

Croatia Country Fiche



IO 1: Guide for Positive Narrative

“Boosting positive narrative on Romani integration through Arts” with reference number 2020-1-CZ01-KA204-078214

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Introduction

Given how they live, Roma are often described as a subclass, as an isolated and marginalized group that has little chance of coming out of the vicious circle of poverty and social exclusion (Šučur 2000). Due to a kind of exclusion from the system of economic and social stratification, it can also be linked to a culture of poverty. The poor develop their own value system and a culture of poverty characterized by low expectations and various forms of socially unacceptable behavior. Once formed, the culture of poverty is passed from parents to children and thus becomes an accepted value pattern of poor communities (UNDP 2006).

Nevertheless, the Roma are not only the passive detainees of such a process, nor they are solely responsible for the difficult entry into the world. It should be pointed out that some historically, structurally and socially produced inequalities are in existence. The deep imprint of discrimination associated with racism and ideology of racial superiority greatly influenced stereotypes and prejudices about Roma in the past and today. Historically, across Europe, there were Jews and Roma, two highly discriminated minorities on the basis of their presumed ethnicity inferiority. Both groups experienced persecution and mass extermination during The World War II, and suffered under almost all other regimes before and after it. However, while anti-Semitism is condemned today at all levels of society and politics, anti-Gypsyism is generally neither recognized nor acknowledged as a socially conditioned phenomenon and a way of creating and spreading deeply ingrained prejudices and distance from Roma communities. Therefore, it is habitual and not thoroughly condemned. Romophobia or anti-Gypsyism is a complex social phenomenon that manifests itself in different ways: hate speech, violence, exploitation and discrimination. One of the definition views anti-Gypsyism as a particular kind of racism, an ideology of racial superiority and the form of dehumanization and institutional racism that feeds the historical discrimination and the struggle to maintain power relations that majority groups give preference. It is based, on the one hand, on imaginary fears, negative stereotypes and myths, and on the other hand on denial of the long history of discrimination against Roma from public consciousness (Nicolae 2006). Therefore, it is not unusual to testify that even those who have never had a personal encounter with the Roma will still be able to describe in detail how they live, how they look and how they behave because they are used to the most obvious stereotypes and prejudices of the majority social group.

Furthermore, some of the indicators of social ills and the characteristic exclusion of Roma from many institutions of the wider society are also found in theories based on the social development and human rights. Because of its theoretical and experiential importance here we emphasize concepts based on discrimination, social exclusion, segregation, stereotyping, prejudice and intolerance. Given that according to Roma are most often expressed negative attitudes and prejudices, it is the Roma population compared to the rest of the population can be conceptually and empirically described in categories of extreme form of deviation and multiple deprivation in almost all areas of life.

Statistical Information about Romani in Croatia and their characteristics

According to the Central Bureau of Statistics there were 16,975 Roma living in the Republic of Croatia (census 2011), while the Council of Europe's estimate of the number of Roma was between 30,000 and 40,000. According to data from a survey conducted by the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities, 24,524 members of the Roma national minority live in 134 localities in 15 counties in the Republic of Croatia, which is the first accurate indicator of the Roma population in Croatia.

Education¹

In the last ten years the schooling of children has become the important issue in Roma communities. Between the ages of 7 and 14, as many as 95.2% of children are covered by primary education, while at the age of 6 - 15 years 80.0%. At the age of 6, another 29.7% of children attend preschool and 24.3% kindergarten. Almost all Roma primary school students (N = 727) attend school regularly, ie daily (94.1% of them), only 5.1% miss approximately one day a week, and more often absent or unable to estimate less than 1%. Data on dropping out of primary education and reasons for dropping out shows that the most drop outs are in the age group from 26 to 60, one in three persons are drop outs. Contrary to some opinions, it is extremely rare for parents to not want that their children continue schooling after primary school. The results of the survey showed

that as many as 90.8% of parents strongly want their children to continue their education after primary school. Although there is a strong wish, reality is different, only 31% of young Roma in the usual age for secondary school attendance are in schools (mostly VETs), more boys (36%) than girls (26%). The key reasons for dropping out are: lack of financial resources (23.3%), previous poor education (18.1%), conclusion of marriage with large gender difference (20.2% of girls compared to only 5.6% of boys).

