



***The immigration of Romanian Roma to Western Europe:  
Causes, effects, and future engagement strategies  
(MigRom)***

**REPORT ON  
THE EXTENDED SURVEY**



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### List of tables:

Table 1. The distribution of Gurai sample according to the mother tongue .....	13
Table 2. The size of the households in the Gurai sample .....	14
Table 3. The relationship status by age groups in the Gurai sample.....	14
Table 4. The distribution of age groups in the Gurai sample .....	15
Table 5. The highest education completed by age groups in Gurai.....	15
Table 6. The distribution of the Gurai sample according to religion.....	15
Table 7. Nr of persons who had migration experience after 2007 by households in Gurai ....	24
Table 8. The duration of the migration experience in Gurai .....	24
Table 9. The distribution of the Bighal sample according to mother tongue .....	36
Table 10. Size of the households in Bighal .....	36
Table 11. The relationship status by age groups in Bighal.....	37
Table 12. The distribution of age groups in the Bighal sample.....	37
Table 13. The highest education completed by age groups in Bighal .....	37
Table 14. The distribution of Bighal sample according to religious belonging .....	38
Table 15. Non-Roma godparents according to age groups and religion in Bighal .....	38
Table 16. No of persons who had migration experience after 2007 by households in Bighal	39
Table 17. The duration of the migration experience in Bighal .....	39
Table 18. Migrants by age group .....	39
Table 19. The country of destination for the migration from Bighal .....	40
Table 20. The basic socio-demographic characteristics of the two surveyed populations .....	41
Table 21. The employment status of the household members in Bighal and Gurai.....	41
Table 22. The multiple types of incomes in a household compared Bighal / Gurai.....	42
Table 23. The most important incomes of the household compared in Bighal and Gurai .....	43
Table 24. Types of incomes compared.....	43
Table 25. The number of household receiveing remittances.....	43
Table 26. The number of rooms compared between Bighal and Gurai .....	44
Table 27. The mobility of the household members in different time periods.....	45

## Introduction

The MIGROM project investigates motivations, experiences and future plans of Romanian Roma migrants, and the effects that the process of migration has on the lives of those who are left behind in the home communities in Romania. In this report we focus on the aspects connected to the effects of the migration of the Roma on the home communities. In order to do this we propose: (1) a literature review (2) a methodological discussion on gathering the empirical material (3) an overview of and general observations about the localities, (4) a presentation of the results from the different field-sites in a comparative manner (5) and an attempt to synthesise the findings.

## The literature

A literature review on the Roma migration from Romania and the effects of this migration on home communities should seek to scrutinise the intersections of the following bodies of literature:

- (1) relevant anthropological and sociological writings about migration and its development effects,
- (2) works on the recent migration of Romanian citizens,
- (3) studies on the migration of Roma from Romania,
- (4) the literature on the migration of Roma in Europe and beyond,
- (5) the Europeanisation of the Roma issue and the role of the migration within this and
- (6) the changing public attitudes towards the Roma as a consequence and in relation to the migration (both at home and in the migration context).

- (1) The general literature on the migration and its connections to local development is abundant and well structured (ex. Kearney 1986, Portes 2010, Binford 2003). Yet there is an ongoing debate on the nature of relationship between migration and development. At one end of the spectrum, there are studies which emphasise the positive effects of migration on local development while at the other end of the spectrum, there are arguments which point out the negative effects of migration on the local communities.

There was a developmentalist optimism in the 1950s and 1960s, followed by a neo-Marxist pessimism over the 1970s and 1980s. Then, in the 1990s and 2000s more optimistic views emerged (de Haas 2007; de Haas 2010). This, as some argue, gives place again to pessimism in the most recent literature (Gamlen 2014). The analyses and the policy interventions inspired by these theories often deal with the problematic aspects of the role of the states in the context of global capitalism. Migrants are often either schematically seen as pioneers of a new era of free movement and of individual freedom or, quite the contrary, as victims of market forces and of exploitation.

Remittances are often considered as indicators and vehicles of the development effects on home community. Yet migrants are connected to friends and relatives back home also in other ways than financial flows. The concept of 'social remittances' was coined by Peggy Levitt (1998), and was revised later (Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011). This concept seems to offer a productive and flexible way to look at the exchanges between migrants and communities left back home. Originally Levitt identified three domains of exchange: normative structures, systems of practices, and social capital. Social remittances as

local-level forms of cultural diffusion can contribute to local level changes and potential improvements.

The recent migration within the European Union has triggered many discussions. There is a recent EC Communication on Maximising the Development Impact of Migration<sup>1</sup> which recognises that migration is both an opportunity and a challenge for development and that poorly-managed migration may undermine progress towards sustainable development. The priorities for 2015 of the European Commission include setting a New European Agenda on migration towards a New Policy on Migration ([http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/work-programme/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/work-programme/index_en.htm)); yet this seems to be focused exclusively on the migration coming from outside the EU.<sup>2</sup> The International Organization for Migration (IOM) emphasises the vulnerability of migrants within the EU, among them naming the Roma migrants in particular, in respect to their vulnerable health condition. The IOM proposes a series of actions to address this.<sup>3</sup>

- (2) There is an emerging literature on the general migration of Romanian citizens. Most notable works are: a quantitative overview (Sandu 2010), an edited volume containing case studies (Anghel–Horváth 2009) and a qualitative monograph (Anghel 2013). None of these focuses explicitly on the migration of the Romanian Roma.

A related body of literature focuses on the migration of ethnic communities other than Roma from Romania, most typically the Hungarians (Brubaker 1998, Fox 2003, Stewart 2003), and some older studies on the Germans (ex. Verdery 1985).

- (3) Literature on the Migration of Roma from Romania consists of a growing number of locally based case studies from ethnically mixed communities (Voiculescu 2005, Tesar 2011, Troc 2012, Pantea 2012, 2013) and an attempt to synthesis (Vlase–Voicu 2014). There are also reports on the general situation of Roma in Romania which contains sections on the migration of the Roma (see: Duminică 2013, Fleck-Rughiniş 2008, and Tarnovschi 2011). A special subsection of this literature addresses material investments in houses and changes in the physical environment of the Roma communities, which emerge in connection to the migration process (Benarrosh-Orsoni 2012, Racleş 2013); potentially. these are indicators of the upward mobility of the Roma within the local context.
- (4) Regarding the general patterns of Roma migration East-West, there are also a number of case studies and edited volumes (Guy–Uherek–Weinerová 2005, Kováts 2002, Vidra 2013), as well as individual studies (Grill 2011, 2012) published during the last decade. They generally focus on the migration of the Eastern and Central European Roma to Western Europe and Canada. Reports by international organisations like the UNDP and

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<sup>1</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Maximising the Development Impact of Migration The EU contribution for the UN High-level Dialogue and next steps towards broadening the development-migration nexus, European Commission, COM(2013) 292, Brussels, 21.5.2013. (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2013:0292:FIN:EN:PDF>)

<sup>2</sup> See the full document: [http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/pdf/cwp\\_2015\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/pdf/cwp_2015_en.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> International Organization for Migration (2014): Migration Initiatives 2015: Regional Strategies, Geneva, 2014. ([http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/free/Migration\\_Initiatives2015.pdf](http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/free/Migration_Initiatives2015.pdf))

the FRA are also source of information on the migration of the Roma from Central and Eastern European region (Cherkezova–Tomova 2013, FRA 2009).

- (5) The literature discussing the Europeanization of the ‘Roma issue’ also focuses on the role of the migration (Sobotka 2003, Matras 2000, 2012, van Baar 2013), and on issues and problems of incorporation in the receiving countries or cities (Nacu 2011, 2012, Roman 2014, Sigona 2005).
- (6) The emerging anti-Gypsism has been identified and described all over the continent (Stewart 2011). There is extensive sociological literature on ethnic relations in Romania (see the separate bibliography prepared by Stefánia Toma).

As for the discourse and policies related to Roma in Romania it is telling that in the autumn of 2010 a member of the Romanian Senate prepared a draft for a law which would officially replace the term Roma (used in the present) with the term “țigan”. The argument in support put forward by the initiator of this bill was that Roma and Romanian are names that refer to two distinct people Yet Westerners too often mistake one for another in reference to Romanian migrants (see also Kaneva – Popescu 2014). Responding to the request of the Romanian Government, the Romanian Academy shockingly issued an official letter supporting this position and recommending the use of the term “țigan”. This stand has been followed by a string of protests organised by Roma organizations. Yet the heated public debate mirrors how much the rules of a politically correct discourse with regard to the Roma in Romania are still unsettled (see Horváth – Nastasa 2012 for a collection of views and analysis).

## 1.0 Methodology

The main aim of the research carried out by the Romanian team was to provide an overall description of local communities in Romania, and to offer comparative perspective on different dimensions connected to the migration process. We identified a set of background determinants of migration<sup>4</sup> (which can be analysed separately from the individual factors and motivations) and also gathered ethnographic data to complement the analysis with the perspective of the actors themselves. Our aim is, to provide policy-relevant data concerning the Romanian Roma communities with a focus on their socio-economic situation in the context of the home localities.

### 1.1. *The focus*

Our research focused on:

- a) Quantitative and qualitative data on the selected Romanian localities and inhabitants;
- b) Other relevant information, regarding various topics of interest, like:
  - Housing, employment, education health situation and level of access to different services
  - Entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship, economic opportunities
  - Social exclusion and inclusion on local level, spatial and school segregation

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<sup>4</sup> Social determinants are the conditions in which people are born, live and work. These conditions are shaped by social, economic and political processes, which consist of several layers of factors that influence the well-being of a person.

- Ethnic relations in local communities
- The relations between Roma and institutions
- Communication channels between and within communities
- Social networks
- Language use
- Migration history
- Other relevant topics

Our main concern was not how to get this information, but what kind of methodological and theoretical approach to use in order to be able to analyse these data coherently and to draw conclusions which are relevant beyond the local realities we can observe. Our sample will not be fully representative statistically (this cannot be achieved when the target population is difficult to define), but our overview will allow some generalisations regarding the processes of migration of Roma from Romania. We have selected several background variables (geographical region, ethnic context, development index, migration rate, etc.) through which we are able to capture a possible variation of migration, and even identify patterns regarding the population researched, within the socio-economic context in which it occurs (for the full discussion of this see our previous report).<sup>5</sup>

## 1.2. Research methods

Our research uses mixed methods for data collection and analysis. The combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches produced complementary data which was analysed both contextually with reference to the local communities and in a comparative manner, with the view to identify processes and patterns which are present in the different fieldsites.

### 1.2.1. Qualitative methods

In order to ensure the production of good quality data, we use triangulation of different methods at the same time (i.e. during the timeframe of the project). Aiming at systematic data-collection and its evidence, we prepared a *Guide for Observation* which contains guidelines for direct observation and a proposed list of interviewees', interview tape recording sheets, photo registration sheet, and list of documents and other materials that are collected during fieldwork. A detailed *Guide for interviews* and discussions is attached to this report. The *Guide* was thought to act as a reminder for the researcher, of the different topics which could ideally be covered. It is not however an exhaustive list of the possible topics, which are likely to emerge during the fieldwork.

We carried out interviews with three main categories of inhabitants of the localities:

- a) Representatives of institutions and organisations: Mayor's office representatives, school director, teachers, health and school mediators, kindergarten teachers, church representatives, local Roma and non-Roma NGOs, entrepreneurs, doctors and pharmacists, Roma representative in local administration, and social workers.

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<sup>5</sup> See: <http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/migrom/docs/Cluj%20Project%20report%201.pdf>

- b) A selection of Roma interlocutors – households heads and members, family networks nodes, both migrants and non-migrants, returnees, persons of different age, gender, education level, employment status, and geographical distribution, and so on.
- c) A selection of representatives of the local majority (in case of ethnically mixed localities, we spoke with members of all ethnic groups). Discussions with non-Roma provide data regarding not only attitudes vis-à-vis Roma, but also general mobility patterns.

Personal details and basic socio-demographic data were collected from all interviewees (including personal history in the locality) respecting the ethical requirements of informed consent and anonymity of the participants.

Specific points of focus for the interviews, discussions, and observations:

- Perceptions of the demographic structure of the communities
- Main problems and needs of the community perceived in general, of the household and of the person in particular
- Evaluations of the access to utilities and infrastructure
- Evaluation of the accessibility to social services
- Access to income sources
- Expressions of collective identity and changing identification processes
- Relation to institutions and authorities
- Work experiences (position on the formal and informal labour market)
- Experiences in schools, with teachers, relationship between teachers and parents, children and teachers, children and school-mates, etc
- Coping strategies
- Indicators of migration potential and accounts of migration experiences
- Internal migration (within Romania)
- Social relations inside the community and with the majority, history of conflicts (if any), both at the community and at the interpersonal level , history of interethnic collaboration with any type of majority institutions or population (authorities, daily-workers, ritual kinship)
- Religion
- Development projects implemented in the locality

### 1.2.2 Quantitative methods

Although we strongly believe that qualitative methods (interviews, discussions, ethnographical observation, etc.) offer better ground for gathering data requisite in understanding the process of mobility of the Roma population, we considered that quantitative data were essential in improving the understanding of the process of migration in local communities. This data – though not statistically representative for the overall population –reveals basic information about the communities, the families, and the migration histories, contributing to the description of the broader context in which migration occurs.

Thus, we designed a **questionnaire** and a **household registration form**. The latter is an integrated instrument, which was nonetheless used with two different purposes. The respondents of the questionnaire (which incorporates also the household form) are persons who self-identify as Roma or are identified as Roma based by the Roma assistants on their local knowledge, are older than 18, and have at least one member of their household who is

or was engaged in some form of mobility / migration.<sup>6</sup> We chose to rely on the Roma assistants' knowledge of families engaged in migration for starting the survey, and we continued to enlarge the sample by means of the snowball method. Thus we were able to identify a growing number of households and persons with migration experience.

The household registration form was envisaged initially as a micro-census tool to be applied to all local Roma households. Due to fact that our research was carried out both in villages and towns, and that our resources were limited, we reconsidered our initial ambitions. In smaller localities (e.g. villages), we have were able to complete the micro-census. When the number of households is not much higher than 200, one can achieve the complete cartography of the households. In towns we faced the classic problems of surveys regarding the identification of Roma persons and households (some of the households inevitably remain 'invisible'). Additionally, we were presented with the problems of designing a sample which would be representative of the Roma population (selecting a limited number of respondents according to predefined criteria from the total Roma population).

In light of the above, we decided to design a base-line study of those households that we could reach using the snowball method. We considered that in this way these households will be the representative of at least one Roma community from the town. In fact the survey achieved more than that: drawing on the data gathered, we are able to describe the broader context of individual migration experiences, and also to compare the local contexts of individual migration histories.

The questions included in the questionnaire address the following topics:

- Basic socio-demographic data (gender, age, religion, education, mother tongue, languages spoken)
- Household composition (those present at home at the moment of the research and those who were not present, but are considered as members of the household)
- Employment and income situation of the household
- Housing situation
- Migration history of the subject and of the household members
- Migration intention of the subject
- Use of financial remittances, if any
- Communication with local authorities.

We have employed Roma assistants for helping with data collection. Yet we were able to launch this component of our research only in mid-November 2014, when administrative difficulties have been resolved and we were allowed to hire the Roma assistants. Therefore data collection is on-going at the moment of writing this report. In two localities data gathering have progressed well and the questionnaires completed so far were coded and introduced into statistical software (SPSS). The preliminary results of the statistical analysis are presented below. A complete statistical analysis will be included into the upgraded report on the extended survey.

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<sup>6</sup> Later the sample was extended, and it was designed to be representative for households present at the moment of the survey in the locality.



