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Roma Poverty and Deprivation: The Need for Multidimensional Anti-Poverty Measures

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Abstract

Reliable data and robust conceptual framework are two necessary preconditions for anti-poverty measures need to be effective and achieve their goals – bringing people out of poverty. Both preconditions are far from met in the case of Roma – one of the biggest minorities in Europe. Data on the absolute number and distribution of Roma population in the EU is patchy, incomparable – or does not exist at all. Thus addressing the data challenge is a necessary precondition for populating indicators that reflect the true face of Roma poverty – are ultimately, for the efforts to take Roma out of poverty to succeed. In its first part, the paper provides an overview of the available approaches and the possible sources of information that can generate the data necessary for monitoring different aspects of Roma inclusion process. The authors point out that different sources have their strengths and weaknesses and using them in complementary manner is desirable. How to use the data (what indicators to apply) is equally important. In its second part the paper proposes a multidimensional poverty index that is better reflecting the specifics of Roma poverty and exclusion than traditional poverty or vulnerability indicators. However two critically important dimensions remains insufficiently covered – namely 'agency' and 'aspirations'. The authors call for reflecting these dimensions through the thematic components in the standardized European social surveys.

Keywords: multidimensional poverty, poverty measurement, Roma inclusion strategy, Roma population, fundamental rights indicators.

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The Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) is a research centre within the Oxford Department of International Development, Queen Elizabeth House, at the University of Oxford. Led by Sabina Alkire, OPHI aspires to build and advance a more systematic methodological and economic framework for reducing multidimensional poverty, grounded in people's experiences and values.

1.   Introduction

Defining, estimating and quantifying Roma poverty is a highly policy-relevant issue. A decade ago the reduction of Roma poverty was put on the political agenda of several governments and formulated as an explicit commitment of the countries participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion. In 2011 the European Commission put additional political weight behind the attempts to lift Roma out of poverty when it issued its communication "An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies."

Two years later, on 9 December 2013 the European Council adopted its first Recommendation specifically addressing Roma integration.[1] The Recommendation preamble situates Roma integration firmly within a human rights perspective, referring to the Union Treaties' articles on equality and non-discrimination. The document also links efforts to improve Roma integration to the EU's strategy for sustainable and inclusive growth (Europe 2020), providing guidance to member states on enhancing the effectiveness of their measures to achieve Roma integration so that tangible progress is achieved and the gaps between Roma and the general population in the core areas of employment, education, housing and health are reduced. The Recommendation stresses the importance of monitoring and evaluation as key elements in the efforts to achieve tangible results.

A week later the message of this recommendation was reinforced by the adoption of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). This regulation ring-fences an allocation of 20 % of the European Social Fund resources of each member state for "promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination' and sets the "ex-ante conditionalities" that member states must apply in regard to improvement of the situation of marginalised communities, such as Roma.[2] These include the implementation of a national strategic policy framework for poverty reduction (Conditionality 9.1) and a national Roma inclusion strategic policy framework within the objective 'promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and discrimination' (Conditionality 9.2).

The policy framework for Roma integration, which includes poverty reduction, is therefore wide-reaching and matched by resources. However, the robust and comprehensive monitoring frameworks that would allow for properly capturing the results of poverty alleviation policies and interventions are still to be developed. In order to respond to questions like "which interventions have contributed to change?" or "what part of the change might be attributed which particular interventions?" one needs to capture change first. Was there any progress? If yes, in which areas and of what magnitude?

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[1] Council of the European Union (2013), Council Recommendation 378/1. 9 December 2013 on effective Roma integration
[2] Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013, available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2013.347.01.0320.01.ENG.

These apparently simple questions are difficult to answer for a number of reasons.

2. Measuring Progress on Roma Integration

2.1 Progress in What? Integration vs. Inclusion

Defining the target group in social research is often fraught with difficulties and uncertainties. This may reflect the absence of legal categories, as is the case for most ethnic groups as well as others such as immigrants, and a (resulting) difficulty or inability to identify persons belonging to such groups in population registers in order to draw robust statistical probability samples.

Defining the target group (and respectively, the universe of study) is even trickier. Part of the challenge is related to the vast diversity of groups and sub-groups broadly defined as 'Roma'. The term 'Roma' used at the Council of Europe "refers to Roma, Sinti, Kale and related groups in Europe, including Travellers and the Eastern groups (Dom and Lom), and covers the wide diversity of the groups concerned, including persons who identify themselves as Gypsies" (CoE 2012: 4). The same definition is used also by European institutions, but its benefits of openness come at a cost – it is not particularly useful for operational purposes (like building a sample frame).

One of the reasons is the vast diversity of groups and sub-groups broadly defined as Roma. Another (even more important) is the fact that Roma identity is a multidimensional concept, a complex construct that can be associated with numerous different elements, constructing complex and dynamic combinations. Also, Roma identity is not a static picture. It gains different connotations in different historical contexts. The same applies also to the way Roma present themselves to others, making Roma identity quite situational and reflective as defined vis-à-vis the non-Roma (the Gadzo). Finally, Roma people are an alphabetic example of dual identity and asking the potential respondent the question "Are you Roma?" might put the respondent in an uncomfortable situation to choose between two different aspects of their shared identity.

Two approaches are usually used to define one's affiliation (ethnic or other): self-identification or external identification. One is a "result of choice," the other of "ascription" (Rughiniş 2011). In the first case the individual respondents are asked directly "To what ethnic group do you belong?" or indirectly "With which group/culture/community do you affiliate?" The most common application of ethnic self-identification is the population census. In the second case, outsiders make a judgment on the identity of the person or the entire community – "Is he or she a Roma?" or "Is the neighbourhood over there a Roma one?"

Both approaches, which are used in various surveys, yield different results. The universe of "self-identified Roma" is often smaller than the "externally identified as Roma" for various reasons. One – and the most obvious – is the stigma associated with "belonging to Roma" and the experience of past and present misuse of ethnic data (Makkonen 2007: 50). But this unwillingness to reveal Roma identity is also driven by more pragmatic reasons. It is easier to integrate with other minorities constituting a majority at the local level (like the Turks in Bulgaria – in which case the Roma living in Turkish-dominated settlements usually self-identify as Turks). Another reason could be better protection of group rights (for example, in countries such as Greece, where Roma would self-identify as Muslims rather than Roma, since only Muslims have specific minority rights).

Ideally, self-identification is the "gold standard" and is indeed used by most countries to identify Roma populations through self-identification in censuses. The censuses are the largest-scale data collection efforts that rely on self-reported affiliation. It is usually thought that censuses underreport Roma populations because they are conducted by the state with whose structures Roma are cautious in sharing information given their bitter experience from the past (OSI 2010; Škobla *et al.* 2009).

In practice, it is not that straightforward. Reporting an affiliation to an ethnic group bears obvious costs – those who indicate their ethnic difference from the majority population "undertake some collateral disadvantages, social exclusion, various forms of discrimination which are historically coded in societies of this region of Europe" (Koller 2012: 1). This is why census data (the source usually used by the government which needs formalized data sources) notoriously and significantly differ from experts' estimates. On average, the difference can be as large as four-fold.[3] Depending on the specific circumstances, it can change in scope and coverage. If the circumstances suggest that there is a certain risk associated with "being Roma," the estimates get lower; if there are some potential benefits (preferential access to services for example) – the estimates get higher. Deliberate campaigns by NGOs to promote self-awareness, pride in one's identity and to dispel the fears about revealing it may also push the figures recorded in censuses up.

Unlike censuses, sample surveys are conducted by non-state actors and provoke a lower level of mistrust on the part of the respondents. But even in that case there is a discrepancy between the self-reported and expert (external) identification of Roma ethnicity. For example, 95% the respondents who self-identified as Roma in the monthly "omnibus" surveys conducted by Taylor Nelson Sofres Balkan British Social Surveys (TNS-BBSS) in 2009–2011 were similarly identified by the enumerators. However only

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[3] One of the most frequently cited source of population estimates on Roma is the Council of Europe. It provides estimates of the Roma population for countries in the CoE area, for EU member states and Europe in total. The ratio between the minimum estimate, maximum estimate and average estimate to the official census data (for countries which register main ethnicity in their censuses) is respectively 2.7, 5 and 4. http://www.coe.int/fr/web/portal/roma/ See also Liegeois 1997.

78% of the respondents identified as Roma by the enumerators self-identified as Roma (12% self-identified as Bulgarians and 9% as Turks).[4] In addition, the universe of those self-identified as Roma is not a simple sub-sample of the "real Roma" identified externally. There is a group who self-identify as Roma but is not seen as Roma by outside observers (Rövid 2011: 8).

An acceptable compromise between the two extremes ("self-identified but underreporting the real numbers" and "externally ascribed identification but imposed") is a mix of the two used in the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) sample surveys. Both use multistage probability sampling. At the first sampling stage, which was based on the census data of the population who self-identified as Roma, the sampling frame was defined as the settlements with a Roma population higher than the national average.[5] Based on it, a list of Primary Sampling Units (PSUs) in individual municipalities was drawn up and the number of interviews was allocated reflecting the structure and distribution of the entire self-identified Roma population. At the second stage, using local NGOs' and experts' assessment, the exact locations of the PSUs (the places where Roma populations actually live) were determined within the individual municipalities. At the third stage the individual respondents were selected using a 'random route' procedure. A randomly selected household was asked a screening question prior to the interview. In the case of FRA, it was "Are any Roma living in your household?" If the answer was "no," the interviewer proceeded with the 'random route' and the next household was addressed. In the case of UNDP, the screening question was "We are conducting a survey among the Roma population. Would you mind to be interviewed?" If the head explicitly denied being Roma by saying, for example, "I am not Roma, why should you interview me?" the interview was similarly discontinued and the interviewer moved to the next household. A willingness to participate in the interview was seen as an implicit endorsement of Roma identity and the robustness of the identification process.

Thus each of the two approaches is reasonable but reflects only part of a complex reality. This is why they are often used complementarily. Indeed, the censuses underestimate the absolute number of Roma but at least reflect adequately the distribution and density of the population. Based on that – and using additional identifiers, such as "mother tongue" or "language used in the household" or "cultural roots/affiliation" – one might build a sample frame and reach reliable estimates of basic indicators, like poverty or unemployment rates that can be used for monitoring progress in respective areas. Rates are not sufficient though because when prioritization and allocation of resources are at stake, policy-makers

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[4] Source: working communication with TNS BBSS.

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2.2   Progress of Who? Defining the Target Group[6]

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[6] This section is based on Ivanov *et al.* 2012: 9–10.

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3.   Populating the Indicators: What Data, From What Sources?

A number of misunderstandings regarding data are floating around the issue of collecting and using data disaggregated by ethnicity. One misconception is that there are no quantitative data on the situation of Roma households. In reality a lot of data exists, both from censuses and various surveys. What is missing is comparability and methodological consistency. Rarely do studies use the same (or similar enough) methodology and tools. Data from different "Roma-targeted" surveys is rarely comparable, either between individual surveys or between individual surveys and the standardized statistical tools such as household budget surveys or labour force surveys.

Another misunderstanding is related to the prohibition on ethnic data collection. Indeed, data protection is becoming an increasingly sensitive issue with the spread of internet and communications technologies (ICT), 'big data' and increasingly easy access to personal information. The laws and regulations on statistics follow the EU standards such as the EU Data Protection Directive 95/46/EC,[10] which prohibits the processing of sensitive personal data, and are designed to protect individual data integrity and privacy. The standards lay down explicit criteria that need to be followed so that data collection is legitimate and lawful.

These criteria are built on a combination of prohibitions and exemptions. While data protection legislation may prohibit the collection of data on ethnicity, the EU Data Protection Directive, for example, also allows for some exceptions to this rule under certain conditions where such data may be collected. For example, if safeguards are in place, if the data subject has given explicit consent to processing of those data, or if processing is carried out in the course of its legitimate activities with appropriate guarantees by a foundation, association or any other non-profitseeking body with a political, philosophical, religious or trade-union aim and on condition that the processing relates solely to the members of the body or to persons who have regular contact with it in connection with its purposes and that the data are not disclosed to a third party without the consent of the data subjects.[11] There are differences in national practices, although, in general, legislation protects individuals against the collection and processing of data that may be used for wrong purposes or violate their privacy. In nearly

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[10] Directive 95/46/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 1995 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data. *Official Journal of the European Communities* No L 281/31. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/policies/privacy/docs/95-46-ce/dir1995-46_part1_en.pdf

[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

all EU member states, legal provisions restrict the processing of sensitive data on ethnicity, but national legislation does not generally prohibit the collection of this type of data but rather restricts it and makes it conditional on respecting certain safeguards.

