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EDITORIAL

BY JARMILA LAJČÁKOVÁ

When Slovaks speak of those who form the majority in Slovakia, their identity is seldom specified. The reason is that Slovaks believe they represent normality in this country. The others are either of Hungarian or Romani origin. For most Slovaks, they represent an issue, a case or a problem. Since Slovaks are often convinced about their own superiority and their universal truth, they often tend to usurp the right to solve the "other". The conviction that one may solve 'the other', in particularly the Roma, is present equally in pub or parliamentary discussions.

This deeply-rooted feeling of superiority is often abused by members of the ruling political elite who have the power not only to set the rules but especially to define why the others must be 'dealt with'. Several articles featured in the latest edition of *Minority Policy in Slovakia* suggest that it is very convenient for politicians to present others as a threat. This state of affairs allows politicians to put themselves in a position of heroes who "protect" the majority enabling them to maintain popularity and remain in power. Logically, the measures they propose are not aimed at eliminating structural disparities or disadvantages of minorities but on protecting the majority and its interests.

But there is also another story about minority and majority. While it does not change the existing dichotomy of categories, it is based on respect of every individual as an equal human being who should have the right to lead a dignified life. The articles discussing local policies reveal that there are local leaders in Slovakia who have chosen this path. Instead of building walls, they strive to adopt policies and measures aimed at

NEWLY INTRODUCED POLICY TOWARDS THE ROMA: YET ANOTHER MISUNDERSTOOD INTEGRATION?

BY JARMILA LAJČÁKOVÁ & ELENA GALLOVÁ KRIGLEROVÁ

In the previous edition of *Minority Policy in Slovakia*,[1] we discussed ideological and institutional changes in the area of minority rights protection introduced by the Robert Fico administration that took power after the early parliamentary elections last March. Part of the changes was transferring the patronage over the Office of Government Plenipotentiary for Romani Communities within the cabinet. While in the previous electoral term the Office reported directly to the prime minister, after the most recent elections it was transferred under the auspices of a single ministerial department, which (very symptomatically) is the Ministry of Interior. Therefore, it was little surprise that basic pillars of government's official policy with respect to the Roma, which were formulated and recently presented by newly-appointed Government Plenipotentiary for Romani Communities Peter Pollák, are built primarily on the foundation of security.

REDEFINING SOCIAL EXCLUSION AS A SECURITY ISSUE

The pillars of the proposed strategy seem to accept efforts to redefine the issue of social exclusion as the issue of good neighbourly relations and security. This shows not only through the document's general rhetoric, which uses various proxy categories such as "maladjusted", "problematic" or "risky" population group to refer to segregated Roma. The principal priority to protect public order is also present in proposed goals that clearly bear the manuscript of a power department.

While this rhetoric with respect to the Roma may be radical, it is a perfectly logical consequence of developments that took place over the past several years. As the maiden edition of *Minority Policy in Slovakia* observed in April 2011, former Interior Minister Daniel Lipšic together with his advisor for Romani criminality elaborated a policy aimed at eliminating this *de facto* recognized crime category with the help of special maps. The rhetoric used by Lucia Nicholsonová, former state secretary at the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family who repeatedly spoke of a ticking time bomb referring to the so-called Roma issue, advocating free sterilizations of Romani women, abuse of the welfare benefits system and one hot meal per day as the minimum standard for maladjusted Roma also seemed to support the thesis that the Roma represent a demographic and economic threat to society.

In recent years, a large number of local and municipal self-governments grew increasingly fond of radical solutions of coexistence and security problems by building walls designed to separate local Romani and non-Romani residents or demolishing illegal dwellings of deprived Roma. As we also noted in our newsletter, securitization of the Roma and stimulation of hostile attitudes toward the Roma was significantly catalyzed by several political parties' election campaigning at the turn of 2011-2012. The problem was escalated by activities of right-wing extremists or the media, which blew up certain stories involving Roma (e.g. a neighbourhood dispute in Malacky) beyond all proportions.

Last but not least, we believe that the generally negative situation was further aggravated by (possibly) *well-intended campaigning* of international players, for instance the World Bank, which overemphasized the argument for Roma inclusions by stressing the economic costs of social exclusion. Basically, their main argument was that adoption of measures aimed at elimi-

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1   Jarmila Lajčáková, "Ideological and Institutional Changes to Minority Policy", *Minority Policy in Slovakia* No. 2/2012, p.1; available at: http://www.cvek.sk/uploaded/files/Mensinova%20politika%20na%20 Slovensku%202_2012.pdf

increasing minority members' chances to become full-fledged members of the broader community. These examples of local leaders' positive attitudes illustrate that political popularity may not necessarily be based on encouraging the feelings of anxiety and intolerance. But most importantly, they show that such an alternative path exists.

Perhaps due to the economic crisis, the feelings of superiority have been mixed and exaggerated with feelings of anxiety and economic insecurity. It is therefore much more important for us to tell and spread the story of respect, equality, opportunity and partnership.

I wish you pleasant and inspiring reading.

nating social exclusion is necessary not because every human being has the right to be treated as equal and as a human being but because it is simply too costly for government and the majority not to include certain groups. Along the lines of this logic, one could conclude that special schools are bad because they cost too much and their graduates do not contribute to the welfare system. In all its pragmatism, the World Bank appealed to the interests of the majority (i.e. economic risks ensuing from social exclusion) instead of the right of Romani children to education.