### 1.2.3. Archival research

For getting a general overview of the formation of some of the Romani communities surveyed and for understanding the local socio-historical conditions of their marginalization, we consulted available *written records*, either in the form of published material (secondary sources) or archival data. We thus complemented the ethnographic and the quantitative research with document research.

We referred to archival materials/ documents issued by:

- the local village hall at the time of the WW II (registers of the deported Roma and their possessions)
- the local Jandarmeria (lists of deported Roma and their families)
- the local Miliția (Police) at the beginning of the communism (which report facts committed by local Roma and considered as deviant) [documents issued by Chestura de Poliție Ialomița 1947; Circa de Miliție Gurai 1949]

Secondary sources consulted comprised local monographs and almanacs.

### 1.2.4 Monitoring the media, problems associated with the exceeding media coverage

We have surveyed mass media reports on the migration of the Roma. We have gathered media material both from national level media and local newspapers. The Romanian press coverage on migration is abundant in negative and stereotypical representations of the Roma. Most often the Roma migrants are portrayed as beggars and criminals. Due to this, in communities which were overexposed to media, our access and research goals were rather difficult to achieve. People were reluctant to speak openly to us, and at times they refused to be tape recorded during the interviews. This happened not only with Roma people, but also with representatives of local authorities. In such cases, we chose to carry out informal discussions rather than conducting formal interviews. The information gathered in such contexts and the way we convey it raises nonetheless ethical problems in as much as it might not only contribute to reinforcing stereotypes, but also to harming our interlocutors. In order to avoid such infelicitous consequences, we chose to replace with pseudonyms the real names of the localities and/or communities surveyed.

## 1.3. The fieldwork

The ISPMN researchers have been conducting research in several communities of origin of the migrants, located in South East Romania and Transylvania. Although we had designed a common methodology, each researcher adopted the methodological tools to the social realities encountered.

In SE Romania research was carried out in village-like urban milieus, where acquaintances with people were done through the snow-ball method. When possible, we have carried out participant observation within Romani families who were more opened to our research goals. One of the localities of our fieldwork is the town of Slobozia, where a sizable population of *spoitori* live, who have relatives in other neighbouring towns (such as Fetești or Călărași).

Research with *spoitori* was carried out in the months of November and December 2013, and April, July and August 2014, for approximately 60 days.

The second location where we carried out fieldwork in SE Romania, we will fictitiously call Gurai. It is typical of the ex-communist agricultural towns from the Bărăgan Plain.<sup>7</sup> Our research in Gurai consisted in repeated fieldtrips, each stretching between 10 and 20 days, in the months of November 2013, and May, June, September, October and November 2014 (approx. 100 days of research).

A third locality is Bighal (pseudonym). It is a relatively big commune situated in Sălaj County in the North-Western region of Romania. In Bighal the local Roma health mediator acted as our research assistant. With her help we identified 193 Roma households in the village and completed 193 household registration forms; and among these households, we filled up 100 questionnaires in late November and during December 2014.

In Gurai we identified 160 households with the help of our local Roma assistant in the same period. These households were all included in the survey; and the household registration form and questionnaires were applied to them. The total number of respondents / households surveyed is 353. On the overall, we gathered information about 1581 persons / household members: 755 from Bighal, and 826 from Gurai. Data were introduced in SPSS database during December 2014 and January 2015. Recoding of the variables and statistical analysis of the data was performed in January 2015.

## **2.0 Community history and migration**

A new wave of Marxist-inspired approach to the spacialization and racialization of poverty in Romania argues that neoliberal market forces are responsible for the constitution of the urban ghetto-like settlements (Vincze 2013, Vincze and Hossu 2014). Our findings suggest that such an approach might be complemented by a longitudinal approach which shows that the morphology of present insulated communities has been shaped by different state regimes. Roma has been long seen as outcast by the State who agglomerated them in rather remote from the centre areas. The communist policies of sedentarization envisaged not only the settling down of the so called nomadic Roma, but also their clustering in settlements designed for the social deviants.

We have also sought to provide the historical background of the causes and effects of contemporary transnational migration. Current Romani mobility within Europe (and beyond) is connected to the transformations the Romanian State has undergone after the fall of the communism, such as deindustrialization and dismantling of collective farms, privatization of the land, and the opening of the state borders. Social phenomena specific to postsocialism do not emerge as a complete rupture with the past; they sometimes embody the legacy of the communist past.

The arrangement and the shape of present Romani communities are at times the outcome of communist policies, such as sedentarization of Roma or/ and the (most of the time failed)

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<sup>7</sup> A steppe plain in SE Romania; traditionally used as pasture by shepherds in the Carpathians (including Transylvania) during transhumance; was converted to arable land in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

attempt to turn them into factory workers / *proletariat*. Additionally, policies towards Roma taken prior to communism, such as their deportation to Transnistria during WW II whose memory is still alive among the survivors, brought disruptions to old forms of social organization and lifestyles and influenced reconfigurations of territorial arrangement of Romani population.

Networks of migration are maps onto kin and neighbour ties (which might cross ethnical borders, or borders among different Romany populations). They connect and separate people both in the home and migration context. The formation of the networks revolves around pockets of information as in regard to work and accommodation opportunities in the receiving countries. Networks are nonetheless not stable, they constantly change over time. To their continuous negotiation and shaping contribute public attitudes and policies towards Roma in the receiving countries, as well as the personal connections one forges before leaving the country and upon one's arrival in the destination country. The constitution of the networks of migration usually maps on the distribution of skills and work abilities as in regard to the work opportunities forged in the receiving country. The kind of economic practices one carries out in the migration country might draw on knowledge and skills acquired in the home country; and experience in one migration country enhance the process of adaptation in another country.

## **2.1 Gurai – Ialomița County**

### **2.1.1. Local histories and socio-economic context**

As part of the socialist settlement policies, Gurai was declared town in 1968, through the merging of 3 villages. It witnessed intensive industrialization during communism (Brick and Tile Factory, Oil, Sugar and Starch Factories, Wine Distilling Plant), and enjoyed the development of large scale collective agriculture. Presently, all industrial plants but the Oil Factory are dismantled. The Oil Factory was also closed down; yet it was bought and re-opened by a Moldavian Oil Company in 2014. Gurai can be seen as one of the failed socialist projects for an agricultural town.

Although it is officially recorded as a town, the locality lacks for the most part of its standard urban infrastructure; and has limited network of running water, sewage system, gas, or paved roads. There are very few four-storey blocks of flats clustered in the administrative centre of the town in the vicinity of the City Hall and Police Station; but nothing else of the locality scenery resembles of an urban settlement. The atmosphere of the town is rather rural, with most of the households having small plots of land which they cultivate for subsistence. The town has 2 orthodox churches, two neo-protestant prayer houses (a Pentecostal, and one for the Jehovah Witnesses), a shabby hospital, and a railway station. Despite of the reduced rate of employment, which is below 10%<sup>8</sup>, the town has a very low percentage of people receiving social benefits. In October 2014 there were 113 persons (out of which, 23 Roma) entitled to social welfare.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See MIGROM Pilot Report 2014 April. The rate of employment is calculated from the active population.

<sup>9</sup> Data provided by the social servant in charge with monitoring the community work carried out by recipients of social welfare.

Broadly speaking, two kinds of Romany populations live in Gurai: the *ursari* (so-called 'traditional' Roma, speakers of Romany language), and the *țigani vătrași* (culturally akin to their Romanian neighbours). Both of these populations started migrating outside Romania in early 90s.

Although Roma live nowadays scattered throughout the town, most of them are concentrated in the ghetto-like neighbourhood of Lut. The ex-village of Lut, transformed into a neighbourhood of the town of Gurai, not unlike the whole town, was a laboratory of the state planned industrialization and agriculturalization coupled with measures targeting at populating the territory.<sup>10</sup> Despite of the attempts made by the socialist state to provide inclusive employment, schooling for all, correction of social deviance by means of work, and even sanitization of bodies and of houses<sup>11</sup>, Lut gained ill-fame at the heyday of communism.

The presence of Roma from Gurai in old documents is rather scarce. One can observe an increase of the entries on Roma from Gurai in documents issued after the 2<sup>nd</sup> WW. We found most of them in files of the local police which record different burglaries committed by Roma, such as house ransacking, possession and use of rifles, and child thefts.<sup>12</sup> Representations of Gurai Roma as savage, untamed and socially dangerous are ubiquitous in official documents issued during communism. A official form completed by the Gurai village hall in 1966 at the request of a bigger administrative unit recorded 197 semi-nomadic Roma families comprising 903 persons. 70% derive their livelihood from begging, 25% from comb making (without paying taxes – this is emphasized by the source), and about 5% work for the Agricultural Cooperative.

The ethnical segregation of the residents of Lut is not a new thing; at least people in Gurai hold memories of the communist times when Roma from Lut were not allowed to walk in the town centre.<sup>13</sup> Stories have it that Roma people from Lut were known country wide as 'being dangerous and involved in burglaries'. The teachers who taught in the primary school in Lut, as well as the nurses who worked in the local surgery (adjacent to the school), all complained that there was a gap in communication with the residents of the neighbourhood. To convince people to register their children in school, they embarked on door-to-door campaigns which were carried out on a regular basis.

Presently the local school was dismantled as a consequence of the implementation of a program targeting school desegregation. A local bus was supplied for driving the pupils residing in the neighbourhood to a school located approx. 4 km away. In only few years' time,

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<sup>10</sup> The whole area of Bărăgan was the target of concerted politics of populating an otherwise quite desert area. We will see in the second part of this report that a lot of *vătrași* Gypsies were brought in Gurai at the outset of communism, as a consequence of a Decree of Forced Domicile.

<sup>11</sup> A 1966 document issued by the town hall regarding the living conditions of the semi-nomadic Gypsies, recorded efforts made by local authorities towards improving Gypsies' personal hygiene (such as the distribution of bars of soap in the settlement).

<sup>12</sup> Archives of Chestura de Politie Ialomita, files no 919, y. 1947; of Circa de Militie Gurai (1949), Circa de Constatate Gurai (1923-1949).

<sup>13</sup> For the moment, we could not provide a clear picture of the history of the formation of the ethnically segregated neighbourhood of Lut, and further archival research and critical examination of the findings is needed.

the rate of school attendance dropped to such an extent that almost half of the classrooms in the new school dissolved by 2010.<sup>14</sup> During a conversation we had, the ex-director of the latter school, related the high percentage of school dropout among Roma pupils, to their migration. A surgery adjacent to the dismantled school, employing a nurse, is the only social facility which caters presently for the neighbourhood.

In the following paragraphs we will briefly present the preliminary results of the survey through which we can draw an image of the main socio-demographic characteristics of the Gurai's Roma population. In *Gurai* we identified and surveyed 160 households with the help of the Roma assistant. These are mostly located in the segregated area of the town (120 households) – the Lut community -, and less in an ethnically mixed neighbourhood (40 households). These 160 households are composed of 826 persons, out of which 384 are males and 441 are female. Most of the persons identified themselves as Roma; only 8 persons declared that they were ethnic Romanians and one is ethnic Hungarian. The sample is distributed according to the mother tongue of the household members as shown in the table below.

	Mother tongue			Total
	ROMANI	ROMANIAN	HUNGARIAN	
NUMBER OF PERSONS	745	77	3	825
PERCENTAGE (%)	90,3	9,3	0,4	100

**Table 1.** The distribution of Gurai sample according to the mother tongue<sup>15</sup>

Most of the households are composed of 4 or more than 4 persons. The average size of the household is 5,16 persons, significantly higher than the national average (the national average is 2,66). The households are also larger if compared to the ones we surveyed in Bighal. On a national level, the size of the household in urban areas is smaller than in rural areas: while the urban average is 2,53 persons per household, the rural average is 2,83 persons per household – source: National Census 2011 Romania). The relatively high number of household members could be a consequence of the increasing rate of conversion to Pentecostalism among the Gurai Roma, given that this religion discourages both the use of contraceptive and the recourse to abortion.<sup>16</sup> In some other cases it can be related to the poor access to health care and family planning programs.

<sup>14</sup> The school-staff was partially relocated to a third school, which is located in the town centre.

<sup>15</sup> In the questionnaire we asked about the 'limba materna' – which is the first language a person learned as a child at home. In the survey we relied on the self-declaration of the subject as concerns the members of the household.

<sup>16</sup> In this case the qualitative fieldresearch could offer us a more insightful explanation, as in Bighal – where the local Roma also converted to Pentecostalism in recent years – we could not observe this tendency. It is more likely that poor access to health assistance and health education is the reason of the higher number of household members in Gurai.

	Number of household members										
	2 prs	3 prs	4 prs	5 prs	6 prs	7 prs	8 prs	9 prs	10 prs	11 prs	Total sample
<b>NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS</b>	15	23	36	24	23	13	12	6	4	4	160
<b>PERCENTAGE (%)</b>	9,4	14,4	22,5	15,0	14,4	8,1	7,5	3,8	2,5	2,5	100

**Table 2.** The size of the households in the Gurai sample

Generally speaking, the design of the questionnaire and household form did not allow us to get detailed information on the gender relations inside the households. Yet there is one question which could be an indicator of how gender relations are structured in this community. We asked the interviewees to answer the question whether they were the head of the family. In case of negative answers, they were asked to define their relationship to the head of the family. In most cases the designated head of the family was a man (husband, partner, father etc.). In only 10 cases did women take over this role (that irrespective of the fact the forms were filled in both with women and men).

Regarding the relationship status of the couples in Gurai, we can observe that aprox. half of the couples are legally married and the other half live in consensual relationship. 17 persons are widowed and 10 divorced or separated.

Relationship status by age group						
<i>Relationship status</i>	Single	Married	Relationship	Widower	Divorcee	Total
<i>Age group</i>						
15-24	73	21	19	-	3	116 (26,3%)
25-49	22	128	100	6	6	262 (59,4%)
50-64	1	35	12	9	1	58 (13,6%)
65+	-	-	3	2	-	5 (1,1%)
Total	96 (21,8%)	184 (41,7%)	134 (30,4%)	17 (3,9%)	10 (2,3%)	441

**Table 3.** The relationship status by age groups in the Gurai sample

The Roma community in the town is relatively young: 58,23% of the persons are below 25 years of age, and the rest of the population is mostly of working age. This in the context when we can observe a quite significant decrease in the percentage of active age population of Gurai in the last 7 years (the difference is almost 10%).<sup>17</sup> This tendency can be partly explained by migration as well as by natural demographic processes as well.<sup>18</sup> For the Roma sample in Gurai the distribution according to age groups is displayed in Table 4.

<sup>17</sup> For detailed statistical data see MIGROM Pilot Research Report.

<sup>18</sup> For details see MIGROM Pilot Research Report.

	Age groups						
	0-2	3-6	7-14	15-24	25-49	50-64	65+
NUMBER PERSONS	58	99	210	114	262	58	25
PERCENTAGE (%)	7,02	11,98	25,43	13,80	31,73	7,02	3,02

**Table 4.** The distribution of age groups in the Gurai sample (N=826)

The educational level of the members of the Gurai sample can be seen on Table 5. It is apparent that most typically, the highest finished educational level is the secondary school, and the first grade of the high school.

N=326	Education by age groups							TOTAL
	0-2	3-6	7-14	15-24	25-49	50-64	65+	
Without education	-	-	2	4	21	16	5	48
No school age	58	89	-	-	-	-	-	147
School age but not attending school	-	1	28	5	-	-	-	34
Primary school	-	8	126	15	80	23	12	264
Secondary School	-	-	50	67	90	9	4	220
High school 1st grade – compulsory level	-	-	-	14	29	2	-	45
Vocational	-	-	-	2	22	5	1	30
High school Baccalaureate level	-	-	-	5	14	2	1	22
Postlyceum, vocational school	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2
University	-	-	-	2	3	-	-	5

**Table 5.** The highest education completed by age groups in Gurai (N=817)

Regarding the distribution of the religious belonging in Gurai there are no Calvinists but the influence of the neoprotestantism is important.