Thus, the aim (reflected in the spirit of the law) "is not to prevent the processing of sensitive data, but to establish safeguards. The argument that data protection laws prohibit the collection of sensitive data under all circumstances is therefore an over-simplification and limited interpretation of the legal provisions. The laws' ambiguity is entirely due to their insistence on imposing a prohibition, which perpetuates doubt as to the lawfulness of collecting such data" (Simon 2007: 20). In other words, collecting such data is possible, mostly permissible and even advisable, provided that basic standards of data protection are followed. It means that data should be anonymized (not allowing an individual to be identified from a data set) and used for purposes strictly specified by law. Even in countries that do not apply the concept of ethnicity in their censuses or official statistical instruments, questions on ethnic identity or proxies can be (and are) used in surveys. What is not possible is to apply one single standardized approach to different country contexts.

The approaches discussed in this paper refer to the experiences of the five Central European countries with the highest Roma populations in the EU. All five are either applying or have the technical prerequisites for applying approaches to collect data on ethnicity as outlined below, namely, (a) including a question on ethnic identity in the census questionnaire, (b) including a question on ethnic identity in standardised European social surveys and (c) administering custom surveys on Roma samples. In addition, some countries engage in territorial mapping of Roma populations (Roma Atlases in Slovakia) or of 'socially vulnerable populations' (in the Czech Republic).

3.1 Territorial mapping of Roma population

Slovakia produced its first *Atlas of Roma Communities* in 2004, and it was updated in 2013 by a Presov University team (UNDP 2014).[12] The atlas provides information on the localities populated by Roma in the country. Data were collected through direct field work in 1070 municipalities (out of 2890 in Slovakia) – municipalities identified in the *Atlas of Roma Communities* in Slovakia 2004, municipalities identified by the Office of the Roma Plenipotentiary's desk research and municipalities where at least 30 people self-identified as Roma in the Population Census 2011. The fieldwork was implemented by 30 researchers with prior direct experience in working with the Roma population at the local level. The information was collected using a structured questionnaire filled in through interviews with the local

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[12] The atlas and related documents are accessible from http://www.employment.gov.sk/sk/rodina-socialna-pomoc/socialne-sluzby/socialne-vylucene-spolocenstva/dokumenty.html .

informants (mayor, employee of the local administration) and verified through Roma NGOs and local activists. The fieldwork lasted between September 2012 and August 2013.

The atlas provides a typology of Roma-populated localities: a) segregated settlements, b) settlements on the edge of town/village, c) settlement (residential concentration) inside the town/village, and d) Roma living dispersed among majority population, as well as including information on the town/village where the above-mentioned types of localities are present. For each locality the atlas provides information on the total population of settlement; the number of houses and apartments and type of dwellings (bricked, wooden, shacks, etc.); basic demographic information on the population (e.g. age distribution); the educational profile of settlement's residents; technical infrastructure (water pipelines, sewage, electricity, gas, waste disposal, etc.); schools (types of schools in the settlement/village/town, number of Roma students); access to services (availability of doctors, shops, pharmacy, bus stops, ATMs, cultural house, church); political participation (ethnic composition of the council, political parties); presence of NGOs, community centres, field social work; unemployment rate, employment opportunities (main employers, Roma employers), etc.

The atlas should not be considered in any way as a census of Roma population. It collected the information on territorial units, not individuals. The data on population are only expert estimates. The methodology used complies with the personal data protection regulations since the ethnicity of individuals and individual data were not collected. The atlas represents only a certain inventory of the localities that are perceived by the surrounding population as populated by Roma people (group-assigned ethnicity, not individually self-declared ethnicity).

Data are envisaged to serve the public administration for evidence-based policy making. It has already been used for the programming of EU funds distribution, with monies from the Operational Program 'Human Resources Development' in Slovakia during the 2014–2020 programming period. It is also being used for constructing sampling frames of Roma-targeted sample surveys.

Romania is also working on an *Atlas of Roma Communities*, expected to be completed in beginning of 2016. In November 2014 the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities (Institutul Național pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale), a governmental body tasked to conduct inter- and multidisciplinary studies and research on national minorities living in Romania, began a two-year project entitled "Socio-graphic Mapping of the Roma Communities in Romania for a Community-level Monitoring of Changes with Regard to Roma Integration."[13]

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13 http://www.ispmn.gov.ro/page/socioromap .

3.2 Censuses

Censuses are still untapped in regards to data on the socioeconomic status of Roma populations. Indeed, censuses have their problems. In many cases censuses underreport ethnic identity for various reasons. The situation also varies from country to country with respect to the legal frameworks (permitting questions on ethnic identity or not, applying indirect ethnic identifiers or not). The robustness of the data when self-identification or indirect methods of capturing ethnic identity are applied in censuses varies (an useful proxy in that regard is the degree of discrepancy between the number of Roma who declared "Roma" as their ethnicity and the experts' estimates used by the Council of Europe to determine the absolute number of Roma populations).

Table 1: Absolute Number of Population Self-Declared as Roma in Censuses in the Five Countries with Highest Roma Populations

Country	2011 census data	CoE estimate	
		Minimum	Maximum
Bulgaria	325,343	700,000	800,000
Czech Republic	11,718	150,000	250,000
Hungary	308,957	500,000	1,000,000
Romania	619,007	1,200,000	2,500,000
Slovakia (1991)	105,738	380,000	600,000

Source: http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/roma/.

Another challenge is related to the concept of identity – if the choice of 'dual identity' available as an option. In the 2011 census, the Czech Republic and Hungary allowed for dual choice (both in regards to ethnicity and mother tongue). The issue was most elaborately addressed in Hungary where the respondents were asked about their mother tongue and also "In what languages do you usually speak with family members or friends?" In Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia the respondents could choose only option for ethnicity and mother tongue. Despite these differences, a number of countries do ask for ethnic identity and the potential of using them for generating statistics disaggregated by ethnicity is still not used. For example, Bulgaria used a question on ethnicity in its 2011 census and 325,343 Bulgarian citizens self-identified as Roma making it the third largest ethnic group (after the Bulgarian and Turkish communities).[14]

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[14] NSI, 2011 population census, http://www.nsi.bg/census2011/PDOCS2/Census2011_ethnos.xls .

The available data allows for calculating some basic socioeconomic characteristics and observing the differences between groups.[15] One priority area of Roma inclusion is education and the census provides a detailed picture of the inter-group disparities in that regard. For example, 84.4 % of persons who self-identified as Roma aged 16 or above declared themselves to be literate (99.5 % among those claiming Bulgarian ethnicity and 94.6% among Turks). It is interesting to observe that the literacy rates for individual groups roughly correspond to enrolment rates in primary education. But the gap between the three groups increases dramatically for higher education levels (Figure 1). The data on the highest completed education level (visualised in Figure 2) illustrates the outcome.

Figure 1: Gross Enrolment Rate in Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Educational Levels
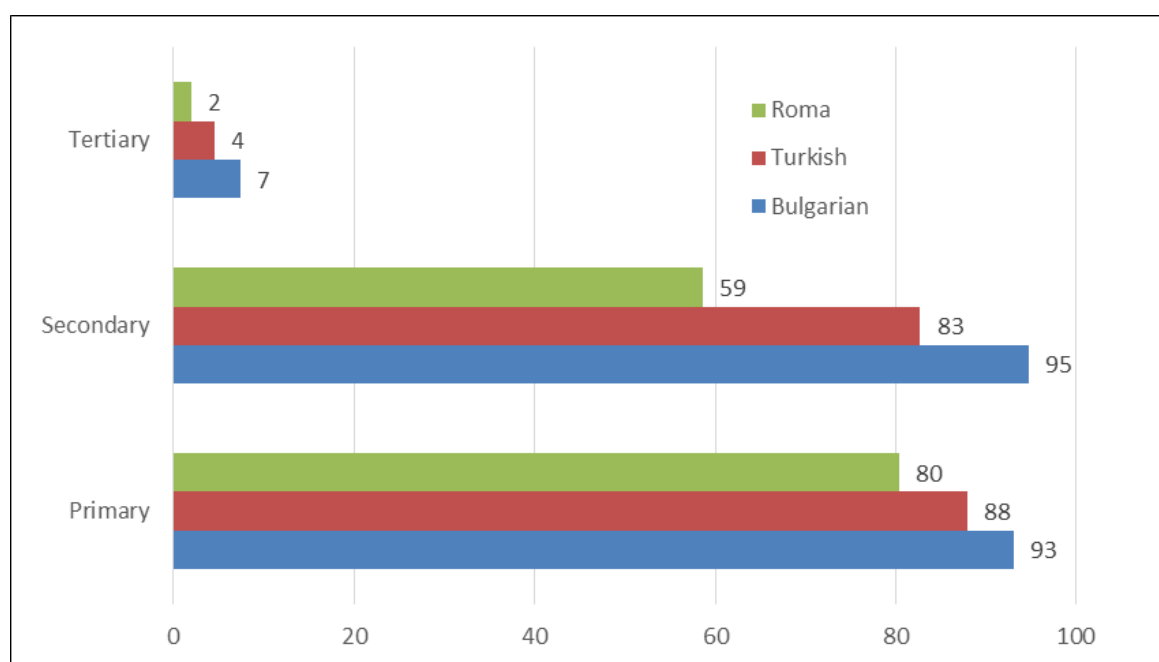
Source: National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria, 2011 Population Census.

Only 0.5% of Roma aged 18 and above who are not in school or training have completed a tertiary level of education (bachelor, masters, PhD or equivalent). Table 2 summarises the highest completed education for other educational levels.

Census data also makes possible monitoring long-term changes in employment status. Figure 3 illustrates the results. Given the high number of observations, in-depth analysis is possible and the individual indicators can be correlated with other variables, such as level of education achieved, characteristics of the household, socioeconomic characteristics of the locality, distribution of resources from the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIFs) etc.).

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[15] The indicators for Roma and non-Roma in Bulgaria presented in this section were calculated by Magdalena Kostova from the Bulgarian National Statistical Institute.

Figure 2: Highest Achieved Educational Level (Population Aged 7 and Above Who Are Not in Education)
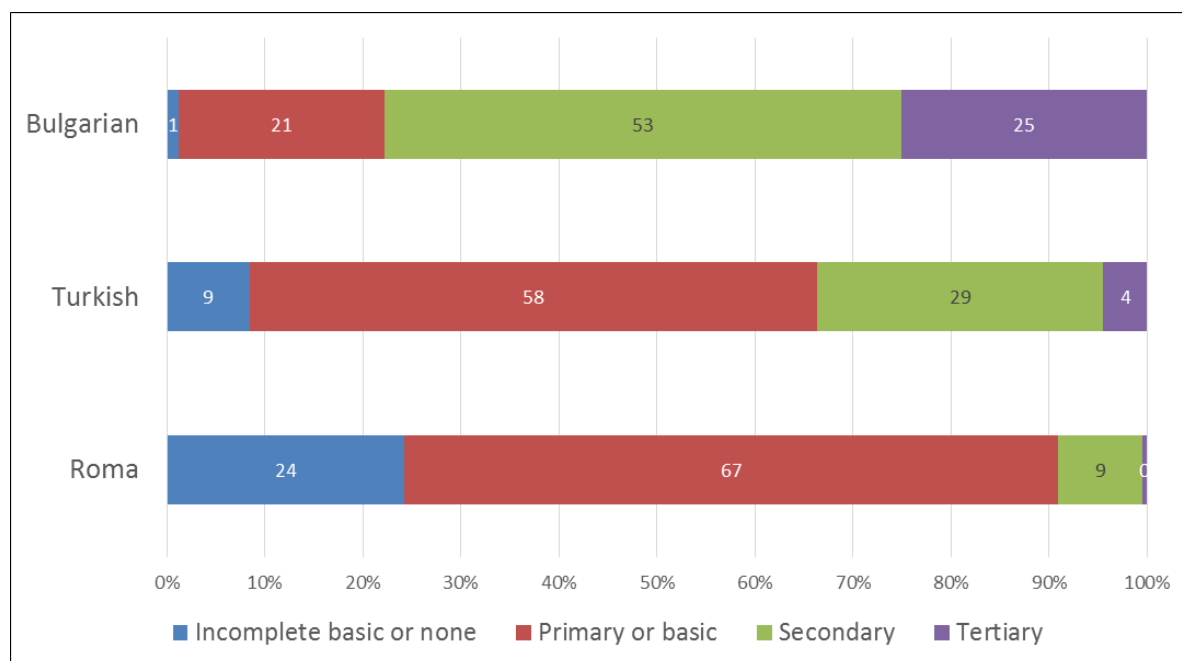
Source: National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria, 2011 Population Census.