SECURITIZATION OF THE ISSUE HINDERS DISCUSSION AND ENCOURAGES VIOLENCE

The document clearly revealed the incumbent administration's rhetoric and inclination toward power policies, corroborating our thesis that the main problem is not social exclusion, poverty or segregation of some Roma but protection of majority population against crime and breaking the so-called common rules by maladjusted individuals. As we have repeatedly pointed out in previous editions of our newsletter, such redefinition of the issue at hand may become extremely dangerous. Once convinced it is threatened, the majority demands repression and protection. It is plain to see that this atmosphere of anxiety suits politicians across the spectrum who like to portray themselves as "protectors of the majority" and submit increasingly radical and simplistic solutions such as facilitating demolition of illegal Romani dwellings, reducing welfare benefits, spying on how Romani families provide for their children or taking away boarding allowances because of unexcused classes at school.

"The proposed strategy clearly revealed the incumbent administration's rhetoric and inclination toward power policies, corroborating our thesis that the main problem is not social exclusion, poverty or segregation of some Roma but protection of majority population against crime and breaking the so-called common rules by maladjusted individuals. The atmosphere of fear and anxiety effectively prevents any meaningful discussion about the necessity to adopt measures that might help some Roma to escape from the vicious circle of social exclusion."

The atmosphere of fear and anxiety effectively prevents any meaningful discussion about the necessity to adopt measures that might help some Roma to escape from the vicious circle of social exclusion. The examples of good practice at the local level that are also discussed in this edition of *Minority Policy in Slovakia* suggest that the correct path toward a solution is the long and hard one that is based on creating opportunities, not the short and easy one that is based on repression. Available surveys corroborate that, for instance in the field of educa-

tion, enforcing desirable behaviour via financially coercive measures has had no effects on improving education of Romani children.[2] On the other hand, securitization and related restrictions directly encourage interethnic tension and violence.

RESPECT AND PARTNERSHIP AS THE WAY OUT OF EXCLUSION

The minority policy advocated by the Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture is based on the need to view members of minorities and their rights from the viewpoint of justice and respect for individuals' human dignity and equality, not from the viewpoint of protecting the majority or its economic interests. We believe that the basic precondition to adopting and implementing such policy is redefining Slovakia as a multicultural country that is not inhabited solely by ethnic Slovaks. Other conditions include eliminating the stigma of affiliation to certain minorities and recognizing every individual as an equal human being with specific sources of individual identity determined by ethnicity, gender, social or economic status. An equitable minority policy must not be based on perceiving minorities as "the object of solution" but on creating partnerships and sharing the power to decide on public affairs.

"An equitable minority policy must not be based on perceiving minorities as "the object of solution" but on creating partnerships and sharing the power to decide on public affairs. The basic precondition to adopting and implementing such policy is redefining Slovakia as a multicultural country that is not inhabited solely by ethnic Slovaks. Other conditions include eliminating the stigma of affiliation to certain minorities and recognizing every individual as an equal human being with specific sources of individual identity."

We believe that stigmatization of the Roma and labelling them as inferior inhabitants of this country is one of the greatest barriers to their chance to live free and dignified lives and escape from the trap of exclusion and dependence on the power of 'Gadjes'. Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor convincingly argued that recognition is not a favour owed to the other but a fundamental human need. On the other hand, the refusal to view a person as equal may be harmful to that person; such individuals often tend to internalize feelings of inferiority, which according to many human rights movements subsequently becomes the strongest tool of their own oppression, causing them to lose faith in their capacities and eventually to fail. Segregated and special schools are not bad because they are costly but because from the very early age they cultivate the feeling of superiority in one group of children and the feeling of inferiority in another. Along the same logic, by forcing children from so-called risky families to attend kindergartens (regardless of their quality) or spend entire days in

"Segregated and special schools are not bad because they are costly but because from the very early age they cultivate the feeling of superiority in one group of children and the feeling of inferiority in another. Along the same logic, by forcing children from so-called risky families to attend kindergartens (regardless of their quality) government will not solve the problem of stigmatization; on the contrary, it may even aggravate it."

2 Eben Friedman, Elena Gallová Kriglerová, Mária Herzog, Laura Surdu: *Assessing Conditional Cash Transfers as a Tool for Reducing the Gap in Educational Outcomes between Roma and non-Roma* (Budapest: Roma Education Fund, 2009); available at: http://www.romanis.eu/fileadmin/media/pdf/FriedmanEtal_CCTs_WP4.pdf

schools, government will not solve the problem of stigmatization; on the contrary, it may even aggravate it.

Especially from this aspect, the rhetoric used by the new government plenipotentiary for Romani communities is a disappointment. Although Peter Pollák openly declares Romani origin, his political communication seems to acknowledge the old "Gadje" argument that the Roma are inferior and must play the game they did not invent and adapt to its rules they had no say in creating. In his public statements, Pollák does not attempt to change the concept of a 'normal person'; on the contrary, he seems to have accepted the notion that a normal person is 'white' and behaves like one. The gist of the reform he has begun to promote (which will be gradually analyzed by the coming editions of our newsletter) is basically applying government's coercive tools to force the Roma to behave like 'white' people, because only then they will become worthy of respect a human being deserves.

