

Development of Unemployment of the Roma Minority in Selected European Countries

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Original Article

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Source: Clinical Social Work and Health Intervention
Pages: 59 – 64

Volume: 9

Issue: 4

Cited references: 27

Reviewers:

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Key words:

Unemployment. Roma Minority. Post-communism. Synoptic Study.

Publisher:

International Society of Applied Preventive Medicine i-gap

CSWHI 2018; 9(4): 59 – 64; DOI 10.22359/cswhi_9_4_08 © 2018 Clinical Social Work and Health Intervention

Abstract:

Objective: The article is aimed at analyzing the degree of unemployment of the Roma minority in selected European countries.

Design: Synoptic study.

Participants: Research data acquired from specialized databases for 1990-2018.

Methods: Meta-analysis.

Results: The results show the lack of availability of data on the target set in most European countries, except for post-communist countries. The unemployment of the Roma minority has no relation at all to the general unemployment; it is always many times higher; it is primarily related to the exclusion of the Roma. Slight variation in the unemployment development can be seen in individual years.

Conclusion: In the first place, unemployment in segregated localities must be dealt with. This article is aimed at analyzing the degree of unemployment of the Roma minority in selected European countries. It is a meta-analysis of existing studies and reports. We used specialized databases as a source and focused on data from 1990 to 2018. For the Slovak Republic, we also found predictive data for the development of the Roma unemployment.

Studies dealing with the Roma minority are often qualitative and their results are limited to stating that the degree of Roma unemployment is higher than that of the majority population without stating any specific numbers. Additionally, many countries consider monitoring of the Roma minority as an ethnically separated group as an ethically and politically inadmissible thing. Therefore, differing data on their socio-economic situation are completely absent. If we want to deal with the unemployment of the Roma we must first allow for the fact that in most countries it is a population significantly affected by social exclusion and by related pathological phenomena. It is therefore necessary to distinguish the Roma who live in some form of segregated settlement (e.g. socially excluded localities in the Czech Republic or Slovak settlements of the Roma); from the Roma who are integrated or assimilated in the company. For example, Cada (2015) states that the unemployment in excluded localities oscillates between 80-85% even in regions where the general unemployment is below the national average. That means that the degree of Roma unemployment does not correspond with the development of the labor market in the given country. The Roma constitute one of the most endangered groups in the labor market not just because of social exclusion.

The Roma participating in the labor market often carry out works of short-term, seasonal character (Davidova *et al* 2010); men are involved more than women (Kajanova *et al* 2015). Cernusakova (2017) speaks of “invisibility” of Roma work. The reason consists in the fact that a great part of the Roma work without any employment contract, in an informal labor market; in highly unstable socially uncertain; often physically hazardous jobs.

The causes of Roma unemployment are dealt with by a number of authors. The causes include a combination of factors such as discrimination in the labor market and in public discourse in general (Gabal, Cada, Snopek 2008); decreasing number of qualified jobs (Mares, Sirovatka, Vyhlidal 2003); low education or qualification in Roma populations (O’Higgins, Ivanov 2006). Sajgalikova, Copus (2017) and Swietek (2013) and other authors see a problem primarily

in intergenerational unemployment. If the family lacks working models the child considers such situation a standard. However, the main cause of low unemployment consists in high indebtedness and the related wage deductions that may play a demotivating role (Trlifajova, Hurrle, Kissova 2014). Thus the Roma pass to the illegal labor market that provides fast and certain earnings. Fuzesi *et al* (2008) sees a cause in their bad health condition.

Hirt and Jakoubek (2006) state that the inferior position of the Roma in the labor market has many other interacting causes: additionally to the above stated, they mention insufficient motivation to work resulting from the structure of large Roma families, mutual loans, etc. One of the few studies carried out directly with employers (Stankova 2014) showed that employers consider the situation of the Roma in the labor market as unfavorable. But they see responsibility on the Roma side due to their low qualifications. In their opinion, the problem should be addressed by the government and by society, but only to a limited degree. Neumanova (2008) emphasizes the importance of supported employment, professional and pre-professional consulting within a study of the Roma population and within the employment office.