Table 2: Highest Educational Level Achieved

Share of persons with the respective educational level out of all persons older than 7 years			
Educational level	Roma	Bulgarians	Turks
Post-secondary, non-tertiary	1.8	0.1	0.3
Secondary (special) vocational	24.0	2.3	9.6
Secondary vocational	12.5	2.8	10.2
Upper secondary general	12.9	3.1	8.0
Vocational training with entrance after 8th degree	1.3	0.3	0.9
Vocational training with entrance after 6th degree	0.4	0.2	0.3
Lower secondary (basic)	17.3	38.6	43.9
Primary	3.7	28.1	14.0
Uncompleted primary	0.6	11.8	4.0
Illiterate	0.5	11.5	4.2

Source: National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria, 2011 Population Census.

Figure 3: Employment, Unemployment and Activity Rates
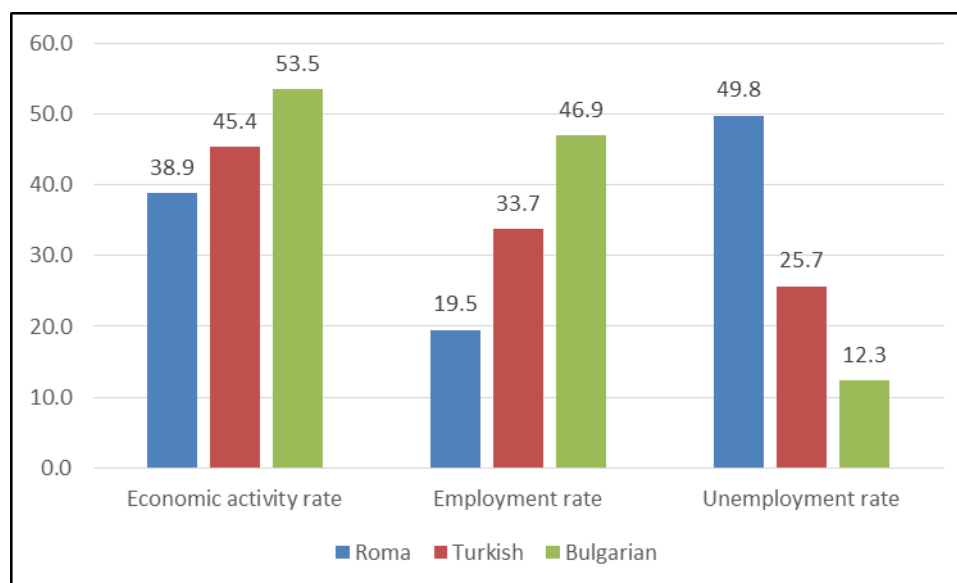
Source: National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria, 2011 Population Census.

The census also provides detailed information on the housing situation – access to basic infrastructures, possession of household items. Data show that only 0.5 % of the Roma population in Bulgaria live in dwellings without electricity and 7.7 % do not have a water supply (inside or outside of the dwelling). Seventeen and half per cent of Roma do not have any sewage system (connected to public sewer, septic shaft, another purifying installation or a cesspit). Seventy point nine per cent do not have running hot water and 57.8 % do not have any bathing facilities (in the dwelling, outside the dwelling but in the building or outside the building).

Data reveals an interesting picture regarding the possession of household amenities. The least absent item is a TV – only 4.5 % of Roma don't have one. Twenty-eight and half per cent lack a cooking stove, 30.5% do not have a telephone, incl. mobile and 37.2% lack a refrigerator. The least popular items are dishwashers (only 1.4% of people live in households that have one), AC (4.2 % have one) and internet (13.2 % have access). The share of people living in households with a computer is slightly higher (15.4 %). Table 3 provides the shares of the population by different ethnicity in Bulgaria lacking access to some basic infrastructures or household amenities.

Table 3: Share of Population Living in Dwellings Without…

	Bulgarians	Roma	Turkish
Electricity	0.0	0.5	0.0
Water supply in the dwelling	0.3	7.7	1.4
Sewage system	1.8	17.5	6.3
Toilet in the dwelling	0.8	6.2	1.3
Running hot water	11.7	70.9	39.3
Bathroom	5.5	57.8	21.4

TV set	1.9	4.5	2.4
Aerial or cable TV	25.3	53.4	52.2
Satellite dish	78.2	60.0	39.2
Audio or video recorder	62.8	79.0	80.3
Telephone, incl. mobile	7.2	30.5	13.8
PC	40.5	84.6	61.3
Internet connection	43.5	86.8	66.0
Cooker	4.9	28.5	18.7
Refrigerator and/or freezer	4.7	37.2	13.4
Automatic washing machine	16.6	57.3	26.0
Dish-washer	87.8	98.6	96.3
Air conditioner	71.4	95.8	91.6
Car/minibus	43.1	77.9	54.1

Source: National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria, 2011 Population Census.

Thus, the census data allow for calculating some core indicators and correlating different variables (like education level and employment status). It does not allow calculating, for example, poverty rates – but has some of the core components of a material deprivation index. Most of all, it yields sufficient information on which to base more sophisticated modelling, like small areas estimation or propensity score matching. Some countries (like Hungary) are actively making use of these opportunities (see Tóth, Vékás 2014; KSH 2014).

Given the different approaches to defining ethnicity and the differently formulated questions from country to country, census data are hardly comparable across countries. Ideally harmonised questions on ethnic identity might be developed as an option for future censuses to allow comparisons between countries. Such a comparable set of questions could be extremely useful for observing longer-term trends and thus could allow for capturing the aggregate outcomes of Roma-targeted policies in the member states with the highest number and share of Roma population. In addition, the census data makes possible constructing robust sampling frames for sample surveys that are widely used for generating data on the status of Roma populations between censuses.

3.3 Standardized European Social Surveys[16]

Questions on ethnic identity can also be applied in standardized European social surveys, (particularly in large-sample surveys). It makes possible constructing sub-samples of individuals (respondents and/or

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16 This section is based on the inputs provided by László Ulicska, Ministry of Human Resources, Hungary.

household members) self-identifying as Roma. This opens the way to calculating core socioeconomic indicators for Roma populations.

Hungary is one of the countries pioneering the usage of such an approach. In order to address the need for the statistical information required for a robust monitoring of the national social inclusion strategy, the Hungarian Central Statistical Office included in 2013 a question on ethnicity in large sample surveys. The Labour Force Survey (LFS) in Hungary covered 67,600 people aged 15–74 years in 38,000 households. Two questions were used to ask for ethnic identity in order to measure dual ethnic identity (common in Hungary). In total 3,700 respondents identified themselves as Roma and only 241 refused to answer the ethnic identity questions. The ratio of Roma in the total sample was 3.8 % (slightly higher than the 3.2 % in the population census). In 2014 the European Health Interview survey and EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) applied the same approach. The EU-SILC in 2014 covered 20,000 people aged 16 years or more in 10,000 households. Due to the large reporting burden on respondents (more than 200 variables), it used only one question on ethnicity with a two-answers option that still provided respondents with the opportunity to indicate dual identity. The ratio of Roma in the total sample EU-SILC in Hungary was 4.2 %.[17] Figures 4–5 visualise some of the results regarding employment.

In 2015 Bulgaria is also including a question on ethnic identity in its EU-SILC. It does not allow however for reporting dual identity. The results are expected in early June.

3.4   Custom Sample Surveys Administered on Roma Samples

Including questions on ethnic identity in European social surveys can provide sufficient information on the major socioeconomic characteristics of Roma populations. This approach however has several drawbacks. First, it is only possible in countries with large Roma populations, which is not the case in most European countries. Second, only a minority of member states have laws that permit applying ethnic tags. Third, European social surveys do not cover important aspects of Roma inclusion, such as discrimination, prejudice or agency.

Custom sample surveys conducted on Roma samples can address these two drawbacks and are being used to address specific issues in depth (for example, FRA's 'Roma Pilot' which focuses on discrimination or UNDP's 'Regional Roma Surveys' which focus on human development and

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[17] For more information, see:
https://www.ksh.hu/docs/szolgaltatasok/sajtoszoba/sajtokozlemenyek_tajekoztatok_2012/mef.pps;
http://www.ksh.hu/elef/temakorok.html .

socioeconomic status or UNICEF's MICS). But the benefits associated with them come at a price: smaller samples and higher costs.

Figure 4: Labour market participation of Roma and Non-Roma in Hungary, 2013 (based on Labour Force Survey data)
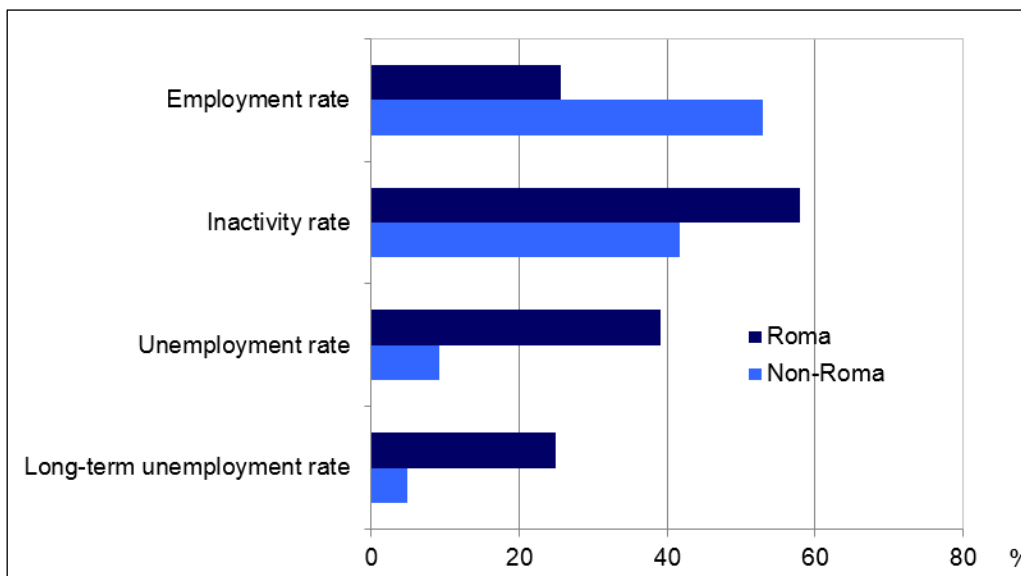
Source: LFS Hungary, 2013.

Figure 5: Security of Employment among Roma and Non-Roma in Hungary, 2013 (Based on LFS Data)
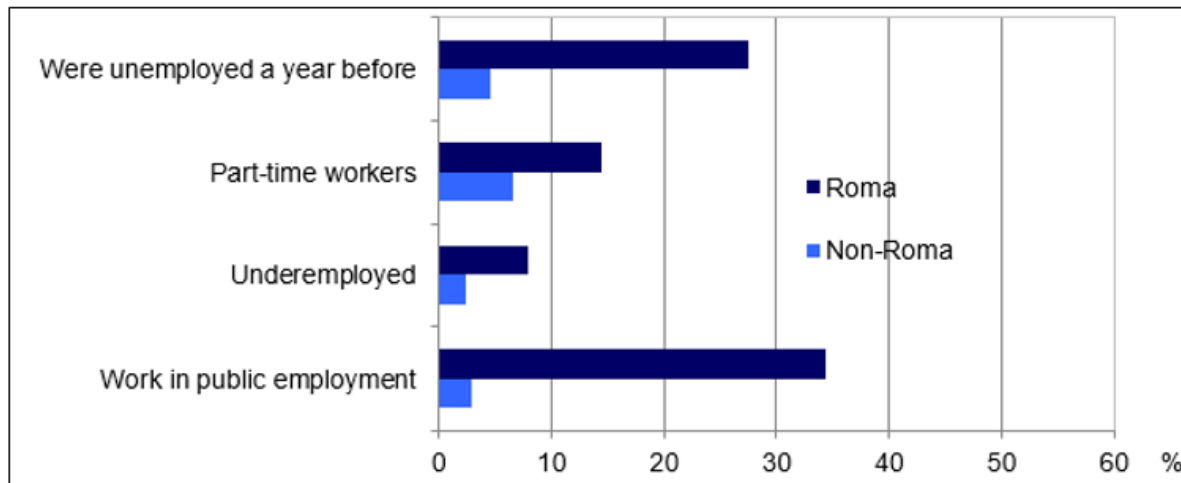
Source: LFS Hungary, 2013.