INTEGRATION SLOVAK WAY: ASSIMILATION OR SEGREGATION

The newly-proposed policy document also indicates that the Slovaks are either unable or unwilling to create space for inclusion of the other. The precondition to integration or inclusion is allowing individuals to be full-fledged members of the community without surrendering their ethnic or language identities. The burden of integration must not be shared only by the minority but first and foremost by the majority, which has control over power and money that may either eliminate or strengthen the barriers hindering minority members' access to the majority's institutions.

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On the other hand, some of the proposed priorities (e.g. in the field of education) are highly assimilative as they assume that Romani as a mother tongue is an obstacle to education that should be 'removed' via children's compulsory pre-school education in Slovak kindergartens. In this respect, the proposed reform brings nothing new as this is one of the principal ambitions of so-called zero grades at primary schools; it merely aggravates this strongly assimilative interference with children's natural development by lowering the age limit even further. This argument is presented in greater detail in a publication examining schools' measures with respect to Romani children the CVEK is about to release. Besides, as many examples from distant as well as near past suggest, forced assimilation is not only unfair and immoral, it is also very difficult to implement. Since poor Romani children will find it extremely difficult to escape racial categorization applied in Slovak schools, it is more likely that these attempts will merely deepen the existing level of segregation.

Some non-governmental activists and academics are willing to accept the newly-presented rhetoric in return for good policies that may get implemented under the guise of repression and restoring 'order'. From this viewpoint, perhaps the key question is how much funds, if any at all, is the incumbent administration willing to invest into quality and effective policies, which cost money. So far, public statements by the policy's authors have not indicated that they have funds ready to be allocated to good measures. When it comes to financing the proposed measures, they use rather superficial formulations or plain clichés that reveal their complete lack of any idea of how to procure them. At this point, we need not discuss whether such measures should be implemented or not, as government pledged to implement them by adopting several integration strategies in the past. The new government plenipotentiary should now focus on how to implement them on the large scale so that they do not get crippled in the administrative jungle of local authorities, which was the case of the institution of teaching assistants.

One must admit, though, that the strategy is deadly specific about one thing: the way of cutting the funds earmarked to support the poorest. Their detailed formulations suggest that these proposals will be implemented rather swiftly. Their principal goal is to enforce 'order' by reducing what the poor are entitled to as citizens of this country. We have a fairly precise idea of where such radical cuts lead since 2004, when former minister of labour, social affairs and family Ľudovít Kaník put through a reform that reduced all welfare benefits by almost a half. As a direct result, most Roma sunk to even greater poverty and the gap between them and the rest of society widened even further, strengthening interethnic tension.

The question is whether such compromise on the part of experts is worth acceptance of racism. ◼

TEN PILLARS OF THE REFORM PROPOSED BY PETER POLLÁK

1. The form and amount of welfare assistance provided by government as well as government's approach to citizens shall carefully take into account citizens' approach to their families, society and state.

2. Government shall systematically evaluate the level of risk a family constitutes to sound development of its children and shall adjust the form and degree of its intervention accordingly.

3. Government shall stipulate clear critical criteria of assessing municipalities' riskiness; as soon as these criteria have been fulfilled, government shall directly ensure performance of particular auxiliary professions (e.g. teaching assistants, social fieldworkers, health care assistants or police specialists) in the municipality.

4. Government cannot rely on irresponsible parents raising responsible children. Government shall ensure proper education of irresponsible parents' children before they enter primary schools.

5. Government's ambition is not to educate children that have completed compulsory school attendance but children that are employable on the labour market.

6. Government shall stipulate the minimum scope of *community* works a socially dependent citizen must perform in order to become eligible to the motivational portion of welfare benefits. Slovakia is not wealthy enough a country to hand out money to people who are fit to work.

7. Government shall adjust the social security system in order to avoid situations when not working is more profitable than going to work.

8. Government shall compensate owners of land on which it allowed emergence of illegal settlements in the past. Subsequently, the land shall be offered for identical prices to its current users whose illegal dwellings shall be removed from the land if they fail to buy the land within the set time limit.

9. Government shall not automatically disburse housing allowance to all real estate owners and tenants but only to people who respect their lawful obligations and refrain from transgressions and criminal offences, regardless of their relation to the property.

10. Government shall introduce measures aimed at taking away transgression immunity from socially dependent citizens who are currently able to perpetrate transgressions with impunity.

SUCCESSFUL ROMA INTEGRATION VIA CREATING OPPORTUNITIES, NOT REPRESSION

BY JARMILA LAJČÁKOVÁ

The European Commission (EC) together with the Open Society Foundations (OSF) based in Budapest perceives local self-governments as key players in the process of integrating poor Romani communities. In 2012, the OSF program titled "Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma Inclusion" established Mayors for Roma Inclusion (MERI), an international network of local leaders divided into national branches. Main ambitions of the network include encouraging local self-governance bodies to exchange experience with this issue as well as amplifying their voice in the process of shaping policies aimed at Roma integration on the national and European level.

As one of the network's first initiatives, the EC and OSF in May 2012 jointly organized an international competition of good examples of local policies aimed at integrating poor Romani communities, nominating a total of 104 case studies from 15 European countries. The national selection commission comprising representatives of the Roma Institute, the Association of Slovak Towns and Villages, the Slovak Governance Institute and the People in Need humanitarian organization assessed the submitted case studies based on the following criteria: (1) sustainability and municipality's involvement in adopting measures aimed at integrating poor Romani communities; (2) long-term commitment to preferring integrated approach to key areas of housing, employment, education, health and community work; (3) furthering policies of non-discrimination; (4) endeavour to make members of the target group involved in decision-making on municipal affairs, particularly on concrete programs and measures that concern the Roma.

