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PAL

ANTIDISCRIMINATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION OF ROMANI PEOPLE



“Fighting discrimination and anti- Gypsyism in education and employment in EU” (PAL)

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Key word

Origin of prejudice	Difficulties of cultural integration	Style of community life
Low level of education	Legal conditions	Traditional and irregular works
Work of women	Work of youth	Legislative framework

Starting questions:

1. Where do the prejudices towards the Roma's work begin?
2. What is the role of work in the history of the Roma people?
3. Do cultural characteristics create barriers to access employment?
 - 3.1 Traditional jobs
 - 3.2 Irregular work
 - 3.3 Live for the day
4. Is the low level of education an obstacle to employment?
6. Could be the different legal conditions in which Roma live an issue for their access to employment?
7. What is the legislative framework?
 - 7.1 Communication 173/2011 "EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020"
 - 7.2 National Strategy for Roma and Sinti Inclusion adopted by the Council of Ministers on 24/02/2012.
 - 7.3 Regional strategy for the inclusion of Roma, and Sinti approved by the Region of Emilia Romagna on 03/29/2016

Definitions of terms

Gagi - term used by Roma to define the non-Roma population.

Traditional work - Typical work done by the Roma community for centuries: carnies, circus, knife-grinders, horse breeders, etc.

Irregular Work - work performed occasionally without regular contracts but which guarantees economic entry: collection of ferrous materials, canvassing, etc.

Live for the day - work activities that allow an immediate gain to make ends meet.



Historical overview of the Roma population

Roma have always been regarded with suspicious eyes because of different type of employment, lifestyle habits and lack of knowledge of this culture which have fueled prejudices that are often a difficult hurdle to overcome.

For centuries, Roma people did not need to enter the world of work because their economy was based on traditional jobs. The main groups of Roma living in Europe have been living of their traditional jobs: grinders, carnies, circus, horse breeders, etc.

Nomadism was an intrinsic condition of the job, which was not an individual matter but involved the entire household: there was not a landowner but the whole family competed for the duties of the job and at the same time it was possible to modify the work organization according to the needs of different family members. Traditional jobs allow an immediate gain, here and now, useful to the daily maintenance of the entire family.

Today, with the end of the nomadic lifestyle that has regarded many Roma families, and with traditional jobs crisis, there is still a difficult obstacle to overcome between Roma and sedentary society that brings with it too many prejudices.

Many groups in Europe are no longer nomadic but sedentary. However they keep the characteristics of everyday life that often lead to travel and to move.

The traditional work has very different characteristics compared to the commonly understood work. Therefore, it is not true that the Roma have never worked, certainly over the centuries they have done many jobs with different traits.

Today, many traditional jobs have been abandoned and the Roma seek entry to the circuits of commonly understood work.

This passage creates barriers: on one hand, the prejudices of Gagi inhibit or are disadvantageous for the access of Roma people, on the other, the Roma people find difficulties to fully understand the rules of sedentary work.

Community life's style

Despite their nomadic lifestyle has decreased, it is true that the travel and move often have remained a characteristic common to many Roma families: the family events (death, birth, marriage) or religious ceremonies (the evangelical cults for example) often lead to trips all over the



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year that are difficult to combine with continued employment and absence rules (i.e. programmed holidays, permissions).

Roma families are used to consider work as an everyday experience, that does not involve long-term planning. For common employees, working means having a monthly perspective, while for Roma people this would imply a complete change of economic management.

Approaching the paid employment means to be willing to change family, economic and relational management.

The paid employees are then asked to leave the community they belong to, most of the time to be alone in a hostile environment. This implies rules and unknown modalities to be internalized.

The difficulty is not just entering the employment world but also spending time in differently structured environment, with few references to their communities.

Indeed, Roma people hide their identity for fear of judgment and exclusion because of their ethnicity.

The work is the cornerstone of any intervention aimed at inclusion: it is an emancipatory tool that can bring about a significant change not only compared to the objective conditions of life but also in the perception of the rest of the community.