One of the first surveys of this kind to integrate socioeconomic aspects and perceptions of discrimination was UNDP's Regional Roma Survey 2004 (Ivanov *et al.* 2006). This survey included nine Central and Eastern European countries. It was the first to cover two samples – Roma at risk of marginalization and non-Roma living in close proximity and sharing the similar local socioeconomic conditions.

In 2011, the FRA – in cooperation with the European Commission, UNDP, and the World Bank – adopted the same approach and conducted a survey of Roma populations in 11 member states on discrimination and living conditions, focusing on employment, education, health and housing. For comparison, a sample of neighbouring non-Roma populations was included in the survey. The survey also collected detailed information on segregation, poverty and deprivation (see FRA 2014a and FRA 2014b). Figures 6–9 visualize some of the results.

Figure 6 presents the at-risk-of-poverty rate (a lead indicator of the Europe 2020 target to combat poverty and social exclusion) for Roma and their non-Roma neighbours. The Roma survey asked how much the household has on average to live on each month. While this may be considered a good approximation of relative income position, it generally underestimates the amount of annual income, which is used for the conventional at-risk-of-poverty indicator that Eurostat uses.[18] Equivalised income was calculated on the basis of the modified OECD scale to account for economies of scale in larger households. The modified OECD scale assigns a weight of 1 to the first adult, 0.5 for each additional adult and 0.3 for each child. For consistency, the analysis takes the 2010 national thresholds published by Eurostat, as they were the ones available at the time of the interviews. The at-risk-of-poverty rates calculated using the Roma survey data are likely to slightly overestimate the at-risk-of-poverty rate. But even with this caveat, Figure 6 shows that the at-risk-of-poverty rate of Roma do not differ significantly from country to country. One of the reasons for this is related to the construction of the samples – they cover Roma at risk of marginalization (who appear to be similarly poor) and not general Roma populations. Thus the results cannot be generalized for all Roma people.

Another example is the at-risk-of-poverty gap (Figure 7). This indicator shows the intensity of the risk of poverty due to low income. It shows the median distance between individual household income and the national at-risk-of-poverty threshold. In Italy, half of the Roma who are at risk of poverty have an income 66 % below the Italian threshold. This means that a single person household needs more than €527 per month simply to reach the Italian threshold. In Romania, the national threshold is only €106 per month. Here the at-risk-of-poverty gap amounts to 52%, meaning that half of the Roma who are at risk of poverty must survive on less than €51 per month (per single person equivalent).

Considering the actual cost of living in these member states, it becomes apparent that the income of Roma households surveyed, which is below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold, is not sufficient to cover basic needs. For non-Roma neighbours the at-risk-of-poverty gap is much closer to the national threshold.

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[18] Monthly income does not cover irregular incomes or lump sum payments and, given that the survey only asks one question on this topic, it is likely that smaller income components are not included.

Figure 6: At Risk of Poverty (Below 60 % of the National Median), by EU Member State (%)
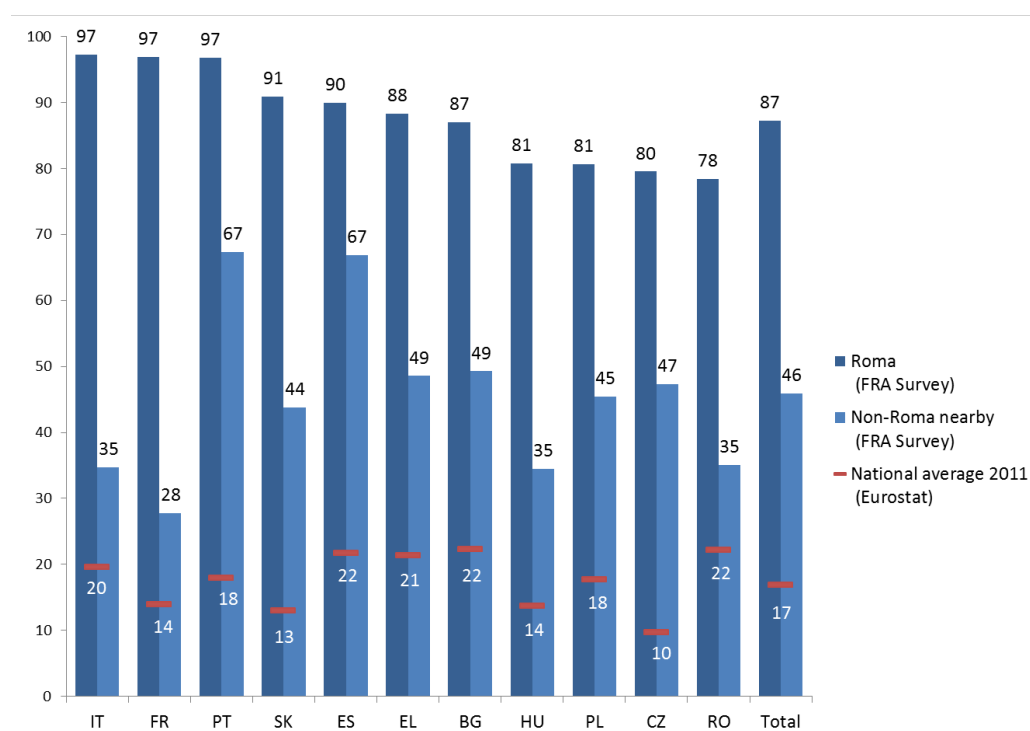
Source: FRA Roma Pilot Survey, 2011, persons in households; Eurostat EU-SILC, 2011. Here and in the other Figures depicting data for multiple countries the following abbreviations are used: IT for Italy; FR for France; PT for Portugal; SK for Slovakia; ES for Spain; EL for Greece; BG for Bulgaria; HU for Hungary; CZ for Czech Republic; RO for Romania. "Total" denotes the unweighted average of the samples.

One possible explanation for this huge income difference could be the uneven age distribution and low or non-existent pension entitlements in Roma households. Pension payments in most countries contribute significantly to household income, preventing poverty.

UNDP/WB/EC data support this hypothesis. The questionnaire administered in this survey had a more elaborate income section and allows for analysing household income by source. Data on the five countries with the most sizeable Roma populations summarised in Figure 8 indicates that Roma have far fewer pension benefits compared to non-Roma households, a fact that may intensify financial retrenchment. Furthermore it can be expected that a lower share of household income comes from pensions for Roma than for non-Roma – due to the lower life expectancy of Roma. The data from the survey on the average age of Roma and non-Roma provide some indication of this. Further research with a closer focus on the impact of pension benefits now and in the future may enhance our understanding of poverty dynamics.

Figure 7: Relative At-Risk-of-Poverty Gap, by EU Member State (€)*
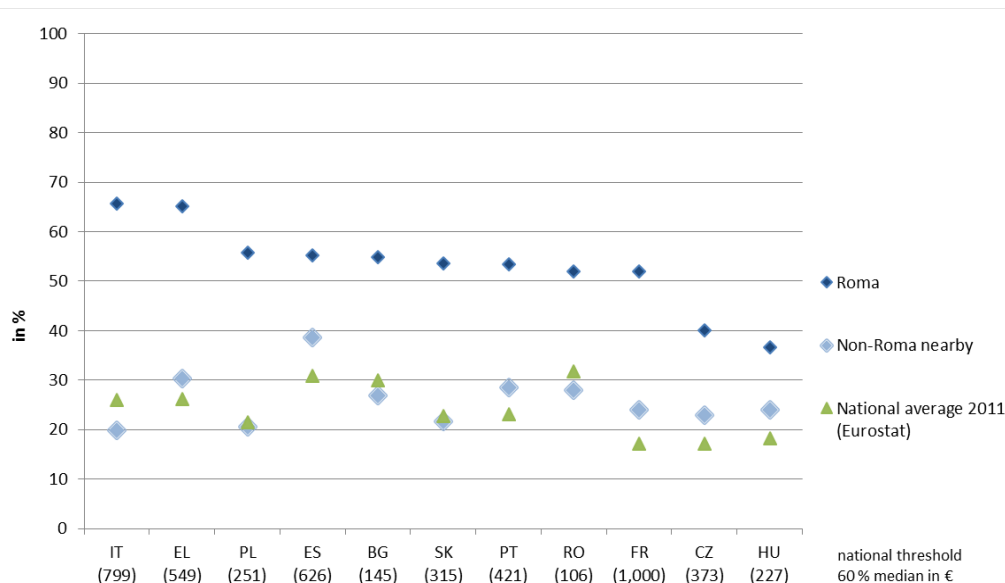
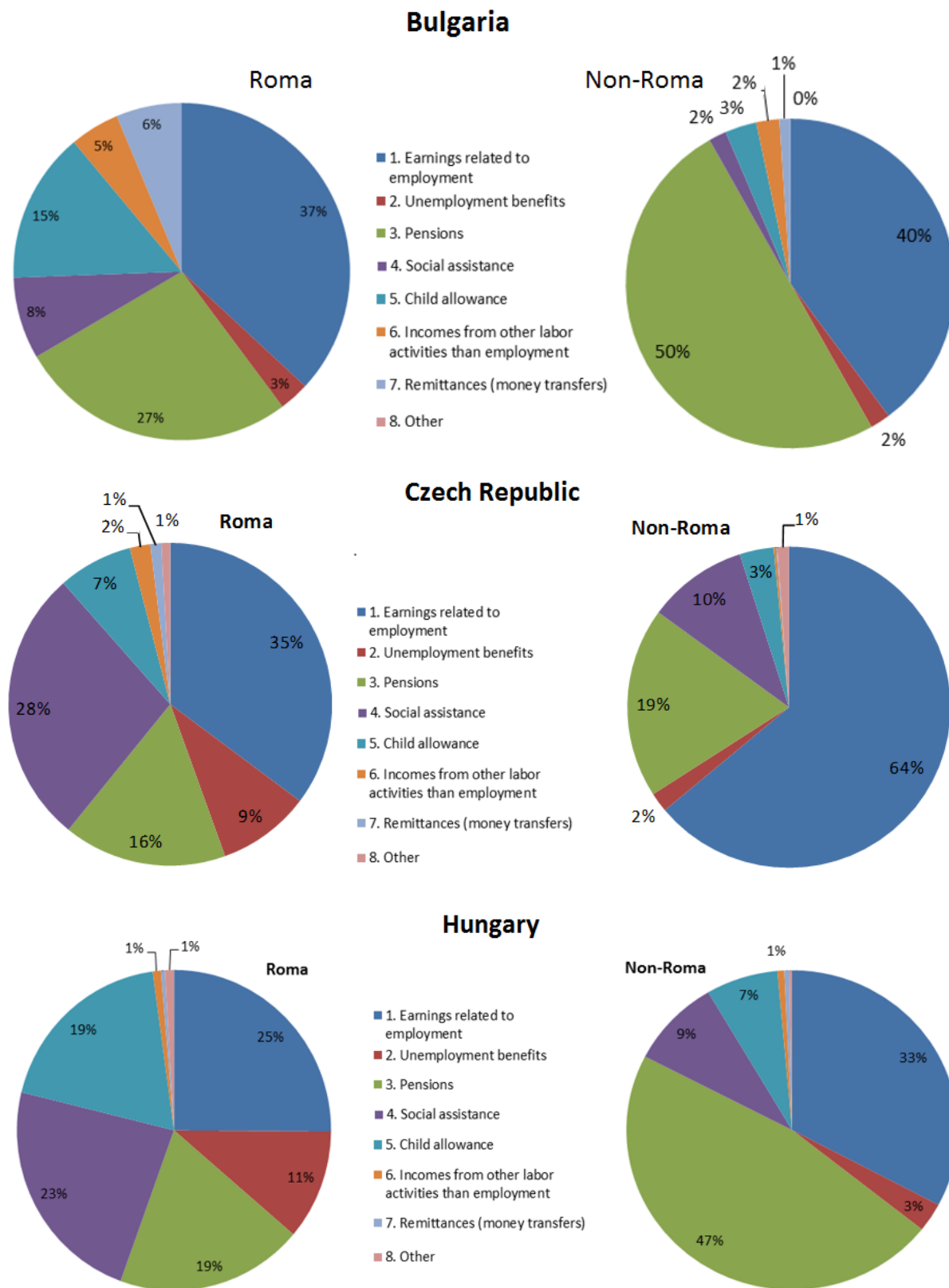Source: FRA Roma Pilot Survey, 2011, persons in households.