	RELIGION		
	Orthodox	Neoprotestant	Protestant
NUMBER OF PERSONS	254	492	10
PERCENTAGE (%)	33,59	65,08	1,32

**Table 6.** The distribution of the Gurai sample according to religion

### The Ursari

*Ursari* Roma were initially clustered in the ex-village of Lut, which is presently a neighbourhood of the town. Located at the Western end of the town of Gurai, the area has, not unlike the most part of the town, a rural air. Although the neighbourhood spreads well towards the railway station (situated somewhere in the geographical centre of the town), public representations associate it with the outskirts of the town, and moreover, with a high percentage of Roma. At the time of state socialism the neighborhood was catered by a local primary school and a shop. A Brick Factory, one of the biggest in the country at that time, was located on the premises of the neighbourhood.

The *ursari* who have been economically successful as of late moved out of this neighbourhood and built villa type houses both in the town centre and in side neighbourhoods. These houses surpass in height and width Romanian customary single

storey houses, to which a vegetable plot was attached. Ursari's houses are built as two or three storey buildings, facades undulated with balconies and pillars. In front of them lies large grass lawns. Lined up along the main road which crosses the town and spilling also into dirt side lanes, ursari's houses convey quite a sight for a rural-like urban milieu.

Most of those who still live in Lut lead their lives in extreme poverty. There are only few houses which meet standard living conditions, and also several villa type houses standing at the entrance of the neighbourhood. The deeper one walks into the neighbourhood, the shabbier the houses (which are made in clay bricks, located on unpaved roads, connected to electricity through makeshifts). Presently, it is the only ethnically segregated neighbourhood in the town – which public representations associates with physical threats and dangers, thefts, fights and precarious health (hepatitis, tuberculosis).

There are striking economic disparities among the people labelled as *ursari*, in Gurai. On the one hand, there are the *ursari* who are better off and moved out of the neighbourhood of Lut and built arresting houses in the town centre. On the other hand, there are the *ursari* who presently live in the neighbourhood of Lut in makeshift houses and very deprived conditions. Our findings suggest that the present features of the neighbourhood, namely its ethnic segregation, its association in people's discourses with backwardness and social deviance, draws on a rather long history of rejection of Roma and their old 'nomadism', in conjunction with more recent communist policies targeted at the removal of cultural differences and the attainment of social inclusion, through employment and schooling.

But how did the clustering of *ursari* Roma in the neighbourhood of Lut happen? Firstly, we should mention that *ursari* Roma are a recent presence on the territory of Gurai. They are not mentioned in old documents. There are Roma recorded in documents issued in the 1840s, who were *robi* (approx. 'slaves') on the domain of a local landlord. Yet they were ancestors of some of the present *țigani vătrași*, some of whom were musicians and who presently live in the Eastern part of the town. They do not speak Romani anymore; often conclude ethnically mixed marriages and on the overall display a diffuse Roma identity.<sup>19</sup>

It seems that Lut, whose soil is mainly clay, was initially inhabited by potters who shared the land with several shepherds who built their sheep yards here. The latter left the place when they were allocated rights in land in faraway localities at the time of the land reform (soon after the 1<sup>st</sup> WW). During the interwar period the local pottery business flourished here; and families of nomad Roma from the area were brought and settled here in order to provide labour force.

Most of them were sent to deportation camps in Transnistria during WW II. In a file that the village hall (*primaria*) compiled with the names and possessions of the deported Roma during WW II, approx. 60 persons are recorded. Only a small percent of them had a house or a hovel in their possession on the territory of Gurai; the rest owned plots (for building purposes) which were bought through hand written agreements (as opposed to bills of sale), according to the village hall files.

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<sup>19</sup> A lot of ursari did not only move out of Lut, but they moved out of Gurai, in nearby towns such as Fetesti or Amara, as a consequence of internal fights among clans, people claim. Their relocation might also be a consequence of recent investigations of child trafficking accusations in the town of Gurai. By moving out of the town, ursari hoped to escape the investigations carried out by mass media and by police bodies in Gurai.



Of the 5 *ursari* survivors of the deportation camps in Transnistria that we identified and talked to, and who reside in Gurai presently, only one was born in Gurai, according to their IDs. This could testify for the fact that by the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> WW, not so many 'nomadic Gypsies' (the main target population of the deportations) had their domicile officially recorded in Gurai. When tracking down the demographic evolution of Roma, one should nonetheless consider the inconsistency between the data recorded in their documents (which at times lack altogether) and the social reality. In the latest of the three phases of the communist policies towards Gypsies in Romania (I: 1945-49; II: 49-77; III: 77-89) Roma who were previously seen as a social problem become the target of centralized politics designed along ethnic lines. Of major concern to the communist policy were the irregular ID documents of semi-nomadic people who were missed out by population censuses.

We shall nonetheless try to put together several life stories which might provide a hint into the demographical evolution of the neighbourhood and its population's economic disparities.

Ion is a survivor of the deportations in Transnistria who lives presently together with his wife in a big house not far away from Gurai town centre. They have children and grandchildren who reside in U.K. and who come home only for the summer holidays. Initially residing in Lut, the family moved out of the Roma neighbourhood in the 90s, when they could afford building a new house on the money gained from economic activities carried out in migration contexts, initially in Germany, and later in the U.K. He confessed to us that he had Romanian origins. He was, in his words, 'adopted' when he was two years old by an *ursari* family and consequently, deported in Transnistria with his foster parents and their biological daughter. Ion learned Romani and married an *ursari* Roma woman, and he had also incorporated the Roma culture in such a way that nobody could tell in the present that he was not of Roma origin. The plot on which the Ion's house was built was obtained on a 90 year lease from the town hall. There are other Roma arresting houses in the town which are built on plots currently on lease from the town hall. Yet some others were built on plots bought from ethnic Romanians, who happily sold their houses to *ursari* Roma. The latter knocked down the Romanian modest houses and rose in their place, imposing new villas. Such was the case with Gogu, a man in his early 60s who was born and lived in Lut. By 1994, his children saved enough money from their stints abroad to buy a house owned by a Romanian not far away from the town centre. Having never travelled outside the country, Gogu was in charge with supervising the construction of the new house. Boasting about the qualities which recommend him as a wise steward of the construction work on the house, such as careful budgeting and adroitness, he presses the point that there was Romanian stock in his family. Almost all the *ursari* people we had the chance to talk to, though conversations were carried out in a furtive way, mentioned having either ancestors or family members of younger generations of Romanian ethnic origin.

We visited old Ion on several occasions, including one time during the summer when the large courtyard which is desert for most of the time, was filled with youth. He never spoke of the migration practices of his children. He only grieved over the distance that sets him apart from his family, in old age. However, Ion's life trajectory has been a blessed one. He was fostered by a Roma family who officially recorded Ion as their son. In his ID papers, Ion is recorded under the surname of his parents. In response to the astonishment we expressed when we learned about Ion's Romanian ethnic origin, he explained to us that practices of

fosterage were not uncommon among Roma. Those who from different reasons could not bring forth a son, and this was the case with the fostering family of Ion, usually resorted to accepting one belonging to Romanian poor families and raising him. *Ursari* families took into care and nurtured, not only boys but also girls. People explained the occurrence of the *ursari* practice of accepting girls both from Romanian and non-*ursari* Roma families, in relation to the form the marriage payment takes among *ursari*. They practice the brideprice, i.e. the groom's side tenders cash to the bride's side. In light of this, people account for the practice of nurturing girls born into non-*ursari* families in two ways. It can either prevent the flow of cash (when a non *ursari* girl is accepted as a bride, as in a case we encountered) on the occasion of a marriage, or it can bring cash (if a girl is grown up and later given as a bride).

Ferma, a man in his late 50s, whom we met on the premises of the town hall when he came to claim social welfare lives in the neighbourhood of Lut. The civil servant in charge with the social benefits, knowing we were interested in meeting Roma, introduced Ferma as an *ursari*. During the short conversation we had on the spot, Ferma confessed that he was of Romanian origin and 'adopted' by an *ursari* family. He speaks Romani, and is known by his Roma nickname. And so do his two brothers, who are also of Romanian origin and who have also been nurtured by the *ursari* fostering family. Yet in contradistinction to Ion's, their plight is slightly different. None of them has been officially recorded as an offspring of the fostering family and as a consequence, when the adopting parents died (15 and 9 years ago, respectively); they were not entitled to any inheritance. Unlike Ion who resides in an arresting villa type house not far away from Gurai town centre, Ferma and one of his non-biological brothers who was at home at the time of our fieldwork (the other one having been away in Spain) live on the outskirts of Lut neighbourhood, in shabby one room adobe huts. On visiting them, we could not shatter away depictions of poor, height fertility rate Roma which fill up tabloid papers.

Ferma's experience of the nurture received from his *ursari* fostering family had been unhappy and unsettling. When he was 20, in 1975, he decided to travel to the Galati County to find his biological parents. This was not a happy family reunion: his biological parents were divorced, his mother was remarried to a man with whom she had new children and above all, they were living in deprived conditions. Only few years later, Ferma decided to look for a job outside Gurai and he had thus reached Craiova, where he had been living and working for 18 years. There he married a Romanian woman who died and with whom he had a son, about 30 years old presently. In early 2000 Ferma returned to Gurai where, having a lot of acquaintances among the Roma in Lut, he hoped to make a new life. From words of mouth, Ferma heard about one such an affluent Roma family who built an above the standard house in Lut, which they left desert behind. Because nobody in this family returned for several years now, the house became the target of small thefts, and children broke its windows while they were playing. Through phone conversations, the rich family arranged to hire Ferma as a guardian of the house in exchange of 50 Euro/ month. When one is hired as a guardian of a villa-type house, one (and his family) is allowed to live on the premises of the household, usually in a small hut adjacent to the villa whose entry keys are kept in the possession of the owner. Ferma met and "married"<sup>20</sup> Constanta with whom he shares the living place he

<sup>20</sup> Although people refer to it as such, "the marriage" between Ferma and Constanta is not legalised; it is rather a consensual relationship.

received in Lut owing to the owners of the villa, and the necessities of life. They were given access to a two room house with tiled floors yet with no heating system. Because one cannot endure winter time in such a house, they built a 4 square meter clay brick hut to accommodate Ferma's large new family. Two beds aligned along two cornering walls of the shack and a cloth hunger on a third wall are the only pieces of furniture which decorate Ferma's temporary home. An electric hot plate which connects to some makeshift wires tied to the mains caters both for the cooking and heating necessities. Here coffee is served in only one mug ; and people wait for their turns to sip it.

Ferma's brother Costel lives in a shack built on a plot which he himself owns, next to Ferma's temporary home. He is married to 53 years old Maria. Maria was born in North Romania, Dorohoi (in the historical region of Moldova), in a poor Roma family. She recounts having been 'abducted' from her family by Ferma and Costel's *ursari* adopting family when she was 15. At that time, she smilingly remembers, some of the *ursari* were still comb-makers and they were roaming the country to sell their artefacts. In their journeys they came across poor non-*ursari* Roma families who were happy to give their daughters as brides to the comb-makers. Brought as a bride in Gurai, Maria was doomed to renounce childhood and take on her shoulders the domestic chores of the *ursari* household. She did not enjoy her new life and only after 3 years of living in Gurai, she run away to her parental family. Back in Moldova, not only did she have a son with a man who vanished, but she was also unwelcome by her parental family. She placed the new born in an orphanage and returned to Gurai where, ever since she has been living together with her adopted-by-*ursari* husband. They are parents to 4 daughters. On returning to Gurai, Maria opened the path for other members of her biological family to come and settle here, such as her sister Constanta, who recently became Ferma's second 'wife'.

There were reasons for people from all over the country, who had a relative in the town of Gurai, to move here during communism: the supply of jobs was rich, and there was available accommodation. Not only did the Brick and Tiles Factory had two blocks of flats built on its premises, designed to house the factory workers, but the Collective Farm offered housing to its employees, as well. At that time Lut was an El Dorado of poor people and unskilled workers from the country. Its clay soil provided enough raw materials to cater not only for the brick factory, but also for the construction of individual loam brick houses. It would be flimsy to claim that most of the new comers in Lut were relatives of those who were accepted into care by *ursari* families when conducting their peripatetic activities, and subsequently fostered by *ursari*. Yet there are reasons to believe, following people's personal histories, that at least some of the current residents of Lut were steered here by *ursari* adoption- related activities.

There were other multiple ways of bringing people residing in other parts of Romania in the town of Gurai, some of them associated with state socialism policies. GT, a Romanian businessman residing in Gurai remembers how at the time of the communism, due to some wrongdoings, he was displaced from a factory in Transylvania, his home land, and placed to work on Gurai Collective Farm. This was a common form of punishment, i.e. the relocation of the family in conjunction with the abasement of one's working conditions, during state socialism. For quite a few years, G.T. was the herder of the cattle of the local collective farm, and the story has it that he used to live, together with his wife, in a barn on the premises of the collective farm.

It is not difficult to infer that the neighbourhood came to be associated with *ursari* per excellence, despite its heterogeneous make-up which transpires in people's stories. In the short historical excursion into the formation of this neighbourhood which we sketched, we mentioned the late arrival of semi-nomadic Roma here. For the settled population, they represented an alien body. It seems that the customary profession of the first semi-nomadic Roma who set foot and settled in Lut, was comb-making, hence the denomination that some of them claim: *pieptanari* (lit. comb-makers). Why the denomination of *ursari* gained pre-eminence over that of *pieptanari*, we could not tell. It might be the case that the denomination of *ursari* for Roma was more familiar to local non-Roma, than that of *pieptanari*. What we could testify for without being mistaken, is that the denomination of *ursari* connotes stereotypical images of Roma, and is used as a pejorative category.

The *ursari* are, in public representation, uneducated, uncivilized, dirty, unhealthy, backward, drunkards and dangerous, and above all, associated with the neighbourhood of Lut. When we confronted people with the examples of those who moved out of Lut as of late, they acknowledged that *ursari* people also had quick wits and a proclivity for economic cunningness. One cannot deny that those *ursari* whose old lived in Lut and who reside now outside of this ill-famed settlement are not only wealthy, but also 'tamed', 'civilized', and 'less dangerous', in people's words. Some argue that it was their conversion to Pentecostalism and subsequently quitting alcohol in conjunction with their moving out of Lut and consequently living in non-segregated areas that contributed to the process of their enlightenment and social development.

One way or another, people still represent both those who moved out of Lut and those who reside there presently as belonging to the same kind of people, the *ursari*. But how did some manage to leave Lut forever and in so doing, at least symbolically to overcome prejudices about social underdevelopment? Did they own peculiar resources or skills which enhanced their social and economic improvement, and were these resources a legacy of the communist times or a recent acquisition? Opinions were divergent. People claimed that there was economic and social differentiation during communism. At that time they all resided in the neighbourhood of Lut where from they were allowed neither to move out, nor to walk out. Yet some of them were better off both in economic and social status terms. Some owned a centre for the acquisition of glass bottles and jars<sup>21</sup>, and some other enjoyed above the standard positions in factories.

Gica, an *ursari* in his late 50s who lives in and looks after the villa type house built downtown by his children residing in UK, remembers having been a foreman in the Brick Factory. He received 8 grades education and later became the supervisor of an ethnic mixed construction team at the Brick Factory. He proudly reminisces that unlike most of the Roma in Lut, he could walk freely in the town whenever he wanted, and even enter and be served in the local restaurants (where Roma were denied access, at that time). Immediately after the fall of the communism, he had the resources to travel illegally to Germany, and upon his return to Romania, he set up together with his brother-in-law, a butchery and vinegar distillery which soon went bankrupt.