For the Roma community habits, this emancipation process must involve the whole context, cannot focus only on the individual, because the success or failure of one become the success or failure of the entire community.

Traditional and irregular works

Currently some Roma still live off traditional or irregular jobs, which, from the outside, is usually perceived as non-work, fueling prejudices against them.

However, there are some activities that provide a livelihood for entire families. Roma families are still owners of rides, games, small or large circus, puppet shows. These jobs are often tied to a condition of nomadism.

What it is certain, is that the tax rules increase, the difficulties in moving, the radical change of places and forms of entertainment, the cost of maintaining some activity are difficult to tackle for families.

In all EU countries would be desirable a legislation that takes into account these difficulties, aiming



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at supporting these economic activities. Promoting and supporting the traditional activities does not only mean ensuring an income to many Roma people, but also enhancing and recognizing a cultural heritage common to all our countries.

There are also many families who live off irregular jobs. These are activities which fall outside the scope of illegality but do not even find their recognition within specific regulations.

For example, a widely practiced activity by Roma men is the collection of ferrous scrap, which has very complex regulatory issues. The main difficulties are both in bureaucratic formalities, and economic costs. Door to door sale (flowers, brooms) is still practiced among women, without forgetting that the practice of almsgiving is still widespread.

These activities are often hidden and unknown and that is why, over time, has long fueled the prejudice that Roma do not work or have no desire to work, without seriously considering the historical and cultural characteristics which instead would lead to different considerations.

Stereotypes and collective imagination lead us to believe that the activities of Roma and Sinti are often completely illegal. Certainly, many Roma and Sinti practice niche activities, which require a very low level of professionalization and that can be done in autonomy, in most cases in irregular ways.

Low level of education

As investigated in other areas of Pal project, access to education and the achievement of a degree are still areas that see Roma communities at a distinct disadvantage compared to the majority of the population.

Still there are many difficulties at school and many Roma students drop out of school before completing compulsory education. Among Roma, low education and specialization makes them underqualified for certain production sectors.

If on one hand, investment in training is still not accepted and internalized by many Roma families, on the other, for a culture in which you become adult very early, it is hard to think to invest many years "only" on studying without a financial gain, necessary to live.

Cultural characteristics, then, in addition to socio-economic conditions, make Roma people ready to work at a very young age without the necessary skills.



Different legal conditions

Various European Roma groups have heterogeneous legal conditions.

First of all, it is important to highlight that in some European countries they are recognized as Cultural/Linguistics Minority and in some others they are not. This already represents a first difference compared to the safeguards and possible targeted policies in favor of Roma communities. Secondly, even within the same country, there are different legal situations which create difficulties with regard to access to employment.

In fact, the Roma are divided in citizens, foreign citizens of other EU Member States, foreign nationals of non-EU countries, foreign holders of refugee status or subsidiary protection, stateless persons.

This multiplicity of status creates fertile ground for the emergence of prejudices. When a group of people is not easily definable, it is easier to create conjecture or to have stereotypical views because the real knowledge requires deep study.

In addition, some of these legal conditions make it more difficult to access to employment contracts and/or to be included in training programs (eg. internships).

Work of women

It is hard to believe that a woman committed daily to take care of the household and of many children can get a job outside this environment, and it is also difficult for men to accept this emancipation.

Of course there is a change taking place regarding women.

Therefore, supporting the work of women means working to overcome prejudice both inside and outside the Roma community.

The idea of women becoming independent from the extended family, takes difficult efforts to be accepted, but, in recent years, has seen positive results which it is important to consider and value.

Work of youth

As regards the labor market, young Roma often live in limbo.

They did not experience the traditional work as their parents, they often have a fragmented and discontinued school education, and they are often crushed by the prejudice of a society that forces



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them to choose whether to remain in the community they belong to or to deny it.

Young people need to be accompanied in their first work experience.