The national selection commission nominated eight municipalities from Slovakia, namely Čičava, Nitra nad Ipľom, Spišský Hrhov, Spišské Tomášovce, Raslavice, Sveržov, Ulič and Zbudské Dlhé. The international expert commission subsequently assessed all nominated case studies in two rounds, selecting 55 best municipalities including all Slovak nominees that advanced into the second round. In the end, four entries from Slovakia were awarded: Spišský Hrhov and Nitra nad Ipľom in the "Complex Approach" category and Čičava and Raslavice in the "Housing Policies" category.

WHAT DO MUNICIPALITIES THAT SUCCEEDED IN INTEGRATING THEIR ROMANI COMMUNITIES HAVE IN COMMON?

Although none of the nominated Slovak municipalities has completely integrated their Romani communities and fully eliminated social and economic disparities between Romani and non-Romani neighbours, they have successfully launched the process of Roma inclusion, which has brought concrete results in terms of improving their housing and education standards or increasing their employment. The involved local council chairpersons succeeded primarily thanks to the courage to adopt long-term measures aimed at creating better opportunities for poor Roma in the field of housing, education and employment as well as to make members of the target group involved in decision-making processes. Most nominated municipalities have managed to build flourishing integrated communities that are attractive to non-Romani as well as Romani newcomers (e.g. Spišské Tomášovce, Sveržov, Spišský Hrhov, Čičava or Nitra nad Ipľom).

The nominated municipalities are quite diverse in terms of the starting position of local Romani communities in 1989, economic activity within the region, size of population, and the share of Romani inhabitants, which fluctuates from 14 to 90 percent. The readers of *Minority Policy in Slovakia* will certainly be interested in common hallmarks of local strategies, policies and measures that might reveal more on why these municipalities, unlike a vast majority of others, successfully embarked on a journey that promises gradual elimination of their poor Romani inhabitants' marginalization. So, what do the eight successful municipalities have in common?

1. LEADERS' STRONG PERSONALITY AND COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING THE STANDARD OF LIVING IN THE ENTIRE MUNICIPALITY

Most importantly, local council chairpersons in all successful municipalities are strongly committed to adopting strategic measures aimed at helping equalize poor Romani communities' chances in access to housing, education or employment. While they may not have always been motivated by moral arguments or human rights reasons, their principal driving force was the understanding that existence of a poor community in their municipality may slow down its overall development.

Particularly interesting is the case of Ulič, a small village near Slovakia's border with Ukraine. When asked why he decided to support programs aimed at improving the situation of the local Romani community, Local Council Chairman Ján Holinka said: "To be honest, it was mostly for pragmatic reasons. Most young non-Roma have moved to larger towns and left the older generation behind. Virtually the only inhabitants in productive age are local Roma. Therefore, it was in my vital interest to mobilize the potential of local Romani workforce to sustain the municipality's overall development." Most programs introduced and furthered by Holinka are aimed at increasing employment through operation of a local sheltered workshop. Currently, Holinka is working on a plan to establish a social enterprise. The village of Ulič also runs a kindergarten and a primary school; both are attended by children from Romani as well as non-Romani community.

Most successful mayors have been able to find pragmatic arguments to convince their (prevailingly) non-Romani voters that they stand to benefit from supporting local Romani communities. "The successful local council chairpersons convinced the majority that the entire municipality might prosper not only from the funds allocated to facilitating integration of local Roma but from the very fact that they are integrated," said Mirka Hapalová from the People In Need organisation. "Once convinced, members of the majority did not hamper integration processes."

According to Pavol Ceľuch, the mayor of Sveržov, it was not always easy. "After a great number of fruitless attempts, we finally obtained a state budget subsidy for the construction of low-standard flats for Romani families, which coincided with the 650th anniversary of our village's foundation. I was shocked by majority inhabitants' negative response to this news, which I considered fantastic. Had elections been held the next day, I would have probably lost against any other candidate. Fortunately, I was backed up by local council members, although I know they had problems at home for it."

Zuzana Nebusová, the mayor of Spišské Tomášovce, has a similar experience: "Non-Roma residents often argue that I help Roma too much," she said. "I keep explaining to them that this village

won't have good life unless Roma live on the same level as non-Roma."

The fact that the local leaders have managed to convince the majority may be illustrated by their repeated re-election, even in municipalities where the Roma make up less than 20 percent of the population. The Sveržov mayor has held his post since 1994 while mayors of Spišský Hrhov and Spišské Tomášovce have been in office since 1998. The leaders of other nominated municipalities who actively furthered fair Roma integration policies are also serving at least their second term in office.

2. CLOSE COOPERATION WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Like on the national level, non-governmental organizations initiated or were instrumental in implementing a great number of successful projects also on the local level. For instance, the village of Spišský Hrhov operates one of very few inclusive schools in Slovakia, which is the result of cooperation between local self-government and People In Need, organization that also helped establish a municipal enterprise in Spišský Hrhov and a community centre in Sveržov. The village of Raslavice cooperated with Friends of the Earth Slovakia in building a composting plant that has not only improved environmental protection on the local level but also helped create jobs for local Roma. The Roma Institute, for its part, has helped municipalities of Nitra nad Ipľom, Raslavice or Ulič draft local strategies of complex development and its experts were instrumental in establishing communication between local Romani communities and local political leaders.

