



Ten years'... Danube Transnational Programme

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Barriers to mobility and coping strategies of highly qualified Roma youth on their way to the business sector in Hungary

Vera Messing and Zsuzsanna Árendás

Center for Social Sciences;

Central European University

Contexts/ multiple frameworks for interpretation

- *Bridge to Business programme* (Bridging Young Roma and Business: Intervention for inclusion of Roma youth through employment in the private sector in Bulgaria and Hungary), 2016-2019, OSF Bulgaria, Autonómia Alapítvány and CPS)
- Highly educated Roma: 27% of Roma between Y20-30 obtained secondary school qualification (2011), in our sample 381 qualified Roma (with at least SSQ)
- Roma on the LM: chances for employment increase for young educated Roma, less in the private sector
- Pathways to social integration/ social mobility: high prestige, quality jobs in the private sector will yield to social mobility
- Two articles are under submission:
 - The one presented here deals with the perspective of young Roma striving to business sphere jobs, the barriers they encounter and coping strategies (Intersections, Journal of East European Society and Politics. SI on mobility.
 - One, that deals with business sector's perspective: Árendás, Fejős and Messing: Do the Roma in CEE fit into corporate diversity? Principles and practices of including Roma in corporate sector firms" in SJM

Research, methods, data

- Mixed method approach: participant and non-participant research integrating qualitative and quantitative methodologies.
 - Survey of Roma aged 18-35 with at least upper secondary degree (matricula/érettségi) N= 381 (93 program participants + 287 control group). This sample comprises appr. 5% of the reference population, which is a very robust sample statistically.
 - Two dozen in-depth interviews with the same group. A dozen include recurring interviews with the same youth to follow on their educational and LM career, barriers, coping strategies.
 - Over dozen interviews with HR fellows of top MNC and local large companies in finance, business, services, retail etc.

Point of departure

- With upper secondary school degree are **the elite of young Roma**.
- **51% are in employment and 20% in education**, 25% are unemployed.
- BUT: Employment is skewed: 30% are self employed or in family business, 39% work in the public sector and only a fifth in the private sector.
- Without access to business sphere - the largest and best paid job segment – labour market integration of Roma will remain only partial.

Why are educated Roma youth so underrepresented in business sector jobs?

What are barriers of gaining employment in the business sector and how do young Roma cope with these?

Barriers and coping: compulsory education

- A similar share of Roma and non-Roma youth (~30%) who achieved upper secondary diploma (érettségi) are likely to continue education towards tertiary or other post-secondary education. The greatest barrier to successful LM integration for young Roma is to enter and complete upper secondary education offering matriculation. The root of this is in non-segregated primary schooling (only 10% in our survey attended segregated education at the primary level).
- Barriers to attaining competitive education identified in our research:
 - Scattered school trajectory: 72% changed school at least once in 4 years of gymnasium. Most frequent reason was a biased teacher and racial bullying; poor quality of 2ry school.
 - This becomes a barrier in two ways:
 - HR fellows may see this as a sign of problematic applicant, of unreliability, especially if scatter school trajectory is complemented by scattered LM trajectory.
 - Racial bullying or racially biased teachers, which have a long-lasting effect on self-esteem and self-worth.

“I had a teacher, who taught literature and grammar. *She picked on me.* Would she sit in front of me now, and tell ‘you smelly Gypsy’ I wouldn’t care. Unless she hit me, just verbally abuse, I wouldn’t care, anymore. It is her problem, not mine [...] But it was different back then. Our class was preparing a recital and she would not allow me to join. She either bullied me or would not notice me at all. My literature grades started to drop, and while I still had excellent grades in other subjects a *mental block built up with which I struggle up to date.* If I am tossed out of my comfort zone – for example in an examination or interview situation – my mind blocks and I can’t find words, can’t continue speaking, I become speechless. I think, the source of this psychological block dates back to this teacher”

Coping strategies:

- Very conscious and difficult choice of primary school;
- Changing school when a racially biased teacher blocks they child’s opportunities;
- Dealing with racist remarks and bullying;
- Looking for a supportive teacher in the school.

Barriers and coping: post compulsory education and qualification

- Small gap in the demand and supply concerning type of qualification: 27% of those in tertiary education graduated in economics and law, a similar share studied to become a teacher, and 9% indicated each of the five categories: engineering, social sciences, healthcare, culture and religious studies, social worker
- But: many graduate from low-ranked rural institutions of post-compulsory and tertiary education, which is seen as disadvantage in the business sector.
- Lack of essential skills demanded by the business sector: IT, English (or other foreign language).
- **Coping strategies:** multiple and parallel educational tracks; changing between education and work or doing in parallel the two.

The gender aspect of post compulsory education

- Different tracks for man and women: women more often choose professions that are less sought for in the business sector
- Traditional families are reluctant to let the young women go to study in another location and loose control over them.
- Women have to be the care-giver; it is often a young women in the family who has to take care of elderly, ill family members or help out with young siblings.



“

It was very difficult for my parents to let me go. It took two years until they accepted. First, they wanted me to commute daily, but when they saw that this was extremely heavy on me, time consuming and also, I could not participate in any program that started after 5 pm., they finally agreed that I should move to the dorm.

