadcast contents. Films and serials are favorite TV programs among the Roma population. According to the interest, these are followed by music and entertainment; there is much less interest in serious issues, such as politics, culture, education, economics and even sport (Table 3).

Table 3. Interest in certain TV content*

| | |
|-----------------------|--------|
| Films and serials | 66.7 % |
| Entertainment | 54.2 % |
| Music | 45.9 % |
| Politics | 29.6 % |
| Culture and education | 29.3 % |
| Sport | 22.4 % |
| Economy | 18.4 % |
| Health | 15 % |
| Other | 1.4 % |

(*The total sum exceeds 100% since it was possible to choose three favorite TV contents.)

(3) The relation to the Romani language. The majority of respondents belonging to the Roma population can speak Romani language (74%), although many cannot speak it fluently (19%). The communication is impeded by the existence of

¹³ We point out the research of the School of Journalism in Novi Sad (2006) about watching the programme in the Romani language. The respondents (the focus group) were selected in such a way that they represent the diversity of media audiences by gender, age, education and occupation: Most of them pointed to problems in the monitoring programme in the Romani language, where the Romani audience is not very familiar with it, because of expansion and standardization of the Romani language. Younger Roma pointed out that their parents and grandparents follow these programs. Middle-aged participants said that their children under the age of 13 did not watch the program, because there is no content for the younger population. Respondents reported that these programs were followed primarily for the information (which is poor, as they noted) and Romani music (According to: Public Service of Voivodina: Monitoring the transformation of the Radio Television of Novi Sad in the Public Service of Voivodina. (2007). Novi Sad: the School of Journalism of Novi Sad, p. 200).

different dialects, which was confirmed by some Roma respondents, declaring that they cannot fully understand the Romani language spoken in radio and television programs (Table 4).

Table 4. Knowledge of the Romani language

| | |
|-----------------|------|
| Speak fluently | 74 % |
| Speak partially | 20 % |
| Do not speak | 6 % |

Most respondents, 87%, think that all Roma are supposed to know their mother tongue, but 8% reported that it was not important or they did not need it (Table 5).

Table 5. The relation to the Romani language

| | |
|--|------|
| All the Roma should speak the Romani language | 87 % |
| It is not important | 5 % |
| No attitude | 5 % |
| All the Romas do not have to speak the Romani language | 3 % |

(4) The interest in the issues about the Romani community life. Romas express a high interest in topics related to their own history and traditions. It was confirmed in this study, since the majority of survey participants (93%) stated that these topics should be included in the Romani programs (Table 6).

Table 6. Interest in television programs about the customs and traditions of the Roma

| | |
|----------------------|------|
| Very interested | 51 % |
| Partially interested | 42 % |
| Uninterested | 7 % |

(5) The life problems of the Roma. The respondents are very interested in everyday topics and problems that the Roma face in their private and business life. To a greater or lesser extent, it was confirmed by about 95% of respondents (Table 7).

Table 7. Interest in everyday problems of Romanies

| | |
|----------------------|------|
| Very interested | 65 % |
| Partially interested | 28 % |
| Uninterested | 7 % |

(6) The Roma and social institutions. The way how the members of Romani communities solve their business and personal problems and how they are helped by social institutions (local government, courts, social and community services, educational institutions, etc.), is the subject which is often discussed in the programs in the Romani language, especially in debate shows. About 55% of survey participants are interested in this area; and, to a lesser extent, 30% more (Table 8).

Table 8. Interest in issues of public institution activities

| | |
|----------------------|------|
| Very interested | 55 % |
| Partially interested | 31 % |
| Uninterested | 14 % |

(7) Romani music. The Roma appreciate and like the original Romani music. It was confirmed in this study, since almost 80% of respondents stated that what they prefer about the program in the Romani language is the authentic Romani music (Table 9).

Table 9. Interest in Romani music

| | |
|----------------------|------|
| Very interested | 78 % |
| Partially interested | 18 % |
| Uninterested | 4 % |

(8) The interest in issues of immediate and wider social environment. The Roma are the most interested in information from their immediate social environment – from the municipality in which they live and its nearest environment (50% are very interested and 35% partially interested); there follow the issues about the Province of Voivodina (49% very interested and 38% partially interested) and information relating to the whole Republic of Serbia (40% very interested and 41% partially interested) (Table 10).

Table 10. Interest in issues of immediate and wider social environment

| | Very interested | Partially interested | Uninterested |
|--------------|-----------------|----------------------|--------------|
| Municipality | 50.3 % | 49.1 % | 39.6 % |
| Province | 35.4 % | 37.8 % | 41 % |
| Republic | 14.3 % | 13.1 % | 19.5 % |

(9) Life of Roma in other countries. About two-thirds of respondents are interested in the life and problems of the Romanies in other countries. About 40% would like this topic to be more present in the local media (Table 11).

Table 11. Interest in the life of Romanies in other countries

| | |
|----------------------|------|
| Very interested | 41 % |
| Partially interested | 35 % |
| Uninterested | 24 % |

Basic research results

- Television is a medium that is to be taken as the primary source of information, so the shows on radio and television channels with coverage on the

territory of the Republic of Serbia are regularly watched, i.e. several times a week (on TV stations: TV Pink, RTS, Fox TV, TV and RTV B92).

- Approximately 99% of examined Romanies watch television programs, of which 74% does it on a daily basis.
- Favorite TV programs are movies, serials, music and entertainment programs.
- Television program of regional broadcasting – Radio Television of Voivodina – that according to the volume and content, broadcasts most of the programs for the Romani population in Serbia, is followed by 81% of surveyed Romanies.
- The most popular programs in the Romani language of this TV station are informative, educational and cultural.
- The majority of Roma respondents (70%) support the editorial policy of the broadcasting in the Romani language programs to broadcast bilingual programs (Romani-Serbian), for two main reasons: the members of other nations can learn about the life of the Roma, and all Roma cannot understand and speak fluently the Romani language.
- The majority of interviewed Roma – 66%, evaluate positively the radio and television programs in the Romani language and nearly 30% of respondents believe that this program is very good.
- Journalists and presenters of the Roma majority (60%) were rated as very good.
- According to the opinion of 64% of the respondents, the TV program of RTV Vojvodina in the Romani language has an important social mission and largely contributes to changing the consciousness of the Roma and their better integration into the society.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the Roma media contribute to the promotion of a different image and cultural identity of Roma within the majority population and the Roma community itself. However, their messages are directed primarily to win over this population for new forms of culture and norms of behavior. Therefore, they play an important part in “intensifying the vote” (Hirschman 1995) of Roma, improving their position in society and overall development of the Roma community.

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