Of the 2581 adults (18 and over) for whom they were collected only 14 persons enrolled at the university, but later dropped out of the studies. Of the 2671 adults, seven of them completed higher education school or undergraduate study, and six graduate study, mostly currently in aged about 30 (seven men and six women).

(Un)Employment²

The unemployment is persistent and heavy among Roma communities in Croatia. 46,2% were unemployed. If you add the category of housewives (19,2%), it is even worse. Only 7.3% had

¹ Data from Kunac. Klasnić, Lalić: INCLUSION OF ROMA IN CROATIAN SOCIETY / RESEARCH OF BASIC DATA; Centar za mirovne studije; Zagreb, 2018.

² Ibid

a paid full-time job. 10.2%, stated that they work occasional part-time jobs, 3.2% of them are on maternity leave, 1.4% are self-employed. It was found that of those who work in some way (N = 1078), the relative majority work in private sector, and a fifth in the public or state sector. This form of work very often refers to public works and other measures of active employment.

Poverty³

Perhaps the most pronounced indicator of a poor economic situation is the frequency of famine which is not based on renunciation for health or aesthetic reasons. A quarter of the members of Roma national minority go to bed hungry on average at least once a week or share a household with such a person.

Data show that four-fifths of Roma children are under 15 years old lives at risk of poverty.

Culture and identity⁴

Roma people have a different views on the key components of their identity. The most important is language at 84.4%. Traditional Roma music is also important at 74.3%. At the third place were traditional Roma crafts, although 26.4% claimed that they are not important at all. When it comes to age groups, statistically significant differences in the average importance of individual components of Roma identity were identified in four features of the Roma way of life. Traditional Roma dances, traditional Roma music, playing instruments and old Roma crafts are at least important to young people aged 16 to 30, and most important to those over 66.

And at the end, the disadvantaged position of the Roma communities is largely the result of their ignorance of the social codes the rest of the population use. Insufficient knowledge of surrounding culture, tradition, language and art is often conditioned by distrust, aversion, different kinds of discriminatory treatment and suffering, primarily as a result of negative stereotyping, and not as a reflection of Roma unwelcomeness, traditional way of life or mentality (Hrvatić 2004). Another important characteristic of the Roma communities is their spatial isolation and segregation of majority population. Since arriving in Croatia, the Roma have mostly settled in the peripheral parts of the settlement, which is partly due to economic deprivation, and partly to legal provisions. Such a way of life leads to very little or no contact of the Roma population with members of the majority groups (Šučur 2000).

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

Good Practices in pedagogical techniques and methodologies using arts for social inclusion

At the beginning one should bear in mind that art education and training even in official, formal setting in the schools is under the threat. While all teachers and artist place faith in art, and at the same time are aware of its values, most of them also express anxiety about their own position in the new academic landscape of material scarcity and hyper-responsibility, or a condition we call vulnerability. Once again, teachers point out students who have not realized the importance of art. Once more artists discuss potentially powerful, important, and unpredictable changes which can occur in the curriculum and in its conceptual components. It is seen to be constant pressure to make it easier to interpret and explain these changes and to make them as good as possible and more efficient application. "Cultural scarcity" in schools does not allow "omissions" which have appeared in the past. Everything must be "counted", both literally and figuratively. There is too little time to compare the "extra". Teachers are under pressure introducing students to new ways, but also the pressures that limit the fulfillment of the "bottom borders" in tests. Artists are under pressure to adapt and connect their work with curriculum and an attempt to create their own events and products which they will be able to share with the public. Most of the teachers we come across talk about the ability of art to influence young people, but does not talk about applying new ways through the traditional curriculum. Many think so art allows young people to show their affinities, strengths and talents to different ways. Art points to the "different sides" of young people by allowing them to work very hard often in contact with public performances and value models and thus expand their own horizons. It allows young people who are not so successful to feel "more successful". It is for this reason that many emphasize that young people who do not excel in school are often expressed through art. These students are motivated in ways that is not prescribed in traditional curriculum.

Along not so favorable situation in the formal education, the informal or non-formal education is even in worse position. Covid 19 epidemiological measures has almost annihilated all activities, moving them on-line that is not a favorable move for some marginalized groups, including Roma people due to the costs of using the internet (costs of IT equipment and internet services).

Nevertheless, some good practices can be identified (pre-Covid and during the Covid). Hopefully, they can be used in post-Covid times.

Most of the cultural and artistic activities of the Roma communities are linked to the traditional Roma music and dances. In the words of one representative of relevant regional institution: "Pehlin Kings. They often perform for us in our street. They are very, very well accepted. They have already become part of the brand of our street where we have numerous associations. We go to their events, they love when we come, they feel appreciated and accepted."

But, according to the research done by Kunac, Klasnić, Lalić young Roma people are not interesting in traditional Roma dances, music and crafts. New forms of art expression is needed. Some good practices are following:

ROUM

ROUM is discarded objects rescue centre, where Roma and artists come together to make interior design pieces out of discarded objects. ROUM enterprise is based on learning from Roma communities which have a long tradition of reusing, rethinking and upcycling discarded objects, preserving traditional crafts and trades, showing great entrepreneurship skills and as a community reducing the amount of waste in our societies.

ROUM takes the Roma tradition and community entrepreneurship, applies a lot of arts, add a sprinkle of new technologies and digital communication, and voila! ROUM brings the forgotten and discarded from the margins to the very heart of the society.

ROUM transforms trash into applied art and unique pieces for interior design. ROUM saves and adopt discarded objects, or old things and furniture, giving them a new life and a unique look. ROUM then sends them to your home, office or a hotel, airbnb or any other venue.



All the pieces are one of the kind and have a minimal price. ROUM operates as a social entrepreneurship and use the funds from the sales to keep the idea and production going. ROUM is a space of solidarity and belief that when we learn from each other and when we work together, everything we touch, increases in value. It has organized numerous creative

workshops for Roma community and enlisted their artists to work collectively on repurposing different objects.

Also, they got the National Geographic Croatia, Yellow framework award in 2020.



Organized as a social enterprise, it is part of the Roma Youth Organization in Croatia.

TeatarR

An interesting social and artistic project - TeatarR - was launched in Zagreb through the cooperation of Roma and non-Roma cultural associations.

For more than a year, young people from the Roma community in Zagreb, under the guidance and mentorship of educators, studied and worked on production and designed and produced a colourful theatre play entitled "We would like to get married" which received professional recognition and encouraged the idea of founding a real Roma theatre.



Due to a number of reasons, such as cultural and social, and to some extent the language barrier, children and youth from the Roma community are generally unable to participate, or insufficiently participate in cultural and artistic activities and contents and regular training programs, education and training in cultural and artistic field. The aim of this project was to improve the opportunities for the inclusion of Roma children and young people and increase their competence in artistic expression by strengthening their personal skills of artistic expression and creation. Young Roma actively participated in the creation of all segments of the play (text, scenography, directing, music, acting) and showed huge artistic potentials and a rich jug of talent. The Roma are not visible on the cultural scene due to the lack of opportunity.

Roma Library

The Central Roma Library "Kali Sara" in Zagreb will strive to be a synergistic place and an information source of material through which it will be possible to follow the history and development of the Roma people, their travels, sufferings and achievements through the centuries. The library will strive to be an interdisciplinary space in which information and knowledge are exchanged, a center of culture and events. Its activities will strive to be as dedicated to historical topics as it is to follow recent professional publications and other types of sources. Sources of information must be based on standards and criteria of quality and professionalism. As such, the Central Library of the Roma in the Republic of Croatia will be governed in its operations by the current Law on Libraries and Librarianship and regulations.



According to its purpose and fund structure, it is a special library: "A special library is an independent library or a library within which covers a certain scientific discipline or a certain field of knowledge, that is, the area of specialized activity. The term special library includes libraries that primarily provide services to a certain category of users and collect a certain type of library material, as well as libraries supported by an organization in order to meet the needs related to its own field of work or activity." The library was open in June 2020 and already has decent membership.

Theater of Blind "New Life"

The theater is the oldest theater of its kind in the world. It started in 1948 in Samobor, small town near Zagreb as amateur organization. Until today the theater had produced 110 premieres and had 3550 performances. All actors are blinded, but they co-operate with the professional and well established directors, set designers, costume designers, writers, playwrights. It has specialized in comedies in order to appeal to the general public and empower blind people, but lately is getting more and more in theater experimentation.



The theater with a long tradition has provide a space to act for numerous blind actors that, unfortunately, are still amateurs although they have significant international experience and are well loved by public.

Drama-theater approach to learning Croatian as foreign language

At the end of this review of best practices, drama-theatrical approach to learning Croatian as foreign language, as for more than one quarter of the Roma pupils and students in primary school language is a detected problem, as well as for the older Roma.

The idea is to produce the short piece in Croatian, and the learners are involved in all stages of production. The process can be longer or shorter, with more theatrical paraphernalia or less, but the result is always appreciated by the learners. It can be adapted for work with all age groups. According to the results it stimulates the intake of the foreign language and motivates learners.

List of items /Publications

<http://romni.net/2020/01/08/zelimo-vise-roma-da-budu-na-sceni/> - Želimo više Roma da budu na sceni/We Wish more Romani on the theater scene

<https://www.jutarnji.hr/kultura/art/price-roma-sjajne-fotografije-jasenka-rasola-prate-tople-ljudske-price-uz-njih-9875239> - IZLOŽBA - PRIČE ROMA Sjajne fotografije Jasenka Rasola prate tople ljudske priče uz njih/ EXHIBITION - ROMA STORIES Great photos by Jasenko Rasol are accompanied by human stories

https://www.cms.hr/system/publication/pdf/108/Uklju_ivanje_Roma_u_hrvatsko_dru_tvo_istra_ivanje_baznih_podataka.pdf - Kunac, Klasnić, Lalić; Uključivanje Roma u hrvatsko društvo: istraživanje baznih podataka/ Roma inclusion into Croatian society: baseline data research; Ured za ljudska prava i prava nacionalnih manjina; Zagreb, 2018.

https://hrcak.srce.hr/index.php?show=clanak&id_clanak_jezik=227811
Brajdić: Umjetnost i obrazovanje/ Art and Education

<https://repozitorij.foozos.hr/islandora/object/foozos:1408>
Brkić: Dramska pedagogija u odgoju i obrazovanju djece s posebnim potrebama

<https://scholar.google.hr/scholar?hl=en&q=%22Dramsko-kazali%C5%A1ni%20pristup%20u%C4%8Denju%20hrvatskoga%20kao%20stranoga%20jezika%22&btnG=> - Hrvatić: Romi u interkulturalnom okružju/ The Romanies in an intercultural environment

<https://phralipen.hr/2017/09/23/suvremena-romska-umjetnost-1-dio/>

<https://scholar.google.hr/scholar?hl=en&q=%22Dramsko-kazali%C5%A1ni%20pristup%20u%C4%8Denju%20hrvatskoga%20kao%20stranoga%20jezika%22&btnG=> - Kodrić: Dramsko-kazališni pristup učenju hrvatskoga kao stranoga jezika/ Dramatic-theatrical approach to learning Croatian as a foreign language

<https://www.bib.irb.hr/43059> - Šučur: Romi kao marginalna skupina /Gypsies as marginalized group

<https://knjiznica.kalisara.hr/> - About Central Roma Library in Croatia

Conclusions

Roma communities in Croatia experience severe poverty, discrimination in the forms of hate speech, negative stereotyping and open marginalization in the society. High level of unemployment, low skills of communities' members, spatial isolation and lack of language skills lead to isolation of the communities and numerous misunderstandings and incidents between general population and Roma people.

Art can be a bridge between people and can help shatter the social distance and existing prejudices. Nevertheless, the Roma art is still perceived only as performative arts (traditional dance and music) in Croatia.

According to the research from 2018, young Roma people are not so much interested in the traditional dances, music and crafts. It is needed to secure a new ways of expressing their artistic impulses in other types of arts, including new digital ones.

In the cultural and artistic scarcity that is plugging our society, it can be demanding task. The public educational system is not responsive to the artistic talents of the majority of pupils/students in the schools, not really paying attention to the needs of different groups.

The new system of non-formal/informal art education is needed.

The system should be based on following principles:

- Free of charge for end users
- Encouragement of development of personal and communities identities and leaning upon existing communities values
- Creating the safe space for individual expression
- Providing, if possible, healing processes
- Securing public presentation of the artifacts in established venues in order to empower artist or artists to be.

In ideal world, the trainers/providers of the informal/non-formal education should be from Roma communities, but that will not be possible in near future.