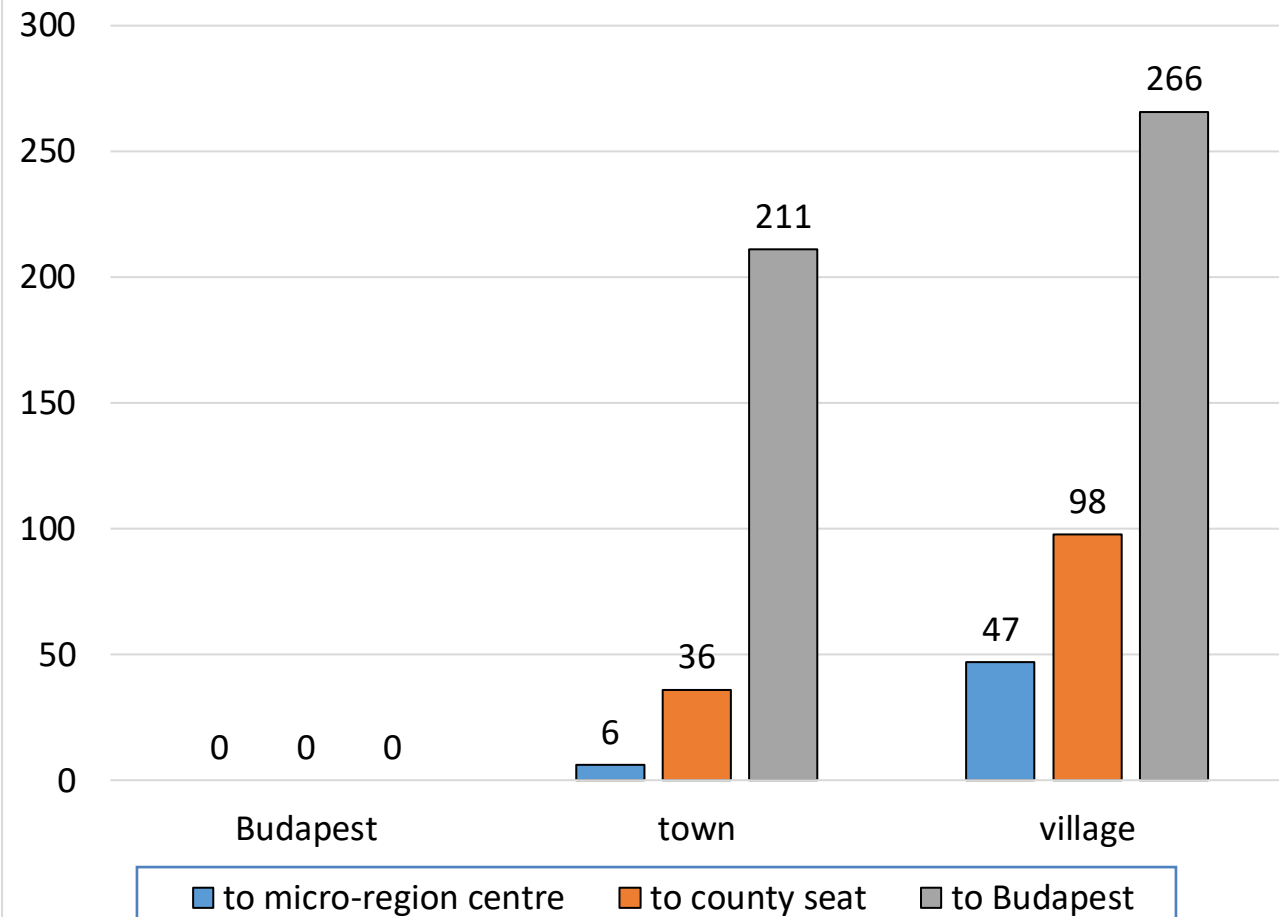
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Young Roma women (later became kindergarden teacher)

Barriers and coping: geography

- 85% live in rural Hungary;
- 36% live Bp or county seats, where business sector jobs are situated;
- Financial cost of relocation
- Emotional cost of relocation

Average time to reach geographical centers by public transports depending on the type of settlement of residence (in minutes)



Coping with geographical barriers. The gender aspect.

- The largest category is very mobile! (both the survey and interviews tell the same story) and does all available to be able to move for a job.
- A smaller part of young Roma were mobile but with some restriction (i.e. wanted to stay in the broader region). They had to be flexible in terms of the job.
- Several young Roma, especially women, were unable to move, primarily due to care responsibilities.

'H. is a single mother, living in a small village near Budapest. She was invited for a job but could not take up the employment, as the childcare (kindergarden) hours did not match with her working hours plus commuting time. Moving to Budapest with a small child was absolutely beyond her financial reach.'

Barriers and coping. Word of labour: encountering discrimination

- 21% of all respondents experienced discrimination personally. Half of those in employment reported having experienced discrimination despite their young age and short labour market presence.
 - During application
 - In the selection process
 - In the job.

Various coping strategies: i.e. neglecting; laughing with the bullies but never filing an official complaint. This was regarded as contra-productive and potentially harming their situation.

Barriers and coping. Identity struggles/ strategies

Young Roma in the business/private sector: social mobility not without any conflicts (far from unambiguous)

- A balancing act between different contexts and social networks
- Multiple attachments, “identity work”, pendulum
- The gap becomes too wide to bridge, leads to tensions and identity questions
- Possible solution: turning to Roma networks, giving back on a community level
- Inside the company: various individual strategies, some do not want to be identified as Roma, a good diversity management within the organization may have a huge role

Árendás, Messing and Fejős. Local adaptations of equality and diversity principles in business organizations in Central East Europe. The case of employing Roma youth in the Hungarian Corporate sector. Submitted to the Scandinavian Journal of Management

Árendás and Messing: "I was told the position has already been filled.+ Barriers to mobility and coping strategies of highly qualified Roma youth on their way to the business sector.

<https://cps.ceu.edu/research/bridge-to-business>

messing@ceu.edu

arendaszs@ceu.edu