In post-communist countries, Roma employment dramatically dropped in connection with the change of the political regime when the labor market transformations affected primarily unqualified persons and members of minorities (Fuzesi *et al* 2008).

Table 1 below shows the degree of Roma unemployment in available data. The most data including predictive statistics were available from Slovakia. In early 21st Century, the highest unemployment was reported from Bulgaria but it showed the strongest decrease in the course of time. On the contrary, the lowest unemployment could be seen in Hungary where it rapidly decreased as well. Slighter forms of decrease can be seen also in other countries, but with different year-on-year variations which were not caused by changes in national labor markets or by essential interventions. According to our hypotheses, they constitute methodical distortions. Variations in the results of individual studies can be seen for example in Slovakia where the outputs of different authors for the same year sometimes differ by more than 15%. We also consider it interesting that Romania that has the highest percentage of Roma population shows a considerably lower percentage of unemployed Roma than other analyzed countries.

Table 1: Degree of Roma unemployment in selected countries and its development in the course of time

Year	Country	Degree of Roma Unemployment	Source
2000	Czech Republic	46.3%	(Sirovatka 2003)
2005	Czech Republic	70.0%*	(Malan, Shreedhar 2007)
2008	Czech Republic	11.7%	(Czech Government 2009)
2011	Czech Republic	39.0%	(Czech Government 2012)
1997	Slovakia	78.0%*	(OECD 2004)
2000	Slovakia	84.8%*	(Sirovatka 2003)
2000 - 2005	Slovakia	78.2%*	(Marcincin, Marcincinova 2009)
2002	Slovakia	83.0%*	(OECD 2004)
2004	Slovakia	67.0%*	(Hidas <i>et al</i> 2018)

2005	Slovakia	73.1%*	(Filadelfiova, Gerbery 2012)
2006 - 2010	Slovakia	65.4%*	(Marcincin, Marcincinova 2009)
2011	Slovakia	70.0%*	(Messing 2014)
2011 - 2015	Slovakia	62.6%*	(Marcincin, Marcincinova 2009)
2012	Slovakia	73.0%*	(Stefancova 2014)
2016	Slovakia	55.0%*	(Hidas <i>et al</i> 2018)
2016 - 2020	Slovakia	62.6%*	(Marcincin, Marcincinova 2009)
2017	Slovakia	41.0%*	(Hidas <i>et al</i> 2018)
2000	Hungary	56.5%*	(Sirovatka 2003)
2011	Hungary	50.0%*	(Messing 2014)
2015	Hungary	28.3%*	(KamaraOnline 2016)
2000	Bulgaria	80.0%*	(Sirovatka 2003)
2010	Bulgaria	59.0%*	(Flanagin 2014)
2011	Bulgaria	40.0%*	(Messing 2014)
2000	Romania	76.9%*	(Sirovatka 2003)
2010	Romania	50.0%*	(Flanagin 2014)
2011	Romania	33.0%*	(Messing 2014)
2011	Romania	51.0%*	(Ionescu, Banu 2015)
2012	Poland	90%*	(Swietek 2013)

* Roma population aged 15-64 years from segregated localities

Conclusion

The results of our analysis show that primarily the unemployment in segregated localities must be urgently addressed. In other cases, Roma unemployment is higher than that of the non-Roma population, but the difference is not so sharp. The main causes of unemployment of the minority seem to consist primarily in social exclusion, not in ethnicity as such. A unified methodology for measuring of the degree of unemployment would contribute to deeper understanding of the issue in question.

Acknowledgment

The work presented in this paper has been supported by the project Nr. 2018/8110/005 „Specific Approaches to Roma Employees“ Internal grant competition of The Institute of Technology and Business in Ceske Budejovice.

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