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<sup>21</sup> During state socialism, Gypsies carved an economic niche in the field of glass recycling. They used to go from door to door to collect glass recipients which they could sell either to shops of factories

People acknowledge that migration was the means through which some of those labelled as *ursari* moved out of Lut and climbed the social and economic ladder. Yet they also maintain that the pioneers of mobility understood both as movement across geographical spaces and as social upward mobility, were those who had resources to set them on the track. It would be inappropriate to generalize and claim that the pioneers of mobility were those who were better off as of old (i.e. prior to the fall of the communism). Our findings on the issue are sparse. Some gossiped that there were *ursari* Roma who had impressive money savings in their CEC<sup>22</sup> accounts. Still some others resorted to make a fortune over-night story plots.

Mass media associates Gurai with child trafficking but almost nobody we talked to, mentioned the phenomenon of child--trafficking. Yet most of our Roma interlocutors considered that one of the strands of our research on migration should tackle practices represented in public discourse as 'child abduction'. They eagerly explained to us that practices which outsiders dubbed as 'child abduction or kidnapping' were actually enacted as fostering/ adoption, or child rearing. Above, we enounced few personal stories of the forms child abduction takes, i.e. child rearing or mixed marriages. It seems that such practices which have been enacted as of the past, continue to be carried on in the present.

Puiu, another survivor of the deportation camps, widowed for ten years, has six sons who have been living abroad for a while. To his mind, migration of his family brought him in the infelicitous state of living his old age in loneliness. On discussing with him about migration, he took out of his coat chest pocket an iPhone and skimmed through some photos. He lingered over the image of an 11 year blond girl that his grandson 'is raising'. He explained to us that he himself did take into care 'orphan children'. One of his 30 year old sons is of Hungarian origin, Puiu claims. Given the bureaucratic intricacies, Puiu has never managed to have the adoption of his son legalised. Yet, he continued, the unregistered adoption does not make his adopted son less than a son. To convince us that the adopted son fully belonged to Puiu's family, the old man stressed that the son was married and produced children, i.e. Puiu's grandchildren.<sup>23</sup> Puiu who, similarly to most of the *ursari*, is converted to Pentecostalism, resorted to an explanation for *ursari*'s proclivity for adopting children which blends Christian and humanitarian beliefs with some alleged Romani specific care towards children. 'Where there are 9 kids sharing a pot with food, there is room for the tenth kid to join in', Puiu posited, and further added that '[*ursari*] do not take children to injure them (*sa i schingiuiasca*)'.

We could not say to what extent the practice labelled as child trafficking both in the mass media and juridical discourses maps onto practices which we described, following *ursari* Roma's discourses, as adoption or child rearing. Puiu was not the only *ursari* whose families were on a trend of economic and social upward mobility as of late who mentioned, in rather fuzzy and ambiguous ways, child adoption related practices. There were some who even asked if we knew of orphan or poor children whom they could adopt. It might be the case that the practice labelled as of late as 'child trafficking' might be the continuation of some practices *ursari* performed since long. Among others, in this section of the report we

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<sup>22</sup> Casa de Economii si Consemnatiuni, the state and only bank at the time of state socialism.

<sup>23</sup> The idea that only married persons who have produced children can be fully acknowledged as belonging to a family or through extension, to the roma people (ame al roma) resonates with Cortorari's conceptions of the person (see Tesar, PhD thesis).

highlighted the case of old Ion, survivor of the deportation camps. He very much insisted on his Romanian origin. And so did Ferma who lives in Lut. Ferma's sister-in-law, Maria, is adamant about having been 'stolen' from her Roma family in Moldova. The archival documents we consulted, recorded cases of 'child abductions' committed by Gurai Roma in previous times. Roma have also explained adoption practices in light of their religious beliefs: most of the adopted children come from deprived families, and their adoption into affluent families is represented both as their rescuing from poverty, and as a religious moral obligation. In public discourse, both in Romania and elsewhere<sup>24</sup>, it is widespread the idea that Roma kidnap non-Roma children. The stereotypical representation of such practices merge ideas of an allegedly ill treatment the Roma family administer to the abducted child and lack of proper care of the former towards the latter, with legal accusations of theft. The case studies we presented above suggest that public perception of 'kidnapping' practices does not map onto realities. Contrary to the age-old myth that have dogged Roma history, according to which Romanies steal children and raise them improperly, we encountered among *ursari* practices of informal adoption which speak of the care the Roma family show towards the adopted child.

The *ursari* in Gurai have received a bad press lately in regard to their migration abroad. As a consequence of their exposure to mass media, people were reluctant to speak about migration. Because informality is pervasive of every sector of the social life including the public institutions, we could get access to stories rather than practices. The findings are derived through the assemblage of different stories and different points of view and convey hypothesis rather than demonstration of the social mechanisms at work. Contrary to the *ursari* who were rather reluctant to speak with us, the *vatrași* were more open. Yet some time was needed nonetheless to gain their confidence, and in the beginning they were worried about being associated with *ursari* and their ill-famed migratory practices.

### **The *Țigani vătrași* (approx. settled Gypsies)**

*Țigani vătrași* are scattered throughout the town with most of them residing in houses interspersed among houses belonging both to *ursari* affluent Roma and to ethnic Romanians, in the Eastern part of the town. Though not a matter of discussion among the people themselves, when we explicitly asked about the denominations of the groups they belong to, few were the group names which were mentioned: *lautari* (musicians), *argintari* (silver smiths), *ciubotari* (shoe-repairers), and *geambasi* (horse dealers). With no relevance for people's present economic activities, these group denominations are nonetheless explained by the old in light of economic activities of the past, of which some still keep live memories. Moreover, old people refer to these group denominations as reminders of a past life style which set them apart from *Ursari/ Pieptanari*. The latter were known across the country as 'dangerous', people contend: they would allegedly had fire guns and killed people, they stole children and their women begged. Moreover, they lived under tents whereas the *Țigani* were settled and travelled in horse-pulled carts to provide services to the *gaze*. There are few socio-economic-cultural features which are specific to the *Țigani*:

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<sup>24</sup> The 2013 Greek and U.K. cases of Roma child kidnapping broadcasted by mass media are telling here (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2473971/3-Roma-Gypsies-arrested-ANOTHER-child-kidnapped-Greece.html>; <http://world.time.com/2013/10/22/another-blonde-girl-removed-from-roma-family/>).

- The declining use of the Romani language – which is spoken by the old generation alone. Young generations were encouraged not to speak Romani and though at times they might understand it, they cannot speak it;
- Almost with no exception, each family has stories of mixed marriages with Romanians as of the past, and such mixed marriages continue to be concluded at present.
- The majority of them live in houses, and only some of the young bought and moved into flats in blocks.
- Some of them are the descendants of old *robi* of a local ex landholder, who were mentioned in documents as old as of 1840, and who lately became famous musicians
- Some others were brought in Gurai at the heyday of the communism- through decrees of fixed / forced domicile (which initially targeted political dissenters, ex-landlords, Germany supporters and Nazis, as well as at members of ethnic groups which were considered unfriendly to the communist regimes etc, later included the peripatetics, providers of services etc). As a consequence, the spread of their kin networks stretches across the country (mostly South Romania – Dobrogea, Galați, Braila, București)
- Industrialization during communism and also the liberalization of the market – increased the mobility of *Tigani*.
- While old generations have scarce education (few classes, if at all), the youth are characterized by better school attendance, some have a high school degree and some hold even university degrees.

During communism, the old combined peripatetic activities (buying and selling goods across the country) with work on the collective farms or in the town factories – mainly the making of clay bricks for the barns of the collective farms. In contradistinction to the heterogeneous nature of the *ursari* population (among whom the economic and social differences are striking), the population of *tigani vatrasi* is more homogeneous, both in respect to economic and to social standing. Moreover, there is not a visible differentiation between those who left the country and those who stayed behind. Given that *tigani vatrasi* are more akin to ethnic Romanians than to *ursari* Roma, their migratory patterns resemble those of the Romanians. Once the opportunities opened for Romanians to be employed in regular jobs abroad, they sought formal job contracts in countries such as Italy or Spain. Only very few of them derive their gains abroad from informal economic practices, such as street music playing.

### 2.1.2 Networks and migration history

In our survey in Gurai we found that only one fourth of the interviewed households declared that they have or had at least one member of the household working in a foreign country after 2007. Out of the 160 households only 46 households were involved in migration with 78 persons which represents 9,44% out of the total 826. When asked about the reason for migration, respondents typically stressed working abroad after 2007. 71,2% of the households did not declare such activities. The Roma assistant who filled the questionnaires suspected that some of the people in the sample avoided declaring that they migrated abroad, even in cases when they did. She maintained that people, who went abroad and for

different reasons practiced begging or other types of informal activities, were shy of declaring such activities and their stints abroad altogether.

Their biased answers can be explained through the combination of at least two rationales: (1) the questions in the questionnaires forms revolved around ‘labour migration’; (2) the awareness of the respondent that informal activities such as begging fall under mainstream ethical judgment. Yet we could have not included questions regarding begging, as this would have put respondents in embarrassing situations.

	0	1	2	3	4	5
<b>NUMBER HOUSEHOLDS</b>	114	24	16	3	2	1

**Table 7.** No of persons who had migration experience after 2007 by households in Gurai

	<i>Under 6 months</i>	<i>Between 6 – 12 months</i>	<i>More than 1 year</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
<b>Number of persons</b>	11	30	37	78

**Table 8.** The duration of the migration experience in Gurai

In Gurai only 78 persons declared that they went to work in a foreign country; most of them stayed long periods there; and 4 persons (1 family) stayed even 2 years. The target countries are limited: 4 persons went to Italy, 22 persons in Great Britain and 51 persons in Spain. About half of those who declared that they worked abroad told us that they travelled there before 2012 (most of them - 14 persons – travelled for the last time abroad in 2008).

According to the type of migration practiced by the different Roma populations and the particular economic practices they are likely to carry on in the migration context, both women and men can act as nodes of migration networks. At times those who possess information about working possibilities in receiving countries happen to be persons who have never migrated. For example, among *tigani vatrasi*, we met an old woman in her 70s who arranged the departure of her grandson and granddaughter to Spain by means of the connections she had with some members of neighbouring families who had relatives there. It is also the case that women who are involved in seasonal work either in Spain or Italy source information about the job market abroad, among female relatives and neighbours back home. We mentioned that *spoitori* have a customary strong gendered division of work, with men practicing dealing in livestock and scrap metal collecting. They are mainly involved in circular/ pendular migration. Among them, most of the economic migration revolves around men’s activities, and migratory networks are also organized within the male realm.

In the summer of 2014, we had the chance to accompany a *spoitori* woman on a journey to Denmark, where she travelled to reunite with her husband who had been jailed in the town of Aarhus for two months at the time of our trip. The husband’s decision to travel to Denmark and engage in scrap metal collecting was highly influenced by the long experience he had previously gained in this economic activity in other countries of Europe, such as Italy, Spain, Germany, and U.K. Late shrinking of gains and opportunities of work in these countries, determined among others by the late increase of the number of arriving migrants in these countries, also contributed to the man’s decision of travelling to Denmark Andrei’s migratory trajectory is representative of *spoitori*’s pendular migration, and of the networks they forge. The networks include both *spoitori* relatives and *tigani vatrasi* neighbours (with whom they associate in male economic activities at home). Moreover, Andrei’s case is informing on the



choice of a new country of migration where he arrives almost as a pioneer and head of a migration network which was meant to carry out scrap metal dealing activities. Having neither acquaintances in the place, nor previous knowledge of the country, Andrei came to Aarhus equipped only with extensive knowledge of metal scrap dealing which he had been previously practiced in different countries of Europe.

He first left Romania sometimes before 2007 and went to Italy, in Pescara, in the company of several *spoitori* close relatives. There he managed to register as a self-employed and worked in scrap metal dealing for several good years, with multiple comings and goings between Romania and Italy. Since 2010, when the business with scrap metal ceased bringing promising gains, he travelled firstly to France, and then to the U.K. (Manchester), and later to Germany. Andrei remembers that he travelled to Manchester in the company of his brothers in law in August 2013. His wife and his sisters-in-law joined them two months later. They all shared a house, and while the women took up begging activities, the men managed to procure themselves a license for scrap metal dealing, and shared all the money derived from the activity. Soon they were placed under arrest for allegations of theft of discarded metal from un-authorized areas such as the river or other public spaces. They resolved to return to Romania. On hearing about scrap metal collecting opportunities in Germany, Andrei travelled there with his brother and father, but soon resolved to head towards Denmark, of which he heard not having had been discovered by the scrap collectors yet.

Here he travelled with his brother and father and once they found accommodation and figured out how metal scrap dealing works locally, he brought other members of the family and some other non-*Spoitori* Roma from Slobozia. Initially sleeping in the woods, he learnt from word of mouth about a Romanian speaker Arab man owner of several estates, which he lets to Romanians. Originally from Egypt, the man had a degree in Medicine from a University in Romania, which he graduated at the end of the 80s. He came to Denmark 20 years ago, worked firstly as a doctor and following an unfortunate accident left his profession and started a small undocumented business of renting houses to immigrants from Southeast Europe, and mainly from Romania. Not only did the Arab offer to Andrei accommodation, but he also helped Andrei to buy a second-hand small van which he registered on his own name, and also initiated Andrei in the whereabouts of the scrap metal collecting, by showing him the places where metal can be sold and found, respectively. Later, Andrei brought his wife and daughter, and his brother's wife, and two *tigani vatrasi* men to work as drivers, from Romania. Unfortunately the scrap metal business did not last more than a month, and Andrei, together with one of the drivers and a Romanian teenager who was translating for them, were accused of theft when lifting discarded metal found in front of a derelict house. During the lawsuits which we attended, Andrei's solicitor had a hard time convincing the prosecutor not only that Andrei's 'facts' could not be classified as theft, but also that scrap metal collecting was a profession specific to the Roma, despite the fact that it was performed exclusively by business companies in Denmark. Once Andrei was arrested, his whole extended family returned in a rush to Romania.

Behind them stayed 40 years old Costel, one of the *tigani vatrasi* whom Andrei had hired as a driver, and who happened not to be caught by the police at the time of the alleged theft. He confessed to us that he had been long working as a driver for *spoitori*, at the time when their business with livestock was flourishing in Romania. For two months, since Andrei had been placed under arrest, Costel worked as an undocumented daily labourer either for the Arab

man or for several acquaintances of the latter, gaining approx. 50 Euro/ day. He convinced his wife Mita to join him in Denmark and only few days before our arrival there, their son Iulian travelled from Spain to Denmark as well. Iulian had only spent one month in Spain, living with his cousins and looking unsuccessfully for a job; and this was his first stint abroad.

Previously to Costel's arrival in Denmark, he and his wife had been living in Paris, for 12 years. There they derived their livelihood from selling clothes, jewels and other trinkets collected from garbage bins, on a flea market. A disconsolate accident put an end to their stay in France. A small *tigani* boy from Slobozia died asphyxiated when introduced into a clothes recycling container by his parents<sup>25</sup>. Following this event which happened during the summer of 2012, the police in Paris scattered away the people who were involved in any clothes collecting activities. Costel and Mita returned to Romania, and the former attempted to find new ways and networks of migration. He thus joined *spoitori* Roma first in U.K., and later in Denmark. As for Mita, she has been a seasonal worker in agriculture in Spain, for 6 years in a row. She travels there at the beginning of the summer and returns towards the end of the autumn. Having been diligently and industriously working on the onion harvest for the last 6 years, Mita is receiving less difficult job tasks with every new harvest, and she also hopes to receive a retiring pension from her Spanish seasonal job.