First of all, the adult environment of reference can hardly give precise indications about the correct way to make active job search. Thus, offering support for preparing interviews, analyzing skills, preparing CV, getting to know the territory offers, counseling, can all be important resources for young Roma.

In order to support the early entry into the world of work, may be also relevant those programs that provide pathways to apprenticeships, perhaps supported by a tutor. These paths create the first approaches between young Roma and the labor market with a mutual recognition, as well as offering a first work experience to be spent on the market.

Strongly investing on young people is not only investing on a single but on a whole community.

The most effective way to overcome prejudice stereotypes and fears is to have positive experiences to refer to.

Positive job placement of young Roma can open positive paths for their communities. These workers must be accompanied and followed by a strong mediation work.

EU framework

The European Commission with Communication 173 of the 5th April 2011 has defined the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020.

One of the main goals is access to employment in terms of reducing the gap between Roma and the rest of the population.

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights has investigated seven member states that revealed significant gaps and where Roma consider themselves highly discriminated in the employment field. As a result, the Commission has set this objective to ensure the Roma people fully access in a non-discriminatory way to vocational training, to the labor market and to self-employment tools and initiatives, encouraging public employment services to appeal to the Roma through personalized services and mediation. All this will attract Roma to the labor market thereby increasing the employment rate.



Italian National framework

The Italian National Strategy for Roma inclusion was adopted on 24th November 2011. The Italian National Strategy encourages cooperation with employment centers; it promotes skills development by providing a composition of entrepreneurial activities involving Roma and non-Roma through the creation of new integration pathways for young people and women, including self-entrepreneurial ones, supported by training. It also encourages career guidance services to be aware of the need of targeted support, in order to facilitate the promotion of social and employment opportunities available in the area. It also points on the awareness of services and industry associations in the prevention of discrimination attitudes against Roma and Sinti and in the guarantee of equal treatment.

Global strategies require systematic interventions to eliminate all barriers that prevent regular access to the labor market.

The specific objectives of the strategy are the following:

- 1: Encouraging the promotion of training and non-discriminatory access to training courses aimed at integrating into the labor market and enterprise creation;
- 2: Promoting tools, methods and devices for the regularization of irregular or casual work and business development and self-employment;
- 3: Developing individualized tutorship to the labor market courses for Roma women and supporting the access of under 35 Roma and Sinti to the system of opportunities and facilities available for youth entrepreneurship and youth employment in general.

The Regional Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, and Sinti was approved by the Emilia-Romagna on the 29th March 2016.

The Region's major resource is represented by the Regional Law n. 14/2015 "Regulation on job placement support and social inclusion of people in fragile and vulnerable situation, through the integration between public employment services, social and health" for persons who live the problems arising from being unemployed or unemployed and simultaneously with social or health difficulties. Roma and Sinti often fall fully into this category and can therefore take advantage of what the Regional Law provides, with customized programs that enhance the capabilities of the person and activate the necessary support to overcome, or significantly reduce, detected



weaknesses.

The actions envisaged by the Regional Strategy are:

1. activation of individualized interventions;
2. self-entrepreneurship support;
3. support the absorption of workers in the field of collection and recovery of scrap metal in already active social cooperatives;
4. support for the opening of new branches of cooperative enterprises and training of new professionals in adjacent sectors to the traditional trades;
5. use of an experimental form of employment contracts that favors the keeping and compliance with the time and manner required by the production system (for ex. vertical and horizontal part-time);
6. use of temporary employment forms provided by law that allow regular employment and remuneration for activities limited in time and duration (eg. INPS vouchers);
7. update by the Town Administration of lists of areas for funfair, amusement parks and / or used for the installation of circuses, preventing them from being placed in too remote areas and other targeted interventions;
8. solicitation at national level to the relevant ministries to simplify and clarify the provisions on the collection and recovery of metals.

Final questions

1. How to combat the cultural prejudices against Roma people towards work?
2. How to support access for women and young people to work?
3. How to sensitize companies towards Roma employees?
4. How to support traditional jobs and the emergence of irregular activities?