Tackling child poverty and breaking the cycle of disadvantage are key policy goals for the European Commission to ensure that the rights of the child as defined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the UN Convention on the Rights of Child are respected, protected and fulfilled. The 2013 European Commission Communication "Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage" calls on member states to focus on children who face increased risks due to multiple disadvantages, such as Roma children. The proportion of Roma children who live in households falling below the national at-risk-of-poverty line is twice as high as that of non-Roma children living nearby. Of the Roma who are at risk of poverty, 42 % are under 18 (for non-Roma households the figure is around half, 22 %).

The labour market participation of women is often seen as a crucial complementary tool to bring children out of poverty. The at-risk-of-poverty rate rises with the number of children. The impact of women's employment on the at-risk-of-poverty rate for households with children, however, is modest, reaching for households with four or more children an at-risk-of-poverty rate close to 100% (FRA 2014c).

The Europe 2020 indicator on poverty and social exclusion encompasses as a third component – severe material deprivation – which is assumed if a person cannot afford basic needs reflecting more directly marginalised living conditions. The choice of items to measure severe material deprivation, however, was driven by distribution and prevalence in the general population. These choices are, therefore, unable to capture the extreme living conditions of Roma in many of the areas covered by this survey. In line with

other studies, the survey results show that a number of Roma live in marginalised and impoverished conditions more reminiscent of some of the poorest regions globally rather than 21st century Europe.

Figure 8: Incomes Structure of Roma and non-Roma Households in the Five EU Member States (total, 2011)

Romania

Roma

0% · 8% · 3% · 31% · 23% · 14% · 19% · 1%

Non-Roma

1% · 2% · 0% · 5% · 4% · 36% · 51% · 1%

1. Earnings related to employment
2. Unemployment benefits
3. Pensions
4. Social assistance
5. Child allowance
6. Incomes from other labor activities than employment
7. Remittances
8. Other

Slovakia

Roma

1% · 17% · 26% · 10% · 33% · 12%

Non-Roma

1% · 15% · 40% · 18% · 4% · 23%

1. Earnings related to employment
2. Unemployment benefits
3. Pensions
4. Social assistance
5. Child allowance
6. Incomes from other labor activities than employment
7. Remittances (money transfers
8. Other

Source: UNDP/World Bank/EC Regional Roma Survey, 2011.

This is strikingly illustrated by the share of children under the age of 18 who live in a household in which at least one person "had to go to bed hungry, because there was not enough money to buy food" (Figure 9). Childhood hunger rates are at least three times higher for the Roma than for the non-Roma populations surveyed. This also shows the limits of a relative poverty measure benchmarking the average living conditions in a country. Absolute poverty such as suffering from hunger and extreme deprivation demands different measures and policies of intervention.

Many Roma also experience discrimination at work and in access to employment. A significantly higher share of Roma than non-Roma have felt discriminated against because of their ethnicity when looking for work. Eleven years after the adoption of the EU's Racial Equality Directive, more than half of the Roma respondents looking for work said they had experienced discrimination because they are Roma.

Figure 9: Incidence of Hunger (At Least One Person in the Household Who Went to Bed Hungry at Least Once in the Last Month, by EU Member State, %)
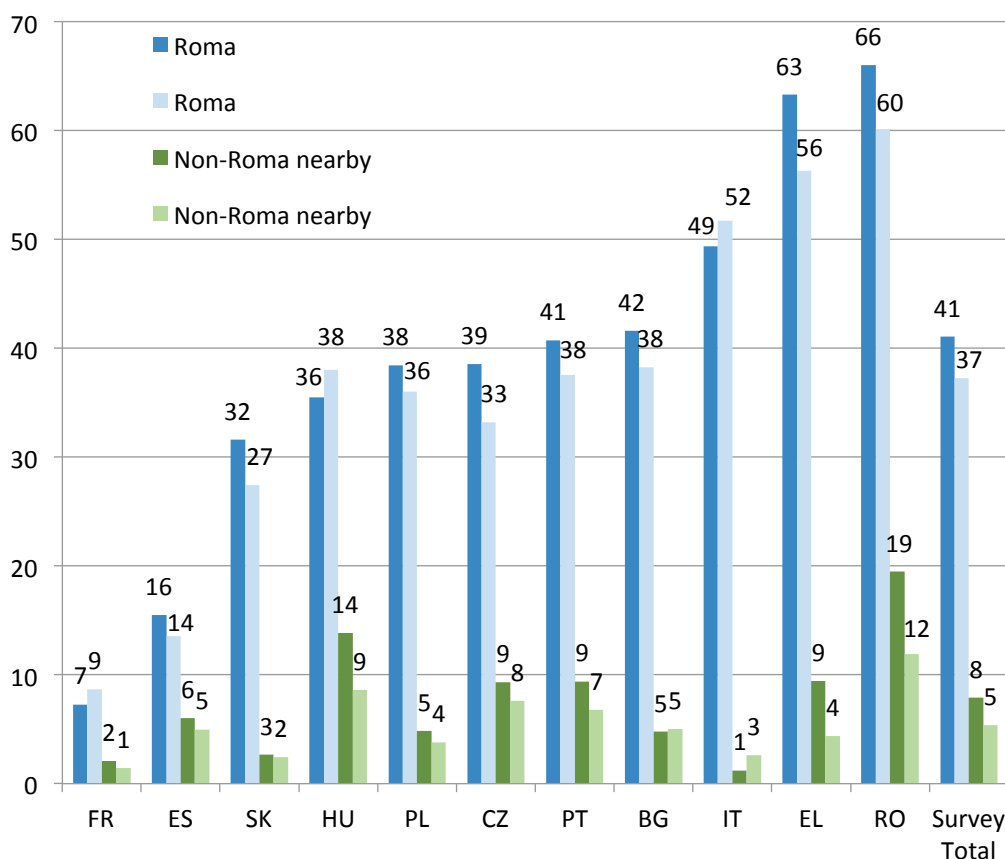
Source: FRA Roma Pilot Survey, 2011, persons in households.

Many Roma also face discrimination at work by their employers or work colleagues. On average 41% of the Roma actually report instances of discrimination at the workplace when they have been discriminated against because of being Roma. However, the rate of perceived discrimination at work is much lower than the rate of perceived discrimination when looking for work.

Figure 10: Experience of Discrimination in Employment in the Last Five Years Because of Being Roma in the Five EU member States (%)
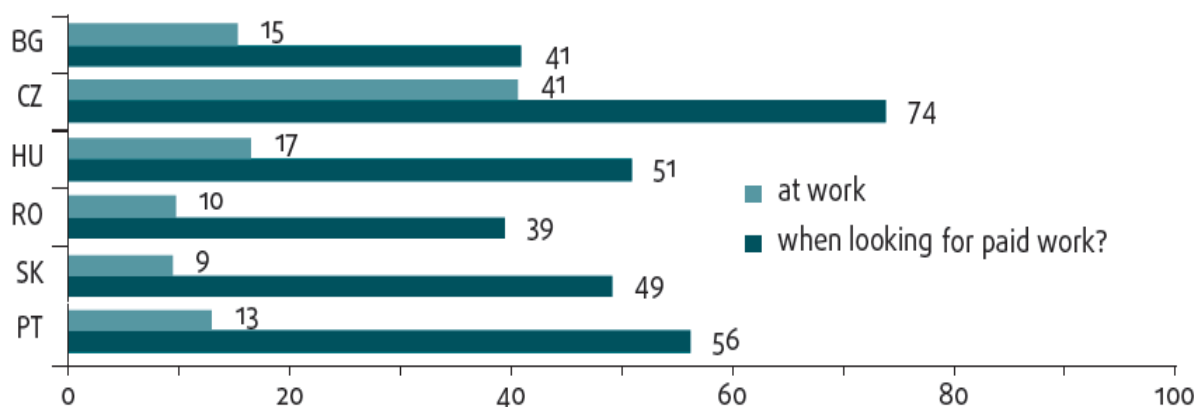
Source: FRA Roma Pilot Survey, 2011.

The examples above suggest that custom surveys on Roma samples may generate data similar to that from the standard European social surveys but for populations that have a low probability of being captured by random samples. In many EU member states Roma are hard-to-reach populations for which custom surveys provide an acceptable alternative. They can also generate important information on the socioeconomic status and fundamental rights of the non-Roma populations living in close proximity to the Roma (and thus sharing similar socioeconomic conditions). Observing the gap between households with comparable characteristics from the two groups gives an idea of the magnitude of prejudice against Roma that results in a worse socioeconomic status compared to their non-Roma neighbours.

4. Using a Multidimensional Poverty Approach for Capturing Aggregated Outcomes of Roma Inclusion

The sections above suggest that sufficient data exist already to populate a broad variety of indicators. The real question is to what extent these indicators serve the purpose of adequately reflecting the specific challenges of Roma poverty and the progress in addressing it. There are three reasons for doubts in that regard.

First, data from surveys depend highly on the population reached and can differ from survey to survey for various reasons (different sampling models, differences in the formulation of the questions, differences in modes, etc.). So the value of the same indicator (for example, poverty rate or unemployment rate) usually differs between surveys administered by different organizations – basically providing users with a choice of which to trust.

Second, different ways of defining and quantifying poverty yield different results and contribute more to the confusion around the issue rather than helping explain the root causes of poverty. The choice of method and poverty thresholds has an obvious impact on the outcomes of the analysis and its policy implications. Table 4 summarises the various approaches to poverty estimation that can be applied – all of them legitimate.

Table 4: Summary of Various Poverty Concepts

Uni-dimensional	Monetary	Income-based	Absolute poverty lines	National thresholds specific for individual countries, in the national currency	1. Nationally specific income-based poverty rates
				Internationally comparable thresholds	2. Severely poor with income below 2.15 PPP\$
					3. "Just poor" with income below 4.30 PPP\$
			Relative	60% of the median income	4. Severely poor (below 40% of the

|				
		poverty lines		median income)
				5. "At risk of poverty" (below 60% of the median income)
	Expenditure-based	Absolute poverty lines	National thresholds specific for individual countries, in national currency	6. Nationally specific expenditure-based poverty rates
			Internationally comparable thresholds	7. Severely poor with expenditures below 2.15 PPP$
				8. "Just poor" with expenditures below 4.30 PPP$
		Relative poverty lines	Share of the median expenditure	9. Severely poor (below 40% of the median expenditures)
				10. "At risk of poverty" (below 60% of the median expenditures)
	Food energy intake (FEI)			11. Nationally specific FEI-based poverty rates (varies by climate conditions, rural/urban distribution, type of occupation etc.)
Multidimensional	Basic needs and human development			12. Human Poverty Index 1 and Human Poverty Index 2
	Social exclusion			13. Social Exclusion Index
	Multidimensional poverty estimates – internationally comparable (following the methodology developed by OPHI and used for international comparisons and in the global Human Development Reports published by UNDP)			14. Multidimensional Poverty Index
	Nationally specific, following the methodology developed by OPHI			15. Severely poor
				16. "Just" poor

Third, most importantly, the traditional poverty measures are not reflecting adequately the multidimensional nature of Roma poverty. Roma poverty is not just a lack of financial resources, unemployment, sub-standard housing or poor access to social services. It is a combination of all these factors, which are both outcomes of past spells of exclusion and determinants of future deprivations – reinforcing the vicious circle of poverty. A composite index, like the EU Material Deprivation Index (Figure 11) is a step forward compared to monetary approaches to poverty but still does not reflect adequately the vicious circle of Roma exclusion. The deprivations in the specific areas are reinforced and augmented by prejudice and discrimination, specific behavioural traits, limited opportunities to participate in political processes, etc. Thus a composite measure of wellbeing (like the EU Material Deprivation Index) cannot capture the multiple dimensions of deprivation in their entirety unless

prejudice and discrimination, the missing opportunities to exercise fundamental rights are accounted for. In the case of Roma populations these missing dimensions are critical. These are the reasons why a multidimensional poverty index might be more appropriate for monitoring and analysing Roma poverty.