Mayors in successful municipalities benefit from non-governmental organizations' know-how especially in the field of education, community fieldwork and activities aimed at promoting coexistence of Roma and non-Roma. "The community centre was a gift from heaven!" said Pavol Ceľuch. "I urge every municipality to invest into such a facility." Both Romani and non-Romani adults and children from the village actively participate in the centre's activities.

"One of the common denominators of successful municipalities is that their leaders strive in the long term to make the most out of available systemic tools designed to facilitate inclusion of the Roma, particularly social fieldwork, construction of low-standard flats, training of teaching and health assistants or development of community centres."

3. APPLICATION OF AVAILABLE SYSTEMIC TOOLS OF ROMA INCLUSION

Another common denominator of successful municipalities is that their leaders strive in the long term to make the most out of available systemic tools specifically designed to facilitate inclusion of the Roma, particularly social fieldwork, construction of low-standard flats, training of teaching and health assistants or development of community centres.

4. PREFERRING A COMPLEX APPROACH TO ROMA INCLUSION

In the long term, most nominated and all awarded municipalities further a complex approach to Roma inclusion. The philosophy of complex approach to development of marginalized Romani communities is based on the need to create opportunities in key areas such as housing, education, employment, health or community work.[1] The gist of the complex approach is creating a synergic effect

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1 The complex approach was first introduced by *Complex Development Program for Romani Settlements*, a policy document that was adopted as

by pursuing activities in all key areas at the same time. It won't help much if the village solves the problem of, say, education but the children do not live in dignified conditions, they do not have access to health care and their parents stand no chance to find jobs.

Naturally, none of the municipalities has optimally managed to tackle problems in all areas. For instance, municipalities' tools to increase employment are particularly limited in the time of global economic crisis. Nevertheless, mayors in all nominated municipalities strove to adopt synergic measures in all key areas, although some of them were at times preferred over others.

At the heart of the complex approach lies not repression but endeavour to create opportunities. In the field of housing, for instance, such opportunities ensued from participating in construction

"In the long term, most nominated and all awarded municipalities further a complex approach to Roma inclusion. At its heart lies not repression but endeavour to create opportunities. In the field of housing, for instance, such opportunities ensued from participating in construction of low-standard flats and getting a chance to improve one's standard of living, getting a chance to purchase land for the construction of family houses for a symbolic price, or participation in recycling and other environmental programs."

of low-standard flats and getting a chance to improve one's standard of living (e.g. in Čičava, Spišský Hrhov or Spišské Tomášovce), getting a chance to purchase land for the construction of family houses for a symbolic price (e.g. in Raslavice or Nitra nad Ipľom), or participation in recycling and other environmental programs (e.g. in Raslavice).

As far as employment goes, opportunities ensued primarily from working for municipal enterprises (e.g. in Sveržov or Spišský Hrhov). The local council chairman in Čičava came up with an innovative approach by persuading the company that developed municipal infrastructure to hire local Roma, most of whom were unemployed in the long term.

In the field of education, the basic success formula was creating opportunities for local Roma to enrol their children in local kindergartens. Romani children's participation in pre-school education was not achieved via threats and sanctions but via close cooperation between community and social fieldworkers on the one hand and Romani parents on the other. Leaders of all nominated municipalities actively strive to prevent placing of Romani children into special classes and schools. A perfect example is a primary school in Spišský Hrhov whose playground is peacefully shared by Romani and non-Romani children, which unfortunately is a very unique sight, especially in East Slovakia but also elsewhere. The mayor of Sveržov also actively intervened against segregationist tendencies at the local primary school.

5. APPLICATION OF AVAILABLE LEGAL TOOLS AND PROGRAMS TO FURTHER ROMA INCLUSION

Another common denominator of successful municipalities is that they actively strive to make the most of all available legal tools and

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Slovak Government Resolution No. 357/2002. The complex approach has also been reflected in the model of drawing financial aid from EU structural funds in the programming period of 2007-2013 via the horizontal priority of marginalized Romani communities. As part of the priority, government allocated €200 million from six operational programs to projects approved within the framework of so-called local strategies of complex approach. Unfortunately, the complex approach as the model of drawing financial aid from European funds has never been implemented in practice; however, the leaders of concerned municipalities implemented the complex approach in the sense that they focused on adopting measures in all key areas simultaneously, although they were unable to draw the allocated funds in a synergic way.

programs that may be used to further Roma integration (i.e. not the tools that are specifically designed to help poor Roma). For instance, all examined municipalities have managed to settle most ownership rights pertaining to municipal land; the average rate for all municipalities involved exceeded 80 percent. Local leaders used various strategies to achieve their goal; they either bought out private land under Romani dwellings or exchanged it for other municipal land and subsequently sold it to Romani families for affordable prices. Nebušová remembers: "It was meticulous work. I helped every single family. We would go together to the public notary's office and settle all legal aspects, one by one."

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The mayor of Spišský Hrhov Vladimír Ledecký personally visited all original land owners in order to explain to them why they should sell their land under Romani dwellings. He went door to door with a suitcase full of cash and contracts ready to be signed, buying out land for the municipality on the spot. He still remembers the magical formula that helped him convince the land owners: "Either you accept this offer of mine or you will always be morally responsible for preferring your individual interests over those of the entire community," he said.