### 2.1.3. The structural effects of migration

Not unlike their Romanian (ex-peasant) neighbours, Romani populations are family-centered: trust and morality are confined to the unit of the family and only seldom do they reach beyond the limits of extended families. They place the idiom of the family at the centre of their conceptions of society, which does not stretch over the notion of community. The sense of their imagined shared identity is conveyed rather by commonality, than by community (Gay y Blasco 1999). Additionally, the individual is not represented as a free subject, but as enmeshed in kinship relations. There are two major consequences of the Romani's view of the society and of the individual as in relation to the effects of migration on the origin community.

Firstly, remittances are not invested in public goods (such as communal churches, roads etc.), as it happens in societies organized around kinship networks which go beyond the extended families (i.e. patrigroups). Secondly, entrepreneurial actions which ideally build on individualistic values mapped onto notions on trust which stretch beyond the kinship networks are incongruous with Romani populations. Consequently, we have encountered almost no other form of investment in the communities of origin but in the construction of houses and related forms of improvement of the families' living conditions. The lack of concern as with the spending of remittances otherwise than through family (and house/holds) centered activities might also be related to Romani attitudes towards time.

Anthropological studies of Roma concur with the idea that these populations are concerned rather with immediate economic gains than with delayed returns. However, a peculiar concern with the future is ubiquitous among Roma, yet it is channelled exclusively into the

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<sup>25</sup> The clothing containers have an opening hole too small for adults to creep through; and children were introduced into the containers, to collect clothing garments.

family and the reproduction of generational cycles. It articulates with the wellbeing of the offspring.

In Gurai we have challenged *ursari* Roma who had enough resources to set up a business to imagine other forms of investment than in houses. One *ursari* man remembered opening a butchery and a vinegar distillery in the early 90s, upon his return from Germany, country which was among the first destinations of transnational migration immediately after the fall of the communism. In few months' time, the business went bankrupt. The Rom blamed the failure of his business on the ethnic Romanian employees who cheated their Roma bosses. As a former supervisor of a construction team in the town Brick Factory at the time of state socialism, the Rom had probably been equipped with the organizational skills necessary for running a business. Yet he confessed not having the wits to do the paperwork, and he was adamant that Roma lack the proclivity for any work involving written documents. The lesson he had learnt from this failed attempt of running a business, was not to embark on a partnership commercial operation again. He believed that the best way of securing a future for his children and grandchildren was to build houses in which they would live upon their return from abroad.

Moreover, in Gurai, we have not encountered permanent returnees during our fieldwork. As long as people are economically active, the prospects of leaving for abroad loom over their dreams. People do return here for short periods of time, yet the dearth of employment opportunities entails a perpetual dream of leaving the country.

Though we have stressed that remittances are predominantly invested in the construction of houses, there are some other realms less visible than the houses where money derived from migration is invested. We have also mentioned that there is almost no investment in the public good. Yet there are specific contributions, which albeit fuzzy and difficult to assess quantitatively, are made by the migrants to the economic life of their home locales. Such contributions are either concentrated in the informal sector of the local economy, or spilled in the retail sector. We shall illustrate this with some examples from the town of Gurai.

An important centre of production at the time of state socialism when few factories and collective farms were developed here, the town of Gurai has a scant economic life presently. The National Institute of Statistics advances an employment rate which is below 10% of the population. This connects with the prevalence of the informal economy (daily labour performed within patron-client relationships, wide spread of informal credit and usury, peddling etc.), and also with a high rate of migration.

The bulk of the registered economic activities is confined to the retail and services sector. There is an abundance of shop keeping small business, and the supermarket chains started opening local branches here only at the end of 2014. Speaking with the shopkeepers, they complained about the low buying capacity of the Gurai inhabitants, and maintained that their business flourish at the time when migrants return home for holidays. They also suggested that not only do migrants have a bigger purchasing power than the non-migrants, but also that the former's tastes are more refined than the latter's. Subsequently the local shops are stored with a bigger variety of goods during the summer and the autumn time when migrants return home. We could also notice the existence a multitude of small service business, such as beauty shops which are dormant for most of the time when migrants are not at home.

Migrants have greatly contributed to the development of the informal sector within the local economy, which supplants the otherwise absent formal economic opportunities. At a time when demand for unskilled manual labour is low to in-existent on the formal job market in Romania, in the town of Gurai the affluent Roma supply the gap in the labour market in several ways.

Firstly, they hire unskilled manual labours for house construction work, on a day-to-day basis. Although such temporary jobs do not offer one prospects for the future, those who have access to them claim that the daily jobs are nonetheless the only means for securing one's daily necessities of life. Because there is ongoing construction work in the town of Gurai at almost any time of the year, with the exception of the winter, all that one needs for getting access to construction 'jobs' is a network of acquaintances.

Secondly, those who reside abroad and leave their houses behind, employ housekeepers whom they pay monthly through wire transfers. The monthly pay varies between 50 and 200 Euro/ month, depending on the size of the house, its location, and the economic standing of its owners. Thirdly, affluent Roma hire women as domestic workers, either on a day-to-day basis, or on a longer term basis. There are also cases of old people left behind by their Roma families, for whom a carer is hired.

There are cases when those employed as guardians of a house do not own a house of their own. They are thus provided by the more affluent Roma migrants not only with a monthly payment, but also with housing. The relationships contracted between the 'employers' and the 'employees' are most of the time of a hierarchical nature and entail different forms of dependencies of the dispossessed by the more affluent. The latter act as gatekeepers controlling the former's access to daily jobs, transnational migration, and at times the gains derived from it. However, social dependency which appears to a liberal mind as conveying paternalism and inequality is represented by the disadvantaged as a viable mode of securing a livelihood in the absence of a State able to cater for the poor. Being dependent on someone does not entail only a one way relationship in which the more powerful command the less powerful; it does also entails claims that the later make on the former. Discussing with a Roma woman from the town of Gurai who does not own neither a house of her own, nor a job on the formal job market, she told us that when the affluent *ursari* leave Romania at the end of their summer holidays, it feels like God abandoned her family. During the summer time, she is employed as a domestic worker on a daily basis by the more affluent Roma. With the gains derived from such temporary activities, she is able to provide her family meals.

Maria, 40 years, speaker of Romani language, is mother of 3 children, two of them with a former husband whom she divorced, and one of them with her present husband (of Romanian origin). She used to live with her family in her mother's house, in a village next to Gurai. The village does not have a high school, and Maria's oldest daughter used to commute to Gurai, where she attends the high school. Neither has Maria ever been formally employed, nor is she entitled to welfare, given that she has never officially divorced her former husband (who is a wage earner). This autumn her family was offered this job cum house by an *ursari* family in Gurai, and Maria eagerly embraced the offer. She wants her children to pursue education, and having a place to live in Gurai would ease their access to school. Maria and her family moved into the *ursari* household in late September, when the previous family working here, vacated the place and left for abroad. Although the big villa standing in the household is locked, Maria's family has access to two rooms adjunct to it, one for cooking and one for sleeping necessities. The *ursari* family pay 100 Euro/ month and provide the woods for the winter (the rooms does not have central heating, it is dotted with a fire stove). Maria's family is happy with these arrangements. In addition to the 100 Euro sent monthly by Western Union by the *ursari* family, Maria's family income is complemented by her husband's, who works as a daily labourer mainly in construction work (for *ursari* as well, the average daily pay being 40 lei – approx. 9 Euro/ day).

Constanta, 39 years old, speaker of Romani language, mother of 4, three daughters and one son, with ages between 6 and 12. Neither her, nor the children did ever go to school. Born in a village in North Romania, Moldova, she came down to Gurai when she was around 20, to reunite with her sister who had been long living here. She met here her first husband, the father of her children, who was a Romani speaker from Brasov. Six years ago the latter left her, and Constanta had no place to live with her kids. They have previously lived in different places, abroad in France, on a *platz*, and when in Gurai, in her sister's house. Constanta is now married to 59 years old Ferma, and together they live in an adobe one room hut adjacent to an *ursari* villa type house. They have never met the *Ursari* family owners of the household where they live, given that the former haven't returned to Romania for almost 4 years now. Constanta's family was 'placed' in the household by some relatives of the owners. They receive 50 Euro/ month for looking after the household, which comprises a villa under construction and a small 2 room house, in addition to the adobe room shared by all the family for sleeping, cooking and eating necessities. Constanta has no monthly income: she does not receive state welfare given that her identity documents are destroyed. During the summer, when some of the *Ursari* return home, Constanta works for them as a housekeeper in exchange of small daily money. Her husband also finds jobs as a menial when the *Ursari* are at home. Not only for Constanta's family, but also for others who found themselves in a similar plight, and who from different reasons cannot rely on the state welfare for their subsistence, the *Ursari* are providers of food and housing.

There is yet another practice of hiring carried out by *Ursari*. Those who leave their old at home, hire persons (usually of Romanian origin) to look after the old.

Matei is a Romanian in his early 60. He worked as a driver on the ambulance and following a car crash in which he was involved 16 years ago, he retired for health reasons. His wife works for the telephone office of the hospital in Gurai. Matei takes care of an old *Ursari* couple in their 80s. He usually starts his job in late September, when the old couple's children together with their grandchildren leave for U.K. Matei gets paid 150 Euro/ month for his caring activities. He spends most of the daytime with the old couple; he sometimes fails to go home and eat the meals of the day with his own family. Instead, he shares the daily meals with the old couple. It happens that Matei also sleeps in their house, when the old do not feel well. He does their shopping, takes them to the hospital when they need it, and is also in charge with the household chores, such as sweeping the courtyard, mowing the lawn, or shovelling the snow during the winter. He speaks affectionately of the old and respectfully of the young who raised an imposing and beautiful villa type house.

We have mentioned that one of the effects of migration is the de-segregation of the ethnically segregated Romani communities. Some of the Roma managed to move out of insulated communities and by so doing, they have symbolically both distanced themselves from those who stayed behind, and also drew near the majority population. Most of the time they have done so by means of building imposing houses in the vicinity of Romanian neighbours. Their material and social success was met with suspicion by the public discourse, and the sources of their income were subjected to moral debates. Media has highly contributed to reinforcing stereotypes about criminal activities as being the main source of capital of the more affluent Roma. In the town of Gurai, the *ursari* were associated mainly with child trafficking and child benefit frauds in the countries of migration. There seems to be thus a recurrent motif of gap between Roma accomplishments and public perceptions.

#### 2.1.4 Changes to family structure

Migration impacted upon the idiom of the family: some members left and other stayed behind. The dispersal of the family across more countries ensued in the renegotiation of the kinship ties and of the expectations embedded in them. Although we cannot generalize in regard to the changes produced by migration in the family composition, as this varies in conjunction with the kind of mobility practiced by different Romani populations, we could nonetheless notice that more often than not, the eldest stayed at home, while the youth left.

Additionally, changes in the policies regulating migration influenced the dynamics of the family. For example, the *tigani vatrasi* from Gurai started getting involved in migration in the early 1990s, when Romanians' circulation in Europe was not free – they practiced 'illegal'/ 'undocumented' migration and Spain was one of the favourite destinations at that time. One important consequence of the irregular migration was the scattering of families, sometimes their dissolution, the weakening of family ties and the uneven enactment of parenthood and care: Husbands who left their families behind, entertained adulterous affairs abroad and have in the end remarried; Spouses left their children in the care of grandparents, etc. However, since the regularization of migration after Romania's EU accession and the advent of free mobility of Romanian citizens in Europe, a tendency towards the reunification of the family (which proves nonetheless to be temporal) emerges. We shall present the case study of a family which might be considered typical of the form of migration practiced by *tigani vatrasi*.

Geta is a 70 years old woman, widowed for seven years. Her sons and grandchildren have been travelling or working abroad, especially in Spain, since yearly 1990s. . She used to have 4 children. Her youngest son died two years ago of leukaemia, in Spain. The oldest daughter (in her 50s) lives in Ploiesti, she is married to an army engineer of *tigani* origin, and is mother of two. The youngest daughter (in her 40s), married with no children, an ex-school mediator, is currently employed by the City Hall and is working for the PSD party. She lives in the town Centre in a flat yet she eats, together with her husband, the daily meals at her mother's place. The oldest son is at home presently on unemployment wages, from Spain. He is father to two, a 22 years old daughter and a 19 years old son. At the end of 2014, the former left for Spain, where she works in a Pastry Factory. Her departure from Romania and settlement in Spain was made possible through the old woman Geta's connections.

In her 70s Geta is a resourceful person who commands respect and reliability from her neighbours. Her household is compounded in a small house and a summer kitchen adjunct to it. She spends most of the time of the day cooking in the summer kitchen. The door of the summer kitchen is opened to several women neighbours who continuously visit Geta and share with her their families' life stories. Women who come here, are always offered food, and they also bring in plates with food. One of these women, a widow in her 40s, has the two daughters and her son in Spain. The youngest daughter is the lover of the son of the owner of a Pastry Factory. She could arrange for Geta's granddaughter not only to travel to Spain, but find a job in the Pastry Factory on her arrival. Geta's granddaughter earns there 700 Euro/ month, and she has sent home her first salary.

Geta's two sons took the roads of the abroad arm in arm in the early 2000. Spain was their first destination, and then Germany – at the time of the 'irregular' migration. The youngest son did whatever was at hand, for earning money: from begging, to cleaning windscreens, to petty larceny. The oldest is less of a smart and have performed only regular work. Gradually with the changing status of Romania in EU and with the changing policies towards Romanian citizens, of receiving countries, both got regular employment in Spain (Madrid and Barcelona respectively). However for both of them migration was tantamount to the dissolution of their nuclear families and moreover, to the bankruptcy of their extended family.

When he first left Romania her oldest son, Robert, left behind his wife and children. He had a new son with a new partner and with the money saved together with his new partner; he bought a 4 rooms flat in Slobozia. Left at home together with the kids in Geta's house, Robert' first wife, a native from Gurai, left the kids in Geta's care, and remarried. Geta raised thus Robert's kids since they were 10 years old the boy, and 13 years old the girl, respectively. They both left high school after the 11<sup>th</sup> grade. All the money saved by Robert abroad went into the flat in Slobozia: furnishing, interior decorations etc. However, Robert's relationship with his partner deteriorated and presently they are litigating in the tribunal, for sharing the flat. Moreover, as a consequence of some disputes with his partner in Spain, Robert is currently not allowed to see his youngest son – who resides in Spain with his mother.

When he left Romania, Robert's brother Doru took his wife with him. In order not to spend too much money on the rent, they shared a flat with the wife's family. The wife was not happy with these arrangements, and she left Doru, motivating that he could not earn enough money

to rent a flat only for the two of them. Doru re-married and spent money on a conspicuous wedding back home. Following the wedding, he deposited all the money earned in Spain in a bank account which he shared with his new wife. He had the intention of investing the money in building a house for his new family back in Gurai. Two years ago Doru died of leukaemia in Spain. The costs of the repatriation of his corpse amounted to around 10.000 Euro, and were supported by his mother, brother and sister, who incurred debts to various neighbours. Doru's wife did not want to contribute money (from the shared bank account she held with her husband) for his funerals. In order to recover the money spent on the obsequies, Doru's family had to sue his wife, and the trial continues to the present.

The two lawsuits, in which the extended family is involved presently, ensued in the increasing indebtedness of the family. Robert and Doru's youngest sister pawned not only her gold in pawnshops, but also her flat. The old Geta decided to put on sale her house, and a placard reading 'house for sale' stands in front of the gates of her house. There are objects in Geta's house, which are reminders of her sons' stints abroad, such as a canvas brought by Doru from Spain, or a sofa bought on money that Robert gained abroad. Geta has no difficulties in acknowledging that were there jobs available at home, her sons would have not taken the roads of the abroad. There were times when both of them worked as waiters in the town restaurant. Only after they lost their jobs at home, did they left for the abroad. For Geta, Spain, which she visited on the disconsolate occasion of her son's death, is a place of dislike not because the country was ugly, but because it alienated her sons from herself and from their families, and even severed irreversibly one of them.