Figure 11: EU Material Deprivation Index of Roma and their non-Roma Neighbours in the Five EU Member States
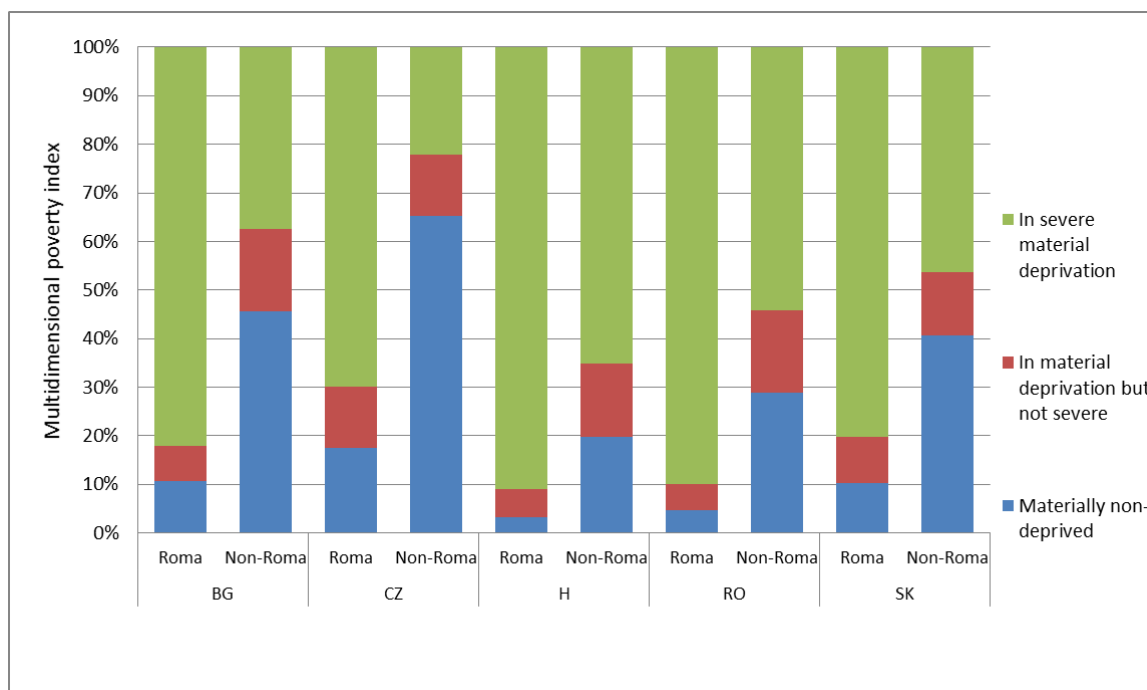
Source: UNDP/World Bank/EC Regional Roma Survey, 2011.

The multidimensional nature of Roma poverty and its determinants calls for a "human development" and not just a "basic needs" approach. It should also integrate a reduction in material deprivation with agency and a fundamental rights agenda. Unemployment, social exclusion and marginalization are interlinked with (and are mutually reinforcing) discrimination, anti-Gypsyism, limited access to justice and segregation.

In order to capture these aspects of Roma deprivation, a multidimensional poverty index has been developed and tested following the standard Alkire and Foster (2007) methodology.[19] This index integrates important aspects of human poverty and reflects the specifics of Roma exclusion appropriately.

4.1 Construction of the Index[20]

This index reflects the status of the individuals (and their characteristics) living in households (with their characteristics) and facing a number of deprivations. It combines twelve equally weighted indicators that

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[19] See Ivanov and Kagin (2014).

[20] This section is based on Ivanov and Kagin (2014).

reflect an individual's status in six critical dimensions that are based on a human development perspective (basic rights, health, education, housing, standard of living and employment). The status of the individual in each dimension is tracked with two indicators per dimension. The first three dimensions cover human capabilities of which basic rights, education and health emerge as particularly important. The second group covers the major aspects of material wellbeing.

Obviously, the entire palette of fundamental rights is far richer than the two indicators in the "basic rights" dimension. Fundamental rights include the right to work, protection of individual security, etc. However, both indicators (namely, 'Civil Status' and 'Discrimination') reflect the presence or absence of the necessary conditions for the realization of other fundamental rights, so they are seen as proxies reflecting at least to certain extent the opportunities for exercising these rights. The individual dimensions are equally weighted.

The index is calculated on the basis of the "individual status of each member of the household." This status reflects either the personal characteristics of the individual in question or the condition of the entire household shared by all its members and extrapolated as an individual parameter to each household member. Table 5 summarises the specific indicators, dimensions, and areas as well as the information required for the individual indicators (individual or household).

Table 5: Dimensions and Indicators of the Roma Multidimensional Poverty Index

Area	Dimension and weight	Indicators	Criterion of deprivation and threshold	Level of observation
Human capabilities	Basic rights (1/6)	Civil status	Having an ID – yes/no (personal document, birth certificate etc.)	I
		Discrimination	HH member lives in a HH where a member has been discriminated against while looking for a job	P
	Health (1/6)	Disability status	A household member having a disability – yes/no	I
		Limited access to medical services	Any HH member living in a HH responding "yes" to the question "were there any periods in the past 12 months when you couldn't visit a doctor when you needed?"	P
	Education (1/6)	Highest completed education	For adults: any HH member above school age who hasn't completed primary education or lower secondary For children: children of school age who are not in school	I
		Self-declared illiteracy rate	Any HH member stated as unable to read and write	I

Material wellbeing	Housing (1/6)	Access to basic infrastructure	A composite indicator – any HH member living in a HH without two of the three (toilet or bathroom inside the house; running water; electricity)	H
		Shares of the population not having access to secure housing	Any HH member living in "ruined houses" or "slums"	
	Standard of living (1/6)	Extreme poverty	Any HH member living in a HH where in the past month someone went to bed hungry because they could not afford enough food for them	H
		Access to various HH amenities	Any HH member living in a HH that doesn't possess four of six categories in the material deprivation index	I
	Employment (1/6)	Unemployment	Any HH member living in a household with none of the adult HH members employed (16+).	H
		Lack of working experience	Any HH member living in a HH in which the HH head or his/her spouse has no working experience	H

Level of observation of the respective indicators:
I – individual status of each household member
P – the experience and perception of the main respondent extrapolated to all household members
H – the status (vulnerability) of the household along a certain parameter extrapolated to all household members

In determining multidimensional poverty status, one cut-off line with two levels was applied: one for "multidimensional poverty" and one for "severe multidimensional poverty." People experiencing five to seven deprivations were considered multidimensionally poor; those experiencing eight or more deprivations were considered "severely multidimensionally poor." Unlike the global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), which also uses the Alkire-Foster methodology, no cut-off within dimensions was applied because of the limited number of deprivations in each dimension (2) and the dichotomous nature of most variables.

This methodology allows for integrating the poverty rate (the share of people experiencing five or more deprivations) and the severity of poverty (the average number of deprivations experienced by those in poverty) into a single index. The MPI is the share of the poor multiplied by the average number of deprivations. Figure 12 presents the value of the multidimensional poverty headcount (severe and not severe poverty) and the value of MPI for Roma and their non-Roma neighbours in the five countries with the highest Roma populations. The data show that multidimensional poverty is not a serious issue among non-Roma in the Czech Republic and Slovakia – but is a challenge in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania.

Figure 13 provides an in-depth view into the multidimensional poverty of Roma in Romania and Bulgaria, illustrating the how poverty headcount, MPI and the average number of deprivations were changing between 2004 and 2011.
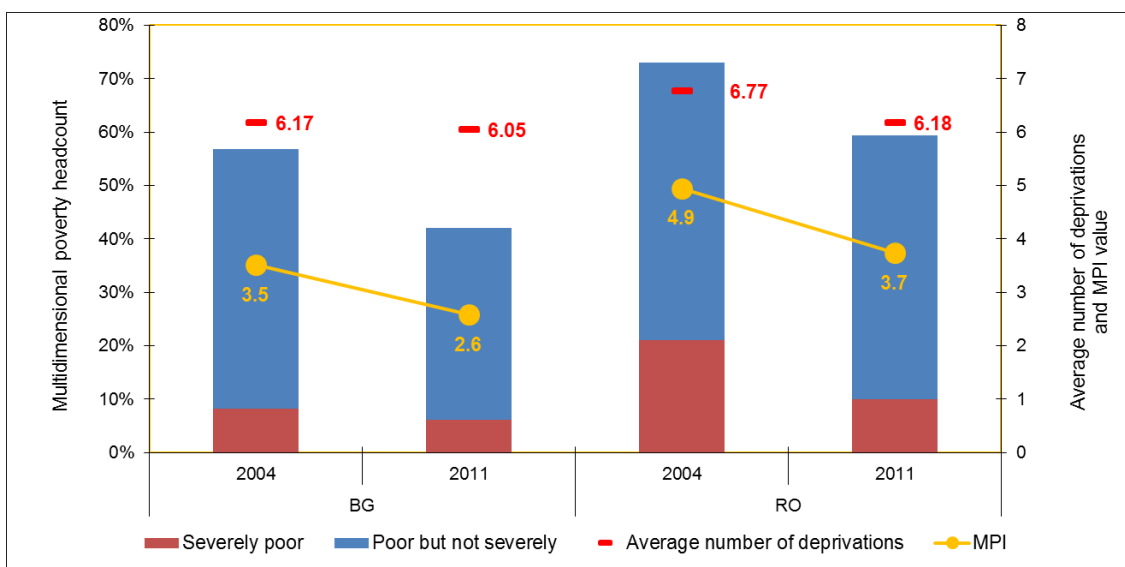
Figure 12: Multidimensional Poverty Incidence (Unsevere and Severe, Bars Left Scale) and MPI (Right Scale) For Roma and Non-Roma, 2011
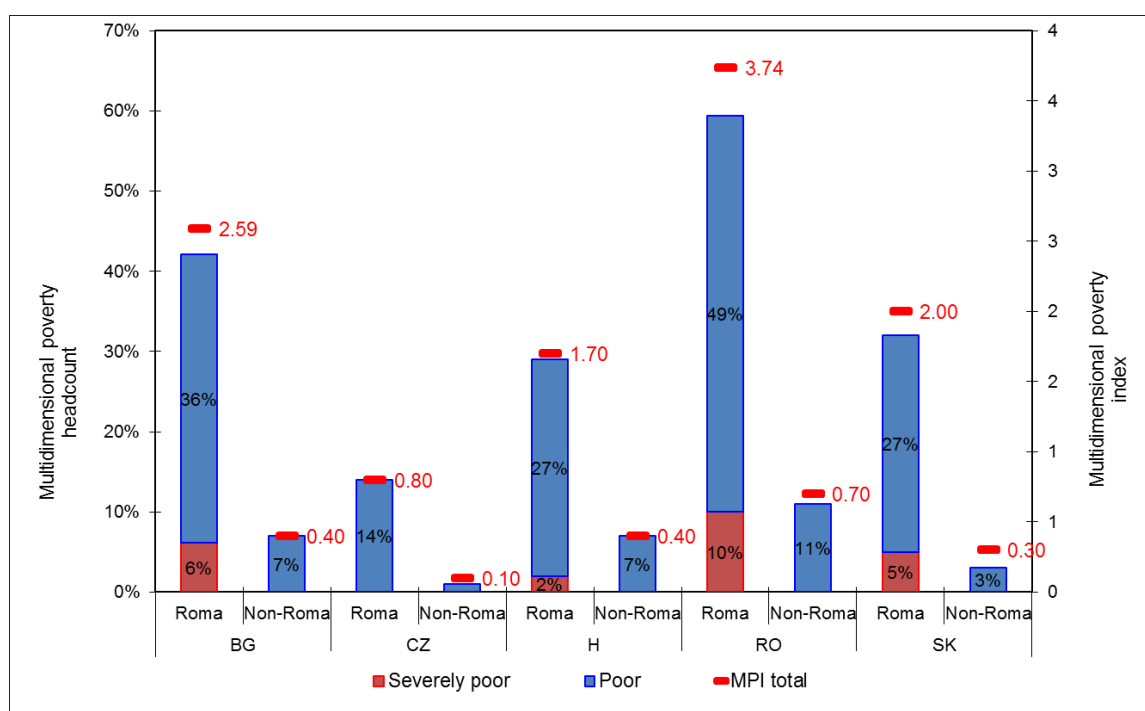
Source: UNDP/World Bank/EC Regional Roma Survey, 2011.

As the figure illustrates, the multidimensional poverty of Roma declined in the two countries, both in terms of poverty headcount and as a value of MPI. MPI declined by the same rate but the outcome was achieved in different ways. In Bulgaria it was largely due to a decrease in the headcount of the (not severely) multidimensionally poor. The average number of deprivations remained almost the same between 2004 and 2011. In Romania however the biggest contribution to the decrease in multidimensional poverty comes from a decrease in the severe poverty headcount. This change is also reflected in the value of the average number of deprivations, which shows a much steeper decline in Romania than in Bulgaria.

Figure 14 shows yet another perspective on the issue in the two countries. In both Romania and Bulgaria the multidimensional poverty rates of Roma decreased by similar magnitude – as it did for their non-Roma neighbours in Romania. In Bulgaria however multidimensional poverty among non-Roma increased over time. A two percentage points increase may appear to be negligible but seen in relative terms (as poverty is seen at the local level), this may indicate a disturbing tendency that needs to be addressed. Bridging the gap between the two groups should be achieved through improving the status of Roma to that of non-Roma – and not the other way around. Otherwise support for Roma-targeted poverty alleviation measures may be eroded.

Figure 13: Multidimensional Poverty Rate and Its Composition for Roma (Non-Severe and Severe, Bars Left Scale) and the Value of MPI (Right Scale)
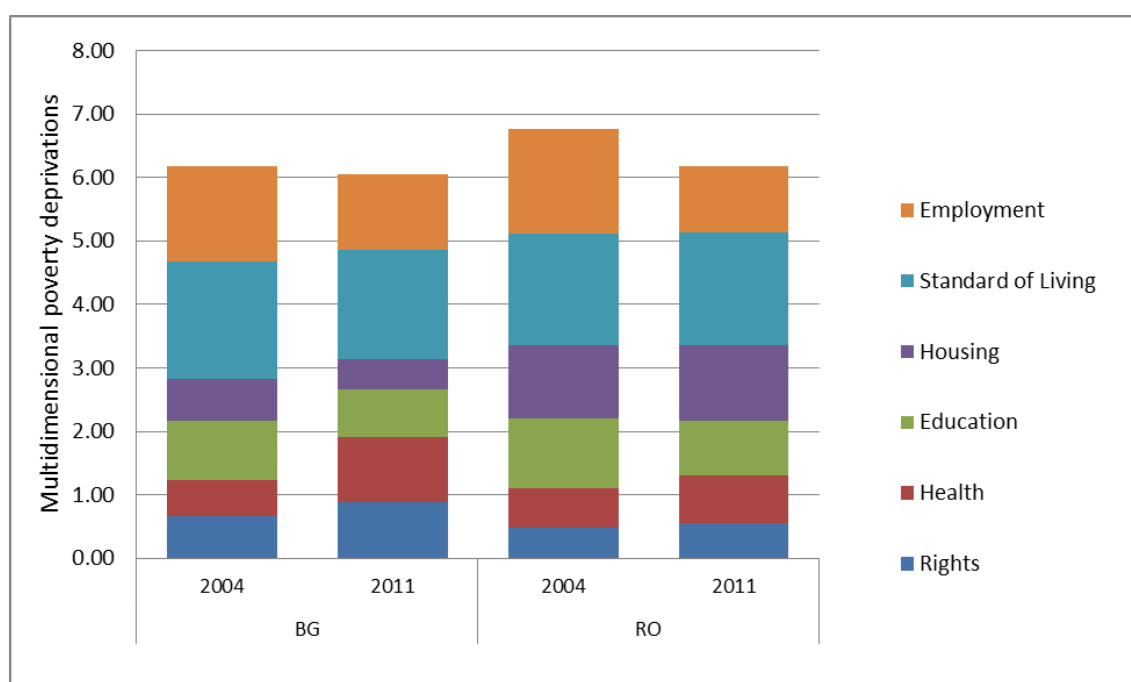

Source: UNDP/World Bank/EC Regional Roma Survey, 2011.

Figure 14: Multidimensional Poverty Rates of Roma and Non-Roma, 2004–2011
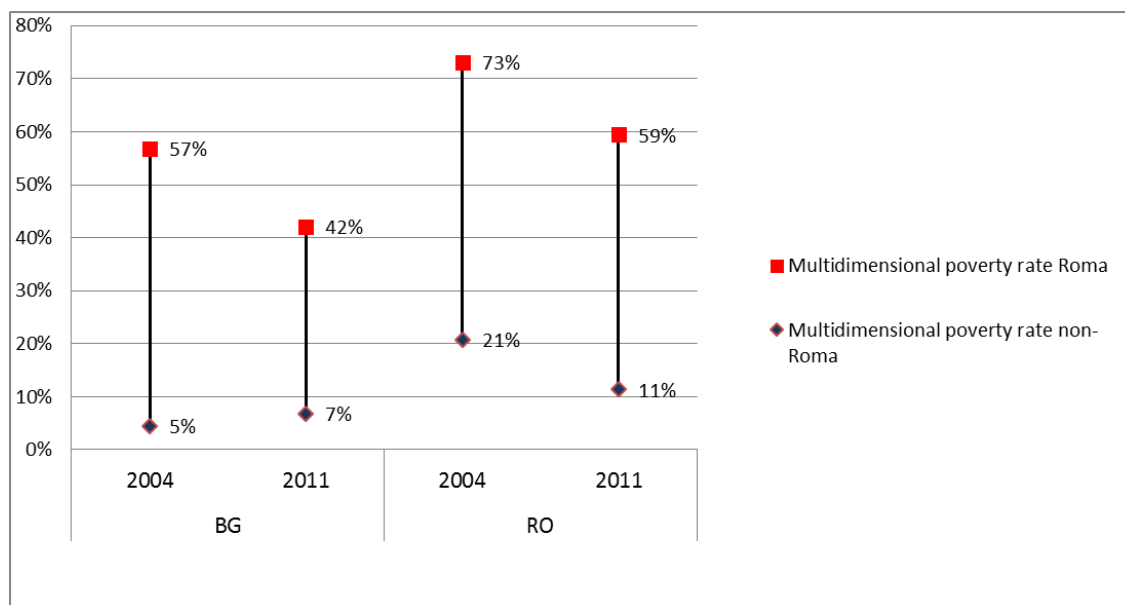
Sources: UNDP Regional Roma Survey (2004) and UNDP/World Bank/EC Regional Roma Survey (2011).

The data in Figure 15 show which deprivations contribute most significantly to these poverty trends and suggest which areas might be prioritized in poverty reduction/Roma inclusion efforts. In Bulgaria the average number of deprivations almost stagnated, but the contribution of individual dimensions changed. The contribution of access to employment, of education and housing vulnerability declined but was offset by an increase in deprivation in health and in individual rights. Romania followed a similar pattern, but the improvement in employment and educational vulnerability was more pronounced than the deterioration in access to health and individual rights. This is why the average number of deprivations – and respectively, the value of MPI – declined.

Figure 15: Changes in Multidimensional Poverty Deprivations Structure of Roma in Bulgaria and Romania, 2004–2011

Sources: UNDP Regional Roma Survey (2004) and UNDP/World Bank/EC Regional Roma Survey (2011).

Tracking the impact of individual, sector-specific policies on poverty is a major contribution of the proposed methodology. It makes possible linking the individual, sector-specific interventions to the overall multidimensional poverty reduction outcome. In that way policy interventions can be prioritized and the allocation of resources devoted to poverty reduction can be optimized.

4.2 Comparing Different Poverty Estimates

Ideally, different poverty concepts should not yield too diverging results. It would be logical to expect that different poverty measures would yield different – but not dramatically different – results. Table 6 and Figure 16 suggest that this is not the case.

Table 6: Poverty Rates by Different Poverty Concepts

| Country | Share of household members who are poor | | | | | |
| | By all three poverty concepts | | By relative and multidimensional but not absolute poverty concept | | By relative and absolute but not multidimensional poverty concept | |
	Roma	Non-Roma	Roma	Non-Roma	Roma	Non-Roma
Bulgaria	21	1	19	4	10	4
Czech Republic	1	0	12	1	1	2
Hungary	1	0	22	3	1	1

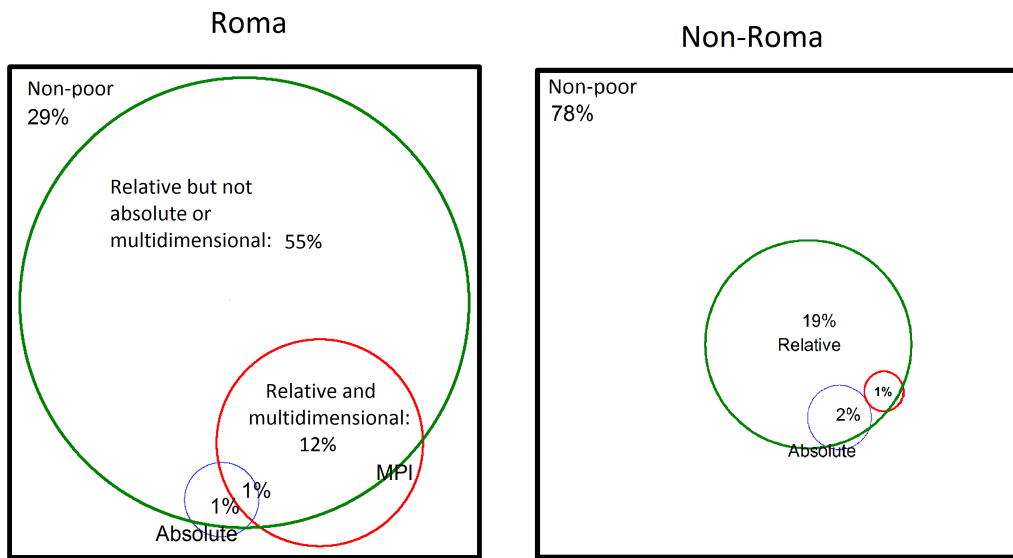| Romania	40	4	12	2	13	9
Slovakia	2	0	33	3	4	7

Source: UNDP/World Bank/EC Regional Roma Survey, 2011.

The figure visualises the shares of household members falling below the poverty lines when different poverty concepts are applied. As the figure shows, absolute poverty rates (calculated using a $4.30PPP internationally applied poverty rate) are of limited relevance and only for low-income countries (Bulgaria and Romania). A relative poverty concept on the other hand tends to produce much higher poverty rates than a multidimensional concept. This can be explained by the fact that in both cases (Roma and their non-Roma neighbours) some of the resources needed for the households' daily living do not come from market-intermediated channels (and thus are not reflected in monetary poverty estimates).

Figure 16: Overlaps between Relative, Absolute and Multidimensional Poverty Measures