The mayor in Nitra nad Ipľom applied the legal instrument of usucaption while leaders in Čičava created a burden of the easement during infrastructure development. "We used all legal possibilities and legislative loopholes in order to settle ownership rights to the land," said Ladislav Kalafa, the mayor of Čičava. Obviously, this common hallmark of involved local leaders is very closely related to their first characteristic, i.e. the good will to act in favour of inclusion processes, which were launched more than a decade ago.

Several municipalities founded municipal enterprises that helped them give jobs to long-term unemployed local Roma whose chances to find jobs would otherwise near zero. Municipal enterprises do not only create new jobs but also serve as centres where local Roma can regain working habits and receive retraining. The municipal enterprise in Sveržov specializes in building low-standard flats. In Spišský Hrhov it has become the principal engine of municipal development. During the initial phase, it purchased a technology to lay paving stones and employed local Roma to pave sidewalks around the village. In a way, it also helped eliminate prejudices. "The fact that non-Romani inhabitants saw local Roma lay slabs in Spišský Hrhov day after day significantly helped undermine stereotypes about Romani laziness and reluctance to work," said Hapalová. The villages of Ulič and Čičava, for their part, operate sheltered workshops to employ local Roma who are jobless in the long term.

6. INVESTING OWN FUNDS INTO ROMA INCLUSION PROGRAMS

The examined villages are willing to invest municipal funds into programs aimed at including Roma and working with poor Romani communities. They do not hesitate to invest their own funds into buying out private land under Romani dwellings, operating community centres or financing salaries of teaching assistants. Of course, all successful municipalities also use external sources of financing such as state budget subsidy schemes via various ministries or financial aid from EU structural funds, which they are willing to co-finance from their own budgets.

7. GETTING LOCAL ROMA INVOLVED IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

Participation in decision-making is the key to the inclusion process. It signalizes that Romani inhabitants have become active players as opposed to mere objects of interventions and various experiments of local self-governments or the national government. The most successful integrated municipalities have managed to create conditions for participation of local Roma in decision-making, not only on matters that concern them but also on matters that concern entire villages. Generally speaking, this positive shift came about as a result of local Romani communities' recent political mobilization. In Nitra nad Ipľom, most local council members including the chairman are of Romani origin. In Čičava and Zbudské Dlhé, the Roma control 100 percent of the local council. Mayor of Sveržov regularly consults leaders of the Romani community regarding social life in the village and Roma inclusion programs. In Spišský Hrhov, a Roma council acts as an advisory body of the local council.

> *"The most successful integrated municipalities have managed to create conditions for participation of local Roma in decision-making, not only on matters that concern them but also on matters that concern entire villages. Participation in decision-making is the key to the inclusion process. It signalizes that Romani inhabitants have become active players as opposed to mere objects of interventions and various experiments of local self-governments or the national government."*

The experience of successful municipalities shows that self-governments can play the pivotal role in the process of including poor Romani communities. Although it is certainly a long-term process that will take several generations of concentrated effort, it is plain to see that some municipalities managed to launch inclusion processes over the past decade or so. In my opinion, there is a fair chance that the long-term integration process will be completed by future generations of Romani children who will graduate from secondary schools and universities and perhaps move out to larger cities that offer better prospects to find jobs.

On the other hand, self-governments are not capable of doing everything. Therefore, an important precondition to the eventual success of inclusion processes is properly set policies on the national level. All leaders of examined municipalities agreed that these policies are often out of touch with reality and fail to respond to actual needs on the local level. They were particularly critical about the impossibility to make procurers of public services hire local unemployed Roma. Also, the current setting of the social security system hinders efforts to increase employment as it does not allow for sufficient combination of welfare benefits and the minimum wage. The problem is that when one family member becomes gainfully employed, many families actually see their total income decline compared to what it was when that one member was jobless.

Last but not least, municipal inclusion programs are also hampered by the excessive administrative burden related to submitting and implementing various projects, especially those co-financed from EU structural funds. Hopefully, the positive example set by the examined municipalities will convince politicians and bureaucrats to turn an attentive ear to the needs of local leaders and prepare the ground for launching inclusion of one of Slovakia's most vulnerable population groups on a more massive scale. ■

"THERE'S NO LIFE HERE"
WHY DO THE ROMA LEAVE?

BY ALENA CHUDŽÍKOVÁ

In summer months of 2012, the Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture (CVEK) took part in a pilot survey examining Romani migration do Canada that was coordinated by the Central European University based in Budapest. Besides providing deeper insight into the motives and methods of Romani migration, the survey revealed or rather confirmed several disturbing phenomena pertaining to stereotypization and stigmatization of the Roma in general and Romani migration in particular. The chief ambition of this article was not to present the survey's complex findings as those will be summed up in the final publication the Central European University is planning to issue by the end of this year. The main goal of this article was to use a concrete example to discuss stigmatization of the Roma that takes place on a more general level and forms one of the most essential barriers to their inclusion.

The field research was carried out in Smižany, the largest Slovakia's village that recently witnessed something of an exodus as about 200 of its Romani residents decided to leave for Canada in early 2012. Their choice of Canada as the country of destination was apparently the result of rationally assessing the chances of tackling their situation. According to information supplied by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, a total of 329 Slovak citizens officially applied for asylum in the country in 2011; in the same year, twelve such applications were turned down while only three were granted. Although there are no data on applicants' ethnicity, it is widely assumed that most asylum seekers from Slovakia, if not all of them, are Roma. Canada's asylum system provides newcomer migrants with a certain level of protection, at least during the initial stage of their stay in the country. Although the chances to obtain asylum near zero for applicants from Slovakia, which is classified as a safe country of origin, the asylum seeker status provides better foothold than the uncertain status of ordinary migrant worker, especially for migrants who arrive with their families, mostly because asylum seekers are free to look at least for temporary jobs while they await decisions on their applications.