Most of those who have not migrated from Gurai are the elder. Even if they stayed behind, migration impacted on their lives in as much as they were either left with no help or care in old age, or they had to incorporate mobility into their lives. In some cases care for the elders was relegated from the family members to neighbours who act as domestic carers in exchange of some monthly payment. In other cases the old travel abroad for short periods of time either for getting access to the health care system where their children reside, or for reuniting with their families during the winter time.



Lina, a tigrani vatrasi woman in her 60s, widowed mother of four: two daughters and two sons. With the exception of one daughter who is married and lives in Bucharest, the other three are in Spain: the sons in Barcelona, and the daughter, in Madrid. Lina lives alone on her disease allowance and money sent by the children, from abroad. Lina spends half a year at home and half a year abroad, at her oldest son. She usually leaves for Spain at the beginning of November when the weather starts to get cold in Romania, and return here at the beginning of the spring. She had had a heart surgery performed in Barcelona. None of her children think about investing money back home, and Lina lives in a very modest two room house. Although she rejoices at the thought of joining the family of his oldest son and seeing her other children every autumn, she finds it difficult to adjust to the life style they have in Spain. In Gurai, Lina busies herself with the household chores: cooking and cleaning inside the house, and tidying up the courtyard. She does a lot of going and coming between her house and her neighbours' where she pops in for chatting and sharing in the town gossip. When in Spain, Lina misses such activities. She associates her trips abroad with unbearable idleness. During the time spent there, she is a housekeeper for her oldest son's household: she cooks and cleans. Yet she is alone most of the time: her three grandchildren spend the days in school, and her son and daughter-in-law are at work for most of the time. She complains that she finds the space of the flat too narrow for her, and at times she expands the spatial limits of her domestic activities beyond the threshold of the flat. She cleans the stairway of the block and sweeps the alleys in front of it. At her age, Lina got used to her yearly trips abroad and back home. When she is at home, she misses her children and their family; when she is in Spain, she misses her house in Gurai. She believes that Spain is good for earning for one's subsistence, yet it contributed to the complication and uneasiness of family ties.

## 2.2. BIGHAL – Sălaj County

Bighal is situated in the North-Western region of Romania in Sălaj County. Compared to Ialomița county in the Southern region of Romania, the former has a mixed ethnic composition (In Sălaj county live more than 20% Hungarians). Both counties have a significant Roma population (between 5 and 7% according to the 2011 National Census). Both counties are ranked as relatively poor counties based on the social development index, and Ialomița has a medium level of risk of poverty, while Sălaj has a higher risk of poverty.<sup>26</sup>

According to the National Census the total population of Bighal is 3600 persons, out of which 442 (12,28%) are Romanians, 2494 (69,28%) are Hungarians, and 596 persons are self-declared Roma, the latter representing approximately 16 % of the total population. Based on our previous fieldwork experience here, we estimated that the number of the Roma in Bighal is significantly higher than the one recorded by the National Census, reaching even more than 1000 persons. Yet upon completion of the household survey in the framework of the present project, we are lead to conclude that the total number of the Roma is somewhere around 900 persons, slightly less than the number estimated by locals during the interviews.

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<sup>26</sup> For details see MIGROM Pilot Research Report.

Beginning with the 15th century, Bighal was an important trade and agricultural centre of the region due to the establishment of a noble family in the locality; fact which earned the locality, the rank of an agricultural town (Hun: *mezőváros*). A local historian notes that the locality did not differ much from other serf villages from the point of view of the local social organization. All the agricultural land was the property of the nobleman, while the peasants rented it in socage regime paying regularly to the feudal lord. In the late 15th century the locality earns the right to organize national fairs every year (all the incomes of the trade went to the landlord). During this period several different handicrafts appeared in the locality; yet the central activity was and remained the agriculture. It was so at the time of state socialism, and after its collapse.

The Roma of Bighal used to be the serfs of the local aristocrat as brick-makers or stable men. Some of them were land-workers on the baron's properties and few of them were musicians. At the beginning of the 20th century the Roma community was moved from the Western part of the village to the Southern end. After the nationalization of the baron's properties, the authorities decided to relocate the Roma community on the Eastern side of the river, to a considerable distance from the village centre. The declared intention behind this decision, was to 'hygienise' and 'civilise' the community. Presently here lies the segregated neighbourhood known as Katanga. During the decades, the area between the community and the village was populated by newcomers, both Hungarians and Romanians. The river remains nonetheless the symbolic border between the old village and the new colony.

Across the time a number of opportunities for employment occurred for the Roma inhabitants, other than the agricultural work. In 1900 a local Jewish entrepreneur opened a brick factory by, which soon extended its market to international export. The Roma who were not employed at this factory continued their customary professions. Meanwhile agriculture developed: crop cultures were replaced with fruits and vegetables which proved to be more profitable at that time. Thus new job opportunities were opened to the local Roma on the farms.

In the 1950s the process of communist collectivization and nationalization of the properties started and lasted more than 10 years. During this period all local industries and private enterprises were nationalized and ended up being dissolved by the end of the decade. Concomitantly the Agricultural Cooperative (CAP) and a Station of Agricultural Machines (SMA) were set up. The rural development strategy of the new regime impacted profoundly upon the development of Bighal until the early 80s. The locality was connected to the electric system; the main national road was paved; and a powerful industrialization process began in the nearby towns, offering jobs for the locals. Yet at the beginning of the 80s the social, political and economic control exercised by the State, become more rigorous. It prioritized the process of urbanization, which entailed the growth of the migration from rural to urban milieu. Consequently, a shortage of labour force emerged on the local market. This shortage was balanced by the cheap Roma labour-force integrated in the agriculture. Some of the Roma themselves participated in the internal migration of the labour force: some of them were looking for brick orders in the region, others worked in industry and construction in the nearby urban areas, and still others were hired for seasonal agricultural jobs in other regions of Romania.

After 1989 the main source of income of the local poor was dissolved – this was the end of the CAP and the period of land-privatization. According to the Law no 19/1991 one could receive land if one or one's forefathers used to be proprietors prior to 1949. Yet the Roma families were not landowners. Another paragraph of the same Law stipulated that one could receive land if she/he was employed at the CAP for minimum three years, if there was enough land at the disposal of the local redistribution committee. Nationwide the implementation of this Law was not an easy task and not few were the cases when it entailed conflicts and trials but not for the Roma, because they were excluded or ignored by the redistribution committees.

Meanwhile, the Roma employed in the extractive industry lost their jobs. The cattle breeding farm was closed as well; the brick factory was privatized and soon collapsed. An so did most of the factories and enterprises in the region. The Roma had thus to find alternative ways in order to survive, and they had to do it at a time when most of the population in the area lost their jobs. Until the economy was restructured and the privatized companies emerged and new factories were opened in the region, many of the local population made recourse to the returning to the small-plot agriculture . Thus, the Roma also returned to their so-called traditional activities. Some of them started to make bricks again, by exploiting the surrounding and unused land plots of the village. Others became day-labourers on the small plots of the local Hungarian families or on the newly established private farms.

At the beginning of the 2000 new factories were opened in the village or in the vicinity of the village, and their number increased in several years. One can thus note a considerable high rate of enterprises (22 per 1000 inhabitants see MIGROM Pilot Report). The entrepreneurs, who for the most part of them were not locals. As we mentioned earlier, the county is one the poorest counties, with a high risk of poverty and low development index. The region was thus declared disadvantaged. This status offered a number of advantages to the entrepreneurs: fiscal facilities, exemption from taxes, priority in accessing fundings and government subventions.

Despite of the high number of enterprises, the job opportunities remained low on local level. This is so because most of the businesses are small or medium size enterprises, or even individual enterprises (with none or only 1 employee). Between 2011 and 2012 we can observe an increase of the employment rate among local men, fact which can be related to the construction of the Northern highway in the region. It opened the paths for several new construction entrepreneurs to move their businesses in the region. For the local Roma, these jobs did not represent employment opportunities. Although some of the Roma men were hired on these construction sites, they were hired mainly as daily labourers.

In the following paragraphs we will briefly present the results of the household survey in Bighal, which convey the current situation of the community. The 193 Roma households surveyed are mostly located in a segregated area of the village. There is also an ethnically mixed area, called Bakos, which is nevertheless perceived by the local Hungarian majority as a 'Gypsy neighbourhood'.

The 193 Roma households are composed of 755 persons, 359 males and 395 females (for one children there was not declared the gender). Only 24 persons originate from other counties than Sălaj, and two children were born in Spain. Among the total of the household members only 7 persons declared Hungarian ethnicity and one (5 member) family declared

other ethnicity. The situation of mother tongue is slightly more diverse but the overwhelming majority of the respondents have Romani as their mother tongue.

	Mother Tongue			
	ROMANI	HUNGARIAN	ROMANIAN	Total
<b>NUMBER OF PERSONS</b>	711	39	3	754
<b>PERCENTAGE (%)</b>	94,30	5,17	0,40	100

**Table 9.** The distribution of the Bighal sample according to mother tongue

The average size of the households is 3,91 persons, significantly higher than the national average which is 2,66, but lower than the Gurai average. There is a slight difference in household size in the urban vs rural milieu, in Romania. The urban average is 2,53, while the average in rural settlements is 2,83 persons per household (according to the National Census 2011 Romania).

	Number of household members										
	1 pr	2 prs	3 prs	4 prs	5 prs	6 prs	7 prs	8 prs	9 prs	10 prs	Total sample
<b>NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS</b>	10	33	35	63	26	8	6	7	4	1	193
<b>PERCENTAGE (%)</b>	5,2	17,1	18,1	32,6	13,5	4,1	3,1	3,6	2,1	0,5	100%

**Table 10.** Size of the households in Bighal

Although the designed questionnaire and household form did not explicitly aimed to elicit details on the gender relations inside the households, there was nonetheless one question whose answers could be an indicator of how gender relations are structured in this community. We asked the interviewees to name the head of the household and define their relationship to the head of the family. In most cases the designated head of the household was a male (husband, partner, father etc); only in 24 cases women took over this role (although the forms were completed with both women and men). Males are considered heads of the households in most cases. The bases for the households are typically unions, and most of the couples are legally married in Bighal.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> It is worth mention that few years ago –beginning with 1st of January 2007 – the Romanian Government offered incentives equal to 200 EURO for those couples who married for the first time through the Law nr. 396/2006. The implementation of the programme stopped on 01.07.2010. The high percentage of married couples in the older age groups can be explained by this financial incentive at least partly.

		Relationship status by age groups (% by age group inside the table)					
Relationship status	Age group	Single	Married	Relationship	Widower	Divorcee	Total
		15-24	71 (55,03%)	4 (3,1%)	53 (41,08%)	1 (0,77%)	0
25-49	30 (11,8%)	171 (67,32%)	42 (16,53%)	8 (3,1%)	3 (1,18%)	254 (100%)	
50-64	3	50	3	11	0	67	
65+	0	7	0	5	0	12	
Total	104 (22,5%)	232 (50,2%)	98 (21,2%)	25 (5,4%)	3 (0,6%)	462	

**Table 11.** The relationship status by age groups in Bighal

The Roma community in Bighal is young if compared to the general population. 55,77% of the persons are younger than 25 years old. And the rest of the population is mostly of working age (60,13% of the Roma are of working age, compared to the approx. 65% of the total population, while the percentage of children younger than 15 years is much higher: approx. 38,15% in the Roma community compared to 20% in the total population).

	Age groups							Total
	0-2	3-6	7-14	15-24	25-49	50-64	65+	
<b>NUMBER PERSONS</b>	52	72	164	133	254	67	13	755
<b>PERCENTAGE (%)</b>	6,89	9,54	21,72	17,62	33,64	8,87	1,72	100

**Table 12.** The distribution of age groups in the Bighal sample

The following table is showing the situation of the education by age groups. It is apparent that Roma in Bighal most typically graduate the secondary cycle of the school and pursue their studies to higher degrees in a reduced proportion. There are few cases of persons without education. The increase of the number within the young middle aged (25-49) can be explained by the problems associated with the postsocialist transition which led to higher rates of drop-out from the early primary classes.

N=538	Education by age groups							TOTAL
	0-2	3-6	7-14	15-24	25-49	50-64	65+	
Without education	-	-	-	4	14	2	3	23
No school age	51	62	-	-	-	-	-	113
Should attend school	-	-	4	1	-	-	-	5
Primary school	-	9	93	9	31	23	6	171
Secondary School	-	-	62	53	176	31	9	331
High school 1st grade – compulsory level	-	-	3	41	18	3	-	65
Vocational	-	-	-	13	6	5	-	24
High school Baccalaureate level	-	-	-	9	4	2	-	15
Postlyceum, vocational school	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	3
University	-	-	-	1	4	-	-	5

**Table 13.** The highest completed education by age groups in Bighal (N=755)

The distribution of the Bighal sample according to religious belonging is shown in the table below. The relatively high number of Protestants (Calvinist) and Roman Catholics can be explained by the presence of the Hungarian minority in the region (in fact Hungarians are the local majority in Bighal) and their long historical living side-by-side with the Roma.

	Religion				Total
	Orthodox	Roman-Catholic	Protestant	Neoprotestant	
<b>NUMBER OF PERSONS</b>	21	1	254	477	753
<b>PERCENTAGE (%)</b>	2,79%	0,13%	33,73%	63,35%	100%

**Table 14.** The distribution of Bighal sample according to religious belonging

It is worth mentioning that in the Bighal sample there are 119 persons who have godparents of other ethnicity than Roma (15,76% out of 755 persons) in contrast to Gurai where only 41 persons have godparents of other ethnicity (4,96% out of 826 persons). In the last decade this practice lost its importance in Bighal also. We can recognize this tendency also in the data provided by the household census, though it will be interesting to see what explains the growing number of children less than 2 years old with Godparents from other ethnic group. Table 15 below shows the number of persons who have non-Roma godparents according to age groups and to religion.

<b>Non-Roma godparents according to age groups and religion</b>		
<b>AGE GROUP</b>	NUMBER OF PERSONS (%)	
	WITH NON-ROMA GODPARENT	
0 – 2	15	12,61
3 – 6		4,20
7 – 14	28	23,53
15 – 24	20	16,81
25 – 49	43	36,13
50 – 64	8	6,72
65+	-	
<b>TOTAL</b>	119	
<b>RELIGION</b>		
Orthodox	7	5,88
Protestant	57	47,90
Pentecostal	55	46,22

**Table 15.** Non-Roma godparents according to age groups and religion in Bighal

### Migration experience

Sălaj County is one of the counties with a high rate of migration, and so is Bighal compared to other localities in the county especially if we take into account that international migration is a quite recent phenomenon in the locality. Only in the last 3 or 4 years did it become obvious that temporary migration became a survival strategy for the locals, including the Roma. Of course, we can identify several tendencies in regard to migration, in the locality. At the beginning of the 90s the target countries for the locals were Hungary and the USA. At that time mainly the ethnic Hungarians left the village. In the 2000s, while the local Hungarians were not involved significantly in international migration, the Romanian

population of the neighbouring remote villages started to get engaged in temporary migration, in Italy and Spain. Upon their return to Romania, they chose to move in Bighal, a kind of centre of the region. Some bought old and empty houses which belonged to the ethnic Hungarians. Others purchased plots on the outskirts of the village. Here they built houses with new design and architecture, which were not characteristic in the local tradition. The new comers proved later to be the new connections through which both ethnic Hungarians and Romany people found opportunities to work abroad.

In Bighal about 2/3 of the households reported that at least one or even more persons were involved in labour migration in foreign countries. We found only 66 households (representing 34,2% of the total interviewed households) where none of the members of the household went to work abroad after 2007 (of course, this does not mean that before 2007 they did not try this experience).

<b>Nr of persons who had migration experience after 2007</b>				
	0	1	2	3
<b>NUMBER HOUSEHOLDS</b>	66	94	28	5
<b>PERCENTAGE (%)</b>	34,2	48,7	14,5	2,5

**Table 16.** Number of persons who had migration experience after 2007 by households in Bighal

In most cases, only one person from a household is engaged in working abroad. It is usually the men who travel abroad for short periods, during the summer. When more than one person in a household go to work abroad, they are usually a young couple with older relatives (usually grandparents) whom they trust to leave their children in care.

	1 month	2 months	3 months	4 months	6 months	12 months	TOTAL
<b>Number of persons</b>	43	91	12	11	5	4	166
<b>PERCENTAGE (%)</b>	25,9	54,81	7,22	6,62	3,01	2,4	100%

**Table 17.** The duration of the migration experience in Bighal

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Nr. of persons</b>	<b>%</b>
15 - 24	19	11,45
25 - 49	117	70,48
50 - 64	30	18,07
65+	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 18.** Migrants by age group

The target countries for the Roma in Bighal are diverse. Most of the persons chose to go to Hungary for seasonal work. This choice is easy to make because of the geographical closeness of the country, and the network of the Hungarian co-villagers with connections in Hungary is larger. The high diversity of the target countries shows us, that the Roma from Bighal chose alternative ways to migrate: a network node to one specific country is not overloaded too much.

	<i>Nr. of persons</i>	<i>%</i>
Hungary	58	35,15
Spain	40	24,24
Czech Republic	23	13,94
Germany	20	12,12
Belgium	5	3,03
Italy	9	5,45
France	3	1,82
Austria	4	2,42
Sweden	1	0,6
Great Britain	1	0,6
India	1	0,6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 19.** The country of destination for the migration from Bighal

### 3. Comparison of the two fieldsites in the light of the surveys

This section compare some basic data regarding migration, from the two selected fields: Gurai, in Southern Romania and Bighal, in North-Western Romania. We should nonetheless stress that the data are provisional, and the interpretation of it might change after the finalisation of the data collection period. The table below (Table 20) shows the basic socio-demographic characteristics of the two surveyed populations.

In order to get a more detailed image of the socio-economic situation of the Roma persons, we asked what their position was on the job market in the same period of the last year, what is now, and whether they have a profession. Not all respondents answered this last question, therefore we can guess that only those who have a profession or consider that they have a profession, answered it, and those who do not have a profession did not answer the question. Thus, aprox. 20 persons named their profession and this number corresponds more or less with the number of those employed at the moment of the survey. With few exceptions (health and school mediators), most of the persons qualified were men, but working in manual and low rated jobs, such as painter, mason, sawyer, security services, mechanic, constructions/ builder. The overall majority of the women do not have any specialization, they are housekeepers, and take care of the household and the children, and they sometimes perform occasional work (especially the women in Bighal get involved in processing wall-nuts for the better-off Roma from the neighbouring village).

Out of the 11 employed persons in Bighal 7 are qualified for the job, while in Gurai out of the 29 persons only 6 are qualified and 23 are not qualified for the position they hold.



	<i>Bighal (N=100)</i>	<i>Gurai (N=160)</i>
<b>GENDER</b>		
Male	43	114 (71,2)
Female	57	46 (28,8)
<b>AGE GROUP</b>		
15 – 24	9	12 (7,5)
25 – 49	77	111 (69,8)
50 – 64	12	29 (18,2)
65+	2	8 (5)
<b>MARITAL STATUS</b>		
Single	1	2 (1,2)
Married	69	73 (45,6)
Consensual relationship	22	72 (45)
Widower	8	10 (6,2)
Divorced	-	3 (1,9)
<b>EDUCATION</b>		
Without any education	-	18 (11,2)
Elementary school (1 – 4 grades)	13	49 (30,6)
Gymnasium (5 – 8 grades)	69	51 (31,9)
High School I ( 9 – 10 grades)	14	15 (9,4)
Professional school	2	18 (11,2)
High School – Baccaureate level	2	7 (4,4)
High Professional	-	2 (1,2)
<b>RELIGION</b>		
Orthodox Christian	5	75 (46,9)
Protestant	33	-
Pentecostal	-	24 (15)
Baptist	62	10 (6,2)
Adventist	-	51 (31,9)
<b>MOTHER TONGUE</b>		
Romani <sup>28</sup>	96	128 (80)
Romanian	-	32 (20)
Hungarian	4	-
<b>OTHER LANGAUGES SPOKEN</b>		
Romani	4	32
Romanian	96	129
Hungarian	79	-
Other. Which?	2 <sup>29</sup>	16 <sup>30</sup>

**Table 20.** The basic socio-demographic characteristics of the two surveyed populations

	<b>Bighal</b>	<b>Gurai</b>
Employed workers	11	29
Daily workers	17	45
Housekeeper	52	35
Pensioner	3	16
Registered unemployed	10	2
Unregistered unemployed	5	7
Maternity leaving	2	-
Entrepreneur	-	1
Social benefits	-	19

**Table 21.** The employment status of the household members in Bighal and Gurai

The categories used in the above Table do not exclude each other. We could see in the example of Bighal that the housekeepers also perform occasional income generating

<sup>28</sup> It is worth mention that in Gurai those 10 persons who declared that their mother tongue is Romanian, they all speak Romani as well.

<sup>29</sup> Spanish

<sup>30</sup> English and Spanish

activities, even the retired ones. It should be mentioned that since 2011 in Romania a Law 31 was implemented which aims at regularizing the situation of tax payments after incomes generated by occasional work. Thus, persons and entrepreneurs can employ – without a contract – daily workers for no more than 90 days per year, and they have the responsibility for paying the 16% tax after each daily worker. In Bighal there is quite big number of persons in this situation, given that agricultural farms and construction firms prefer this kind of employment over the older types of contracts. This type of employment ensures a bigger stability for this type of daily workers, given that they can be sure – at least in the case of Bighal – that for example for the period of the summer or early autumn they have a more or less regular income. The “traditional” daily labourers, who have to look for occasional jobs among the inhabitants of the village, are more vulnerable (from this point of view we don’t know the situation in Gurai yet).

There might be the case, if my reading of the questionnaire answers is correct, that some of the people who are beneficiary of social welfare (law 416/ 2001) declared themselves as ‘employed’ or ‘having a profession’(such as cleaner). The above mentioned law stipulated that the receivers of social welfare perform a monthly quota of work to the benefit of their residential unit (such work comprises cleaning the public space of the town/ village, digging ditches etc).

The period of data collection determined heavily the answers to the questions related both to jobs and to type of income (and last but not least, to the migration situation as well). It was the end of the year (more precisely, the end of November and beginning of December), which is the period when informal jobs in agriculture and construction sites are short. Thus the types of income of the households are reduced as well. Most of the households rely on two types of income. According to the answers in the questionnaires, in Bighal out of 32 households that rely on two categories of income, 13 rely only on the Minimum Guaranteed Income (VMG) and children’s allowances, and other financial support for families with children. Similarly, in Gurai, out of 50 families, 7 (compared to Bighal, less households) rely on the above mentioned two social incomes.

	<i>Bighal</i>	<i>Gurai</i>
NR. OF TYPE OF INCOME PER HOUSEHOLD	(N=100)	(N=160)
1 type of income	4	10 (6,2)
2 type of income	32	50 (31,2)
3 type of income	28	51 (31,9)
4 type of income	31	32 (20)
5 type of income	4	17 (10,6)
6 type of income	1	-

**Table 22.** The multiple types of incomes in a household compared Bighal / Gurai

In Bighal, out of the 100 households 70 mentioned that their most important income was the





	<i>Bighal (N=100)</i>	<i>Gurai (N=160)</i>
<b>THE SUBJECT</b>		
YES. Before 2002	-	5
Yes. Between 2002-2007	1	13 (8,1)
Yes. After 2007	51	23 (14,4)
<b>OTHER MEMBER OF THE HOUSEHOLD</b>		
YES. Before 2002	-	3 (1,9)
Yes. Between 2002-2007	-	15 (9,4)
Yes. After 2007	50	36 (22,5)

**Table 27.** The mobility of the household members in different time periods

Comparing the results for the two localities we can see, that before 2007 Roma from Bighal were not involved in international migration, or at least migration among them was not as intense as now. Conversely Roma from Gurai started getting involved in migration much earlier. This explains partly the different migration patterns encountered in the two localities. Those migrating from Bighal are at the beginning at their migration history, which they initiated recently (qualitative fieldwork reveal explanation for this). Not only did they start travelling abroad recently, but they also spend, on average only one or two months during the summer in foreign countries. They mainly work in construction and agriculture. Usually it is only one person from the household, typically a male, involved in working abroad. The target countries are diversified. We might infer that the networks used are also diversified.

In Gurai we found a different pattern. Here Roma have a longer migration history, going back even before 2002. Those interviewed stayed a much longer period abroad, some of them even several years. They did so in the company of other household members. The target countries are less diverse than those in which the Bighal Roma migrate (only 2 or 3 countries mentioned in the case of Gurai, as opposed to 11 different countries mentioned in the case of Bighal).

We have learned earlier that vast majority of the households in Bighal receive money from persons living or working abroad (98 out of 100 households). These persons might be members of the household, extended family members who might not be household members, friends and other persons. In Gurai only aprox. half of the households declared that they spend money they received from abroad (85 out of the 160 households).

However, this result should be interpreted carefully, as it might be influenced by several factors. The main influencing factor is connected to the methodology of data collection. Bighal is a village, with a considerable Roma population but which can be contacted. We have thus designed a census of the households, in addition to data collection through face-to-face questionnaires. The questionnaires were filled in with members of those households where persons involved in international migration were identified. Thus, we learned that out of the 241 Roma households registered, roughly one third of the households do not have migration experience after 2007. Still, on one hand this does not mean that they were not involved in migration before 2007; on the other hand it does not mean that they do not receive money from abroad from other members of the extended family or friends who are not members of the household. Reversely, Gurai is a town, considerably bigger than Bighal, with a more diversified Roma population which might be difficult to find and encounter, even to register (as we learned also from the qualitative research data).

Thus, to collect statistical data from Gurai, a different methodology was necessary. We needed a sample of the local Roma population. It was obvious from the beginning that it is not possible at this point to construct a representative Roma sample, thus we decided to take into consideration two aspects: the knowledge of the local Roma assistant and her connections in the community, and the geographical position of the households (segregated vs. dispersed community). Therefore, the collected data are not representative for the Roma population of Gurai (those who have been living abroad for a longer period and who were not at home at the moment of the data collection, are not included in the sample). Without being representative, the collected data only describes the interviewed population. In this case these data might be considered as a pilot study without the ambition of generalizing the results.

The second factor which might influence the results, is the relationship of the Roma assistant with those interviewed. The topics we were interested in – i.e. income, practices of spending the money, work habits, migration history – might be very sensitive issues for some persons, who they might decide not to speak about it openly. Just to give an example, eligibility for social assistance depends on the economic situation of the household, on the presence of the household members and on their employment situation. One's involvement in international migration, and consequently one's absence from home, and one's substantial household income, might contribute to one's loss of eligibility for social support. In this context, it becomes obvious that in case of low trust in the interviewer, the subjects might decide to not confess openly. One might do so for fear that the data might be further used against one's own goal. This can explain the several situations we encountered in Gurai when people acknowledged that they spoke English or Spanish, - and this despite a low educational level - , yet they maintained that they had never been involved in migration. In Bighal – at least to our knowledge – we did not encounter such situations. Here the Roma community is smaller, and for the most part of it, segregated. The interviewer is well-known and trusted among the population. He also maintains very good relationships with local authorities, the social worker of the local mayor's office.

We were also interested in the reasons presented by the persons who did not migrate. We asked them to explain briefly the reasons for their choice to stay at home rather than leave for abroad. It was an open ended question. The Roma assistant was asked to jot down on the questionnaire file, the answer provided by the subject. After the answers were introduced in the database, we could trace groups of answers depending on the topics mentioned. Thus, we could conclude that in Bighal those who did not leave for work abroad, they did so mainly because of the lack of financial possibilities. Several persons answered that they stayed at home because they have many children and did not have anybody trustful and available to look after the children. Some said that it was his/her health situation which prevented him/her from travelling abroad. Another person mentioned that he did not want to leave the village. In Gurai – probably because there are more persons who did not migrate in the past – we have received a much diverse set of reasons. Similarly to Bighal, most recurrent reason was the lack of money. Regarding this issue, some persons declared that they wanted to avoid borrowing money informally, and qualitative research suggests that 1) most of the deprived do not have access to migration; and 2) usury and ensuing social dependencies are widespread in Gurai. The same number of persons mentioned that health problems prevented them from migrating abroad. Children as reasons to stay at home were mentioned also in several cases, just like religious affiliation. In this case the subjects said that their

religious affiliation prevented them from getting involved in activities which they associate with migration abroad (such as begging or petty thefts) (See also Gurai qualitative report about the perception of the migrants). Lack of a permanent job, housing, the insecurity of life in a foreign country and the stability of life at home was also mentioned several times. While one person stayed at home because her relatives left and left the house under her supervision.

After a brief overview of the socio-economic situation of those interviewed, we can see, that their economic situation is precarious, with a limited number of possibilities and that they are vulnerable. Still, there are persons who managed to travel abroad and to live for shorter or longer periods there. To understand the way these persons managed to travel abroad, we asked them to tell us shortly about the help received at their first travel and the latest one.

Every person from Gurai (among those who migrated) answered that they received either financial help or a secure job, or both of them, from a member of the family. In Bighal the answers were more diverse. More persons declared that they received financial help, access to a job from a friend or villager (many times a Hungarian person) or even a Hungarian work colleague. Fewer people received help from members of the family; yet one cannot deny that the family represented a significant help for leaving the country, in Bighal.

#### **4. The impact of migration on origin communities – conclusions**

Transnational migration has both positive and negative effects on the origin communities. There are cases when migration contributed to economic and social upward mobility for the Roma. Yet there are also cases when migration widened the gap between the affluent and the poor. There is evidence that for those deprived, who do not have access to resources, mobility across Europe either remains only a dream, or, if seized, entails contracting debts or other forms of dependencies.

In some other cases, transnational migration contributed to the territorial de-segregation of Roma. In the town of Gurai, the *ursari* who had the resources to leave Romania at the advent of postsocialism and reached Western countries (such as Germany and U.K., and immediately afterwards Spain, Italy), moved out of the ethnically segregated neighbourhood of Lut (where they initially resided), and built villa type houses either in the town centre or in other neighbourhoods of the town. Not only did the ethnic configuration of the town change, but also the built environment developed conspicuously.

The most visible effect of transnational migration in origin communities is the construction of houses. Although the practice of investing money derived from migration in the building of houses in home lands is not specific to Romani people and it is spread not only across Romania, but also worldwide, we are lead to argue that there are some peculiarities of the Romani cultures associated with the construction of houses, which vary nonetheless in accordance with the region of origin and with the socio-cultural configuration of each Roma community. In a forthcoming article, Tesăr (2015) shows that the construction of the villa-type houses among Roma in Transylvania, is related to the owners' quest for visibility. This desire for visibility comes to counterpoint the Roma historical marginalization, which was at a time symbolical, social and territorial. It becomes thus obvious that migration (and the economic gains derived from it) provides the grounds for the advent of a phenomenon which conceals

under its material manifestations, aspirations related to the reversal of old social hierarchies which have always placed Roma in an inferior position vis-à-vis the majority population.

In still some other cases it is difficult to assert to what extent it was rather migration than changes in broader local economic and social context which lead to the upward mobility of Roma. In Gurai there are Roma who managed to move out of the segregated neighbourhood of Lut and built houses in the town centre by means of economic practices conducted at home, such as informal lending of credits with usury. Among the *spoitori* we could also notice a tendency of moving out of local segregated communities and buying flats in blocks scattered though the town. Yet for most of the *spoitori* migration is only one temporary among many other practices to which they resort for gaining resources. It appears to us that among *spoitori* migration impacts rather on consumption behaviour and life styles (house decorations and electronic devices, clothing style) than on the economic status of the families.

## 5. Local Policies

In Romania migration of Roma does not fall within the agenda of Roma targeted public policies or third sector agencies activities. In local public institutions responsibility for Roma related issues is shared between health facilitators (*mediator sanitar*), school facilitators (*mediator scolar*) and the Roma counsellors. Their Roma origin should ensure good communication with local communities. From the conversations we had with some of them, it appears that issues related to Roma access to education or to the health system become more difficult to grasp in the context of migration. Different patterns of mobility in which the varied length of the stay abroad combines with the unpredictability of movement of household members complicates not only the process of schooling of Roma pupils, but also the claiming of rights to local health services. Some of the representatives of the public institutions gradually withdraw from engagement with Roma, both as a consequence of their inability to keep up with the movement of people and with the changes in household structures, and of acknowledging Roma's self-regulating mechanisms which leave no room for external (state) interventions (in Gurai). Others on the other hand continue to get involved actively in the work of the authorities with the local Roma community representing a channel of communication between authorities and members of the community (the example of Bighal).



During a casual conversation we had with one of the two Roma health facilitators in Gurai, we asked her if she kept a record of the households in Lut and if she could provide a rough estimation of the *ursari* population currently living there. Twelve years ago, when she was hired as a health mediator, she designed cartography of the settlement, she admitted. Yet none of the data or the graphics she collected back then, map onto present reality on the ground. She gave up trying to keep an updated cartography of the settlement once she realized how incongruous were her analytical tools – size of the household, earnings of the members of the household's etc-, with the ever-changing realities on the ground. She justified her tenet with some examples. The owners of houses changed overnight. The members of the household also varied from a day to the next: 'Where today I recorded 7 children, the next day I only found 2. Or the opposite: where I recorded today only 2 children, the next day I found 10'. And moreover, the huge mismatches between the data recorded in documents, and people's living realities, not only prompted her to stop keeping a record of household sizes and compositions, but also invalidated her work altogether. When she received her job as a health facilitator, Ana was also allocated an office in the now dismantled school in Lut. Working amidst the people, she had an intimate knowledge of their life styles and living conditions. For several years, Ana's office was moved in the town hall (in the town centre) as a consequence of changes in the legislation regarding the status of the Roma health facilitator in Romania. From her present cosy office, Ana admits being miles apart not only in terms of space, but also in terms of intimate knowledge of the *ursari* in Lut. Yet on assessing her own job, Ana seems rather sadly resigned than content. 'Twelve years ago, when I got this position, I thought that I could change the world. That was really childish of me. I thought that I could help the Roma. Yet you can see how the Roma manage their lives on their own... '. From her office in the town hall, Ana appreciates that the number of households in Lut is between 150-200, yet she is adamant that figures do not map onto ethnographic realities.

## Conclusions

- (1) The institutions of the Romanian state seem to be unable and often not motivated to deal and manage the issues related to the migration of the Romanian citizens, Roma among them. Roma suffer additionally because of the indifference and/or discrimination of the authorities. Even if benevolent, local authorities lack the resources and the information to deal efficiently with the migration process. They only observe the effects of the migratory movements but do not facilitate that financial and social remittances can feed into local development. (Indicators: The low number of socially assisted families in some localities with high unemployment / narratives from Roma about failures to communicate effectively with the local authorities / observation of the attitudes of public servants, and ethnography of the authorities).
- (2) Most migrant Roma from Romania live transnational existence, that is, their migration is not 'completed', and they continue to maintain connections with their relatives and friends in the locality of origin. There is a continuous flow of resources and also people between the different places of migration and back home. (indicators: observation of transnational practices, communication channels, transportation and travel / narratives of the family members at home / information from the questionnaire on the income of the household, including remittances / visible investment in renovating and building houses, buying furniture and goods).
- (3) Migration offers potential for upward social mobility for the Roma families involved. The transnational existence also involves investment in improving social status 'at home'. This is often done even at the expense of keeping the costs of living rather low in the

migration context and not investing into improving the living conditions there. Alternatively the 'surplus income' not necessary for the person or / family in the migration context is invested 'back home' for long term plans. (Indicators: buying houses or plots in more central, more prestigious areas within the locality of origin / renovating and building new houses, villas / converting financial resources acquired during the migration into higher local status).

- (4) The downside of the mobility of the families which have successful migrants as members is contributing to the increased socio-economic inequalities within the community and the locality. These can contribute to the development of dependency or even exploitation between the economically well-off and the poorer segments of the local society (irrespectively of ethnic belonging). (Indicators: observing and describing the territorial segregation which persists / the process of 'moving out' of those who wish to improve their status / ethnography of the local economic activities and informal exchanges).
- (5) One particularity of the migration of the Roma can be the flexibility and resourcefulness of Roma communities as a relative advantage in migration process. The experience of being economically more flexible 'at home' is an asset in migration situation. The coping strategies with stigmatization and/or marginalization also better equips Roma for the hardships during the migration. These can be relative advantages if compared to members of the local majorities who migrate. (indicators: narrative of migration experience / the existence of mixed groups involving both Roma and non-Roma where Roma).
- (6) The weakness/ineffectiveness of state institutions and local authorities forces Roma to rely on non-state institutions and the self-organisation and self-management. It also has as a side effect the hardening of identities (increased awareness of distinctiveness) and using local, social and ethnic identities as important markers for social divisions, distancing and resource hoarding. This process combined with the changing status and upward social mobility of some of the groups create transformed conditions and will potentially influence ethnic relations (ethnography of kinship, relatives, community associations, churches / existence of local social and ethnic tensions, conflicts).

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## **Guidelines for the interviews**

### **1. Description of the locality, households, families, persons**

#### 1.1. Ethnic structure of the locality.

Description of different groups, main characteristics. If there is a sign of incoming migration? New persons, families, communities moving in (newcomers)? What is the reason? How they describe them? What is their opinion about them? Are there any poor neighborhoods in the locality? Description of main neighborhoods where Roma lives. How many shops are in the locality? How many markets? Other type of shops? Is there everything accessible in the local shops or do they have to travel for some things? Local entertainment units – bars, discotheques, etc? Problems of the locality in general (at least three of them)? How these can be solved? Who should be in charge for it? Any actions already taken by whom?

Problems of the Roma population in the locality? What do they need? How these can be solved? Who should be in charge for it? Any actions already taken by whom? Problems of other vulnerable groups?

#### 1.2. Family life

The whole life story of him/her from early childhood until today concentrating on family life on the time of the childhood, and in the community, brothers, sisters, other relative children, friends, school experiences, job experiences, coping strategies etc. Before 1989? How did their life change after 1990? How did it change in the last two years?

Marriage and family - what age? How many children? How they choose the spouse? Relations with wife's/ husband/s family? With the extended family? General opinions at what age should one make a family? How about children? How many children? What is the role of the husband? What is the role of the wife? How it should be? Problems in marriage? Any gender differences? Wedding?

Family life today; ways of making decisions / different responsibilities inside the family / division of tasks, roles. Children in the family; who cares of children; socialization in the family, in age-group; way of learning mother-tongue(s). Relations to other relatives living in different households / different village / far from the family. Who is responsible for household costs? Who is responsible for keeping record of money and decide what to spend on?

Inter-generational relationships – what is the composition of the household, how many generations live together? Division of tasks on generations. Describe the relationship with close family members. Usual topics of discussion with different members of the family. In case of conflict who has the last word?

#### 1.3. Housing conditions

Description of the house, building. Form of property? How many persons live there? How many rooms? Garden, annexes for animals etc. Access to infrastructure and services (electricity, running water and so on). Main properties in the household (land, cars, any kind of kitchen utensils, computer etc.). Is it in good condition or not? Neighbors and relationship with neighbors. The cost of housing per month? What type of costs?

#### 1.4. Education

Level of education of the members of the household, of the extended family? Attitudes toward education – useful, necessity or...what kind of knowledge should school and education provide in order to be successful? Relationship with teachers? Relationship with other children? Regularity of contact? Possible conflicts? If there were conflictual situations, what was the reason? How was it solved? Extracurricular activities? Perceived benefits of formal education in migration situation.

Informal education – what the family members teaches each other, especially to children?

#### 1.5. Religion

Religious background of the family. Everyday practices if there are any? Changes in general, changes in migration if it is the case. What does it mean to be a Roma? Assessment of neo-protestant churches? Attitudes toward it? Observed changes?

#### 1.6. Health

Health problems in the family? Self-assessment of the health situation. In the Roma neighborhood? Access to health services? Opinions about health services? Needs? Everyday sanitary practices. Generational differences. Dependents. Informal caretakers, family roles. Traditional remedies etc. Last visit to doctor, hospital, emergency service. Access, payment, etc.

Alimentation and food – most important meals a day? How do they look? Only the family members, extended family members? Regularity? Group-activity? Main foods consumed? What is considered luxurious? Baked food, cold food? Drinks? Cigarettes? Products from their own household? How they procure them (local market, local shops, from the local agricultures), etc. Preferred food. Recipes. Gender roles.

Reproductive health.

#### 1.7. Migration

Migration experiences, working, living in abroad. Why to go, why to stay? If they have already worked in abroad, how was it, where, how long, what they did, with whom they moved to and how and why they came back? Was it worth it? Helping networks? Migration in the country (seasonal mobility and/or any other kind of moving). Causes, motivations of mobility. Communication with the left-behind? Care of elderly and children? Or women? What did they know about the country/countries of migration? Comparison with present experiences. Effects on the family, family members, every day life, economic situation, relation with other Roma, relation with other majority population, etc.

#### 1.8. Social networks

Relations to „others”, non-Roma neighbours, friends. Relations to the majority population of the locality. History of interactions with local majority. Relation to the institutions and representatives of different institutions. Relations to school and teachers (if they have school-age child/children), and to health service providers. What do they think about ethnic homogeneity in the classroom? How do they evaluate the usefulness and the quality of education their children receive? Language usage. Linguistic competences. Attitudes about languages. Communication in migration. Social networks. Friends? Intra-group conflicts.

#### 1.9. Relationship and interaction with local authorities.

Awareness of projects implemented for Roma in the locality? Relation to local Roma organizations / NGO's. Information, level of knowledge and opinion about Roma organizations in the country, Roma parties, generally about Roma's ability to enforce

interests („Roma voice”). Expectations from local government, from Roma local organizations, from national Roma organizations, parties, from government.

#### 1.10. Entertainment

Main source of entertainment, desired way of entertainment - age specific possibilities. Which are the usual places? Sports? Artistic events? Cultural events? Other community activities? Access to culture (books, cultural/minority TV shows, events in cultural centres). Main sources of information they use. How informed they are about local things; and about country issues.

#### 1.11. Main sources of income.

Qualifications. Experiences on labour market (formal and informal). Discrimination experiences on labour market (personal perceptions and opinions, how they confront these situations). Networks used to find household income generating activities and resources. Before 1989 and after 1989? Other main moments identified by the interviewees. Practices in migration? Gender and generational differences. How much is the monthly, weekly or daily income of the household? How do they spend it? Savings? Plans for the future? Other incomes.

#### 1.12 Concrete plans for the close future. Long term aspirations, plans, ideas about children's future, expectations from children.

### **2. Interview with non-Roma inhabitants in the neighborhood**

2.1. Life in the country, in the locality, in the neighbourhood and in the family in the past (how was it in their childhood). Changes of the life until today. How they explain changes?

2.2. “Community life”. How people interact to each other?

2.3. Relationships with the local authorities

2.4. Relationships with the Roma neighbours – between adults, and between children. What are the opportunities for contact and longer relationships? Are there inter-ethnic friendships or family relations? What types of conflicts occur, and how are they managed?

2.5. Problems and possible solutions/coping strategies

2.6. Aspirations

2.7. Education, culture and entertainment

2.8. Migration

### **3 Interview with mayor or deputy-mayor of the locality**

3.1 Resources of the local municipality and the development plans; main resources in the locality.

3.2. Identified needs/priorities of the locality, for the non-Roma and the Roma communities and areas.

3.3. Development projects in the last years (infrastructure, social projects, income generating activities).

3.4. The level of involvement of Roma inhabitants in different programmes, projects.

3.5. Best practices in programmes.

3.6. Budget for different social benefits and distribution of the different types of social benefits.

3.7. Percent of the retrocession requests already solved.

3.8. Perception of the Roma communities in the locality and Roma in general.



- 3.9. Specific projects about the Roma neighbourhood and community.
- 3.10. Knowledge about the National Strategy and policies focused on Roma.
- 3.11. Methods of collecting data about dwellers in the locality (especially linked to the civil status and ID papers); the issue of registering ethnic identity of the dwellers.

#### **4. Interview with the social worker in the town-hall**

- 4.1. Main social problems identified in the locality/Roma community.
- 4.2. Special problematic cases.
- 4.3. Types of resources at town hall level.
- 4.4. Distribution of different social benefits.
- 4.5. What other resources should the social worker have, in order to be able to assist all the problematic cases?
- 4.6. Interpersonal relationships with Roma people.
- 4.7. Suggestions for programs to improve the situation of Roma people.

#### **5. Interview with school teachers, director of the school**

- 5.1. Educational methods.
- 5.2. Responsibilities on one teacher (how many classes/children are under the responsibility of the same teacher)
- 5.3. Specific problems in relation to Roma and non-Roma pupils
- 5.4. Evaluation of risks, costs and benefits of ethnic homogeneity in the classroom
- 5.5. Needs for more human resources in education and criteria for achieving human resources in the locality's situation
- 5.6. School abandon, possible reasons and categories at risk
- 5.7. Special needs and resources of the Roma and non-Roma families and children in the locality
- 5.8. Roma children relationship to other children in school; Roma parents relationship and comparison to other parents
- 5.9. Suggestions for nation-wide programs (including curriculum reforms, human resource policies etc) to improve the educational participation and performance of Roma pupils

#### **6. Interview with local roma organization and / or informal Roma leader**

- 6.1. Identified problems – priorities
- 6.2. Identified resources in the community
- 6.3. Past and future projects
- 6.4. Civil involvement of the community
- 6.5. Self-representation
- 6.6. Institutional blockages, if there are any
- 6.7. Support required from other decisional actors
- 6.8. History of personal involvement, history of the organization

#### **7 Interview with health representatives (family doctors, etc.)**

- 7.1. the health situation of the whole population/Roma community (immunisation, frequency of the medical visits, hygiene, alimentation)

- 7.2. interaction with Roma patients – frequency, location, problems
- 7.3. general/special needs and problems
- 7.4. typical illnesses
- 7.5. statistics of the medical situation in the locality
- 7.6. suggestions for programs to improve the health situation of Roma people
- 7.7. personal relations with Roma persons

## **5. MAIN TOPICS FOR COMPARISON BETWEEN DIFFERENT COUNTIES, LOCALITIES**

1. Economic description of the locality
2. Ethnic groups present
3. Religious diversity
4. Language diversity
5. Conflicts between different ethnic groups
6. smaller conflicts between different ethnic neighbors
7. intra-groups conflicts
8. documented cases of ethnic discrimination
9. Long-term economic relationship with majority population
10. history of internal migration
11. ritual kinship with majority
12. geographical segregation or mixed neighborhoods.
13. access to formal job-market
14. local development projects in which Roma were included
15. Modes of starting to migrate

Annex 2. Survey Qestionnaire