Czech Republic

Roma

Non-poor
29%

Relative but not
absolute or
multidimensional: 55%

Relative and
multidimensional:
12%

MPI

1%

Absolute

1%

Non-Roma

Non-poor
78%

19%
Relative

1%

2%
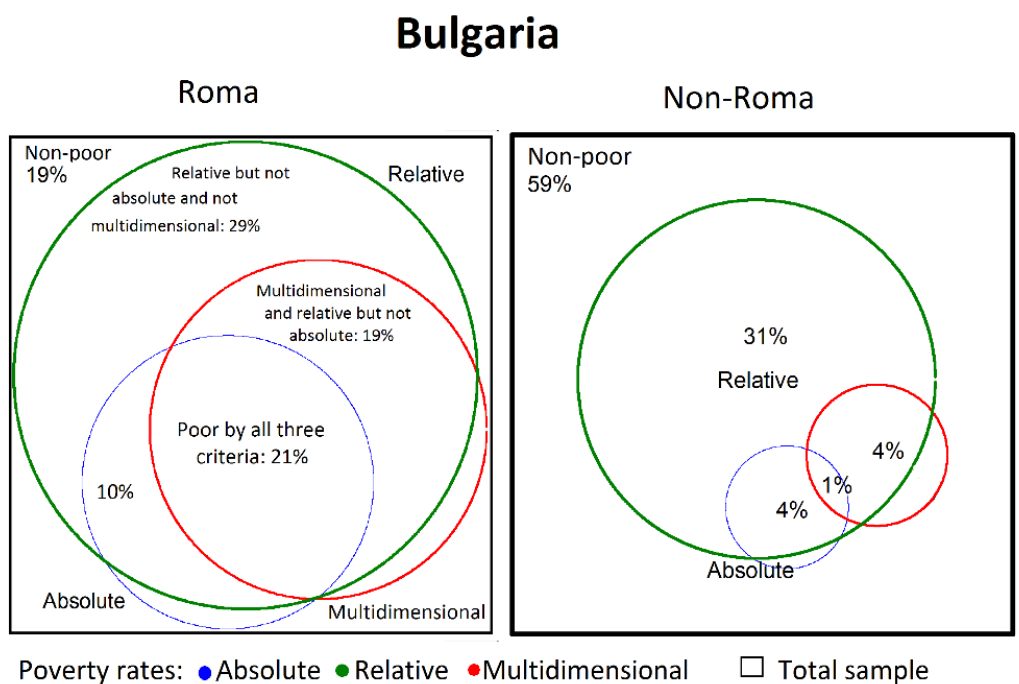
Absolute

Poverty rates: ● Absolute ● Relative ● Multidimensional ☐ Total sample

Hungary

Roma

Non-poor
23%

Relative but not absolute or
multidimensional: 47%

Relative and
multidimensional
but not absolute: 22%

1% 1%

Absolute

7%
Multidimensional

Non-Roma

Non-poor
63%

30%
Relative

3%

4%

1%
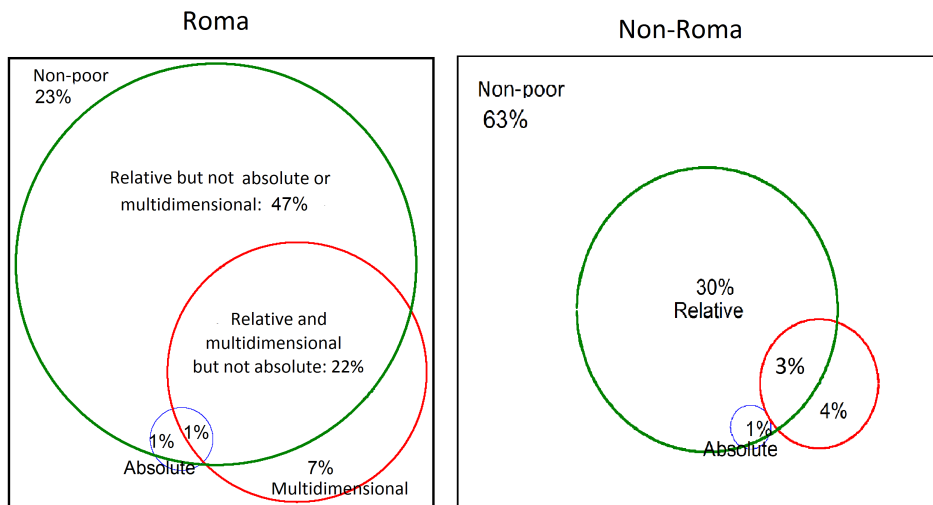
Absolute

Poverty rates: ● Absolute ● Relative ● Multidimensional ☐ Total sample

Romania

Roma

Non-poor
19%

Relative
9%

12%

Poor by all three
criteria: 40%

13%

8%
Multidimensional

Non-Roma

Non-poor
68%

11%   Relative   2%

4%   6%

9%

Absolute

Poverty rates: ●Absolute ●Relative ●Multidimensional   ☐ Total sample

Slovakia

Roma

Non-poor
12%

Relative but not absolute or
multidimensional: 49%

Relative and
multidimensional
but not absolute: 33%

2%
4%

Absolute   2%
Multidimensional

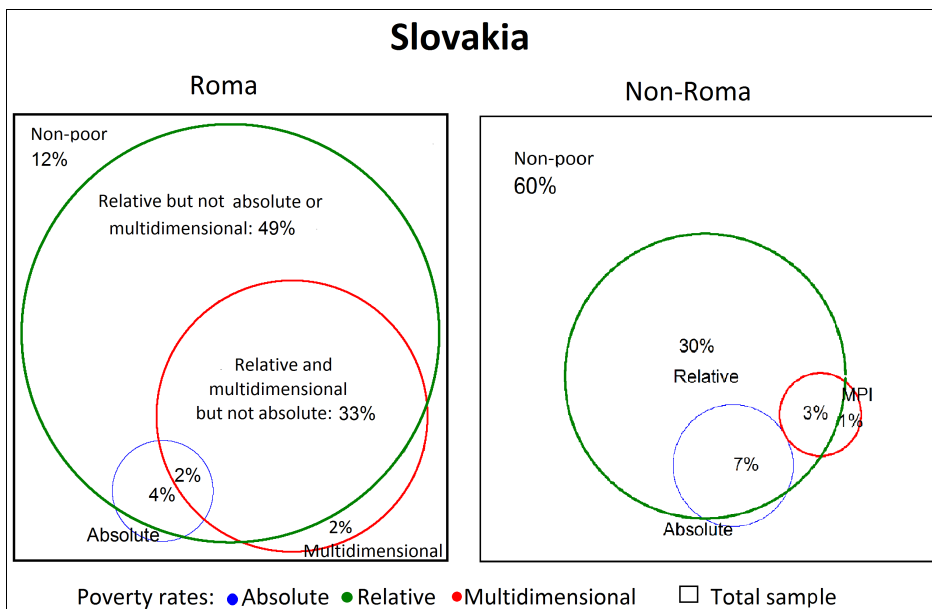### Non-Roma

Non-poor
60%

30%
Relative

MPI
3% 1%

7%

Absolute

Poverty rates: ●Absolute ●Relative ●Multidimensional   ☐ Total sample

Source: UNDP/World Bank/EC Regional Roma Survey, 2011.

4.3 From 'Multidimensional Poverty' to 'Fundamental Rights' Indicators

Most of the indicators presented above reflect various aspects of the socioeconomic **status** (of individuals and households). This is important from the perspective of fundamental rights but is not sufficient. Indeed, differences in status reflect different individuals' opportunities to exercise their fundamental rights. But registering the differences in status between groups is not sufficient – even when matched by questions on perceived or experienced discrimination or prejudice that prevented the respondent from exercising those rights. In addition to differences in status and the perception of

discrimination, a comprehensive system of fundamental-rights-focused indicators should capture two more aspects: agency and aspirations.

Both are missing from the standard human development – poverty or vulnerability – indicators. Aspirations can be captured relatively easily through questions regarding the desired level of achievement in different areas of respondents' children. Applying the concept of **agency** is a much greater challenge and generating robust data to populate appropriate indicators of agency is an even bigger one.

All of the above contributes to a "status bias" in human development indicators at the expense of agency: the tendency to quantify and monitor the status and the magnitude of deprivations in various dimensions rather than the opportunities people have (or lack) to reach their desired status and realize their aspirations. Achieved status may be seen as a proxy of limited opportunities (and thus a violation of fundamental rights) but only to a limited extent.

Agency may be defined as the aspirations of an individual (or a group), matched by the resources and opportunities required to reach those aspirations. Seen from this perspective, it would be hard to find a group more in need of an explicit agency focus than the Roma, who face a vicious circle of high levels of deprivation in virtually all spheres of life that are mutually determining and reinforce each other (UNDP 2002: 42). These deprivations lead to low aspirations that can be met through "low-agency strategies" and thus additionally fuel the cycle of exclusion, replicating its patterns over generations. Roma life takes place in an "agency-hostile" context, with powerful interests vested in keeping the Roma in a subordinate status and preventing them from taking their destinies into their own hands without the need of permanent support from various intermediaries from within and outside their communities.

The standard approach uses sample surveys to capture the degree to which respondents feel that they have "control over their lives" or their perception of the optimal balance between the role of the state and that of the individual in achieving personal success and realizing one's aspirations (see Alkire 2005; Ibrahim and Alkire 2007; Samman and Santos 2009). Indeed, these aspects are critical to the perception of agency, but such data exist only for national-level samples and rarely for group-targeted research. What is more important, such questions are not particularly useful if detached from the effects of complex internal group dynamics; local, social and political context; and the patterns of interaction among various stakeholders. Historical experience of prejudice and discrimination also powerfully affects the range of individual aspirations. Table 7 provides an example of a bloc of questions on agency that may generate sufficient data to complement the status profiles of the respondents.

Table 7: Do You Feel You Can Change the Following Aspects of Your Life – If You Want To?

Aspect of life	Control (can/ cannot change)	Reason	Aspiration (want/do not want to change)
1. Your job			
2. The place of your residence (moving to another city/town in your country)			
3. The country you live			
4. The mayor of the place you live			
5. The school your children attend			
6. The provider of the health services your household uses			
7. Your spouse/partner you live with			
8. Other (is there any other aspect of your life you feel you cannot change?)			
Codes for reasons if the "cannot change" option is chosen for any of the aspects: (a) Financial; (b) Group belonging/peer pressure; (c) Family traditions; (d) Religious beliefs; (e) Formal status (possession/lack of respective documents); (f) Personal safety concerns.			

Addressing aspirations is equally important. A UNDP/World Bank/EC Regional Roma Survey in 2011 included such a section, capturing respondents' aspirations through questions on their visions of their children's future. Figure 17 visualises the results regarding educational aspirations for multidimensionally poor and non-poor Roma and their neighbours (the figure visualises the data of the unweighted regional sample).

Figure 17: Educational Aspirations and Multidimensional Poverty
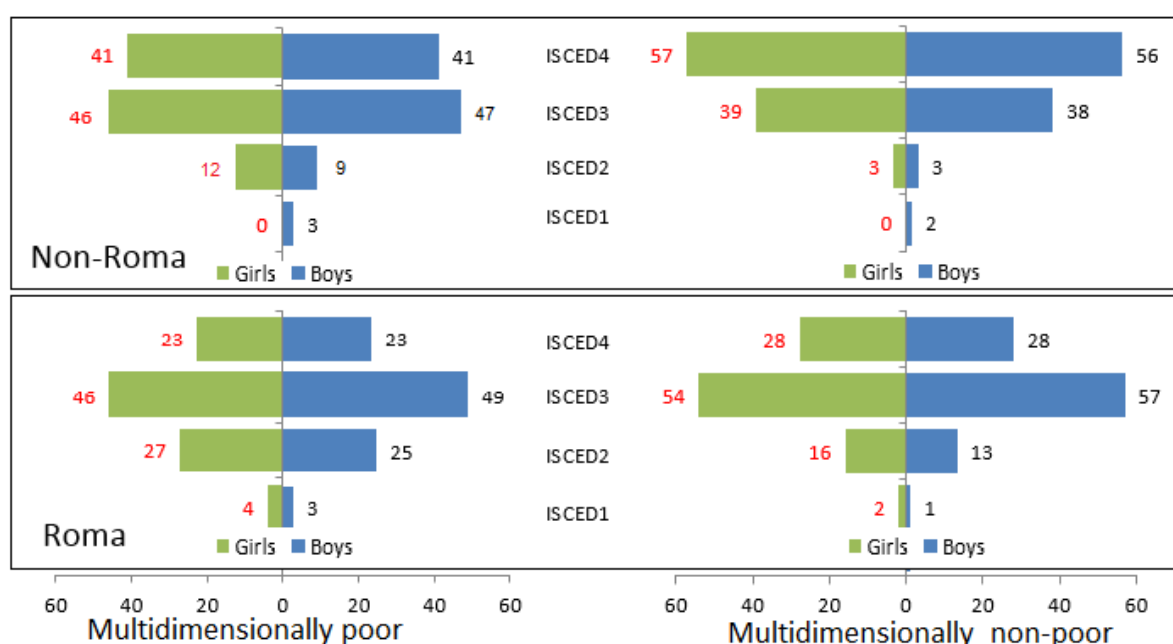
Source: UNDP/World Bank/EC Regional Roma Survey, 2011.

5. Conclusions

Roma integration is an area that will see increasing policy attention and availability of resources. Thus adequately capturing progress in Roma integration is a highly policy-relevant task facing a number of challenges. Two of them stand out.

The first is the data needed for monitoring progress. A variety of approaches can be used to tackle the paucity of ethnically disaggregated data and indicators. The three major approaches (censuses, standardized European social surveys and custom sample surveys) serve different purposes and should be used in a complementary manner. Censuses can provide reliable and robust data for monitoring long-term changes. In-between censuses, the standardized European surveys, in particular the LFS, can yield data with higher frequency.

Currently these tools can be used only in a limited number of EU countries that allow ethnic self-identification in surveys. In cases where questions on ethnic identity cannot be included in censuses or standardised European or national surveys, custom sample surveys can fill the gap, providing comparability across countries. The potential of these custom surveys to generate data that can be compared to general population data can be increased by synchronising the three sources of ethnically disaggregated data to the extent possible. One important step in that regard is to develop more standardised approaches when collecting data on ethnic identity and using an identical core set of questions for generating data on issues that are important for monitoring progress on Roma integration.

The choice of indicators (and the poverty concept behind them) constitutes the second challenge. A multidimensional poverty concept better reflects the specifics of Roma exclusion. Taking advantage of its benefits, however, requires addressing the 'agency' and 'aspirations' dimensions. Data for these dimensions may be generated through the thematic components in the standardized European social surveys (like EU-SILC).

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