REASONS FOR MIGRATION

The departure of the Roma from Smižany could not escape attention of the media that soon began to question their motives and accuse them of disloyalty to their homeland. While these issues dominated the entire media discourse that unfolded, no one seemed to be interested in true reasons why such a sizeable part of the Smižany population had chosen to seek asylum in a country across the Atlantic. That is why we decided to examine these reasons ourselves.

As one would expect, it turned out that the main reason of the Smižany Roma to leave their homeland was their bleak socio-economic situation; moreover, the increasingly radical attitudes to the Roma on the part of the general public as well as the political elite have thwarted any prospects for its future improvement. Located in the region plagued by nearly 20-percent unemployment, Smižany offer virtually no employment opportunities to local Roma. Since they have practically no influence over shaping policies and adopting measures that concern them directly or indirectly (be it on the local or the national level), they depend on the majority's willingness to "let them into its living space".

Another major reason for the exodus was the housing situation of local Roma. Today, one can seldom find a house in the Romani neighbourhood of Smižany that would be inhabited by a single nuclear family. Most Romani dwellings have gradually evolved into multi-generation homes, not in terms of size but number of families that are forced to live together because they cannot afford to live separately. After various fruitless attempts to solve their socio-economic situation (e.g. labour migration to other regions of Slovakia or improving their qualifications), migration abroad has become another active strategy of local Roma to escape the vicious circle of poverty.

NO CHANCE OF CROSSING THE "COLONY" BOUNDARIES

The Roma from Smižany hope to use the money their relatives send from Canada to build new houses or refurbish existing ones. To them, migration is a way out of completely hopeless housing situation in Slovakia. As one of our female respondents put it, *"there's no life here"*. On the other hand, it is interesting that most local Roma view migration only as a way of improving socio-economic status within their own community and do not expect to be accepted by the majority and cross the boundaries of the so-called Romani colony. According to them, it is unthinkable for a Roma to buy or build a house among non-Roma as they will simply not allow it. For them, the "colony" represents a historically demarcated territory on which they are allowed to exist. Therefore, any notion of climbing up the social ladder is restricted to their own world, which in Slovakia is strictly segregated from the world of the "white".

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PRESUMED GUILTY

Although the Roma view migration primarily as a vehicle to achieving what the majority continues to urge them to (i.e. "provide for themselves through their own effort and earn higher standard of living"), the feeling of guilt for doing something wrong by leaving could be perceived in each respondent's testimony. The Roma have become very sensitive to the belief widely shared by the majority that the only motive for Romani migration to western countries is the intention to abuse their generous social security systems and thus spoil "Slovakia's good image abroad". Out interviews not only failed to corroborate such motive but they directly disproved it. All interviewed Roma stressed their intention to earn an honest living abroad and consistently emphasized that they had complied with

> *"Presumption of guilt on the part of the majority makes the Roma identify internally with this stigma and begin to underrate their possibilities and capacities. Unfortunately, the majority rarely views the Roma as a heterogeneous population group. Instead of showing willingness to revise their stereotypical notions of the Roma, those Roma who do not fit these concepts are simply excluded from this category with the argument that 'they are not even Roma'."*

all formal conditions prior to their departure (e.g. informing the police of their change of domicile or signing out of the social security system). As if they yearned to avoid in advance all accusations the majority might potentially bring against them.

This presumption of guilt on the part of the majority makes the Roma identify internally with this stigma and begin to underrate their possibilities and capacities. At the same time, they accept the concept of "maladjusted Gypsies" from whom they desperately seek disassociation by striving to prove that they are decent citizens. Unfortunately, the majority rarely views the Roma as a heterogeneous population group. Instead of showing willingness to revise their stereotypical notions of the Roma, those Roma who do not fit these concepts are simply excluded from this category with the argument that "they are not even Roma".[1] The gap between the majority and the Roma thus grows wider and becomes increasingly difficult to cross.

Stigmatization is one of the most essential reasons for the failure of any policy measures aimed at including the Roma. With respect to the Roma, we may speak of double stigmatization as they are stigmatized not only because of their ethnicity but also due to the high unemployment and poverty a part of them live in. While Erving Goffman defines ethnic stigma as so-called tribal stigma,[2] unemployment and poverty tend to be perceived as a character defect. In the eyes of the majority, poverty and unemployment of the significant part of the Romani population represents an individual (perhaps even moral) failure as it is considered a direct result of their unwillingness to work hard to earn an honest living. This notion is reproduced by the media, which rarely address structural reasons for Romani poverty and if so, they tend to disparage or even question them (e.g. discrimination against the Roma on the labour market or within education system). Even worse, political leaders in recent years grew increasingly fond of radical social policy reforms that are based on the premise that all poor people are lazy and therefore fail to tackle the problem of poverty and unemployment in a complex manner; instead, their restrictive measures focus exclusively on "forcing the lazy to work".

Self-identified stigmatization, lack of respect on the part of the majority and fear are among principal reasons for the Roma to leave the country at least temporarily. One female respondent described her relatives' lifestyle in Toronto in the following way: *"They even go out. So far, they have not run into any troubles."*

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1   This phenomenon has been described by Ľuboš Kovács and Martin Kanovský in their article "Perceptions of the Roma and Shaping of Public Policies: A Report on Survey Findings". For further details, please see *Minority Policy in Slovakia* No. 2/2012; available at: http://cvek.sk/uploaded/files/Mensinova%20politika%20na%20Slovensku%202_2012.pdf
2   Goffman, Erving (1963), *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc.

Apparently, the Roma perceive Canada as a promised land where people are not categorized based on ethnicity and where everybody has a chance to lead a decent life as long as they are willing to work hard and abide by the rules. The yearning to be accepted as an equal human being thus plays an important role in deciding whether they should stay in the country or leave abroad. In this respect, it came as a surprise that only few of them actually intend to settle abroad for good. In spite of their difficult situation and increasingly radical attitudes of the majority at home, the eventual return to Slovakia is often part of their strategy. On the other hand, many of them fear that applicable authorities might punish them for their "rebellion" by refusing to reregister them, which is why they emphasize that they have done nothing wrong and have complied with all legal conditions prior to their departure. *"But I believe that if they signed out of the social security system and everywhere else, they must be reregistered when they return, right?"* one of the respondents asked anxiously. *"Not only the Roma have left the country; the white left, too, and even earlier than us."*

The Slovak media repeatedly bring stories of Slovak emigrants who made it big abroad in the past. But while migration of non-Roma is praised as a bold survival strategy, Romani economic migration automatically raises suspicions of wicked intentions, although it is in fact a much riskier path toward a better life. It seems there is simply no way for the Roma to win in Slovakia: if they collect welfare benefits, they are branded as parasites; but if they decide to leave the country, they are accused of intentions to parasitize elsewhere.

The case of the Smižany Roma reflects the overall situation of the Roma in Slovakia and the general attitude of the majority to them: not only their non-Romani neighbours who refuse to "let them in"; not only right-wing extremists who keep them in constant fear by announcing various marches "to give them short shrift"; unfortunately, it is also political leaders who increasingly automatically add the adjective "maladjusted" to the noun "Roma" and then formulate their policy measures accordingly. While it is my qualified guess that we are bound to see many more "Romani reforms" or "strategies", none of them stands a chance to succeed as long as the Roma continue to be accused without reason and convicted without proof. ■

> *"It seems there is simply no way for the Roma to win in Slovakia: if they collect welfare benefits, they are branded as parasites; but if they decide to leave the country, they are accused of intentions to parasitize elsewhere. None of the reforms or strategies of Roma integration stand a chance as long as the Roma continue to be accused without reason and convicted without proof."*

BRUISES THAT KEEP GNAWING SLOVAKIA'S CONSCIENCE

BY JARMILA LAJČÁKOVÁ

In the third quarter of 2012, the main focus of the political and media discourse was on the Romani minority, particularly those of its members who inhabit segregated settlements. However, let me point out that Slovakia has yet to come to terms with two more urgent issues that keep the country's ethnic Hungarians hostage to political populism that comes from both banks of the River Danube.

On August 25, 2012 it had been six years since the infamous attack on Hedviga Žáková Malinová, an ethnic Hungarian student and a Slovak citizen. Despite all the evidence that has been piled up over the past six years, the prosecution continues to question nationalistic motives behind the incident and even whether the attack took place at all.

Zuzana Wienk, a civic activist and Program Director of Fair Play Alliance, poignantly commented that the prosecution's conduct in this case resembled one of prosecution in a totalitarian regime and that government's treatment of Hedviga Žáková Malinová undermined the very foundation of the rule of law in Slovakia.[1] The most recent such step in the totalitarian direction was the prosecution's request to subject Žáková Malinová to psychiatric observation in a mental institution. The prosecution argued that it aimed to establish whether the

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1   Zuzana Wienk, "Dokedy sa budeme prizerať, ako nám kradnú právny štát?" ['How Long Will We Look on While the Rule of Law Is Being Stolen from Us?'], *Sme* daily, August 24, 2012, p. 13.

post-traumatic stress disorder of which Žáková Malinová had suffered after the attack might have affected her testimony at the time. For more than five years, the victim of the attack has been prosecuted for alleged perjury. From the very beginning of police investigation, her attorney demanded that the psychiatrists who diagnosed her with post-traumatic stress disorder be interrogated. Back then, his efforts were in vain. Now, after six years, the prosecution suddenly wants to examine the victim's mental condition. Although both district and regional courts turned down the request, they ruled so on grounds that the prosecution should have tried more consistently to subject Žáková Malinová to outpatient examination, even under the threat of imposing financial fine.[2]

On February 1, 2012, the Iveta Radičová administration reached extrajudicial settlement of the lawsuit Žáková Malinová had filed with the European Court of Human Rights. Her cabinet admitted there were "certain circumstances that invite misgivings regarding respecting the complainant's rights guaranteed by the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms" and expressed "regrets over the case of complainant Hedviga Žáková Malinová".[3] Nevertheless, criminal prosecution of the attack's victim for alleged perjury has never been dropped.

Perhaps it would have been had there been no obstructions on the part of the president to appoint a new general attorney duly elected by parliament which, by the way, is another issue that casts a huge shadow of doubt over existence of the rule of law in Slovakia.

The case of Hedviga Žáková Malinová and the trauma it caused her and her family stands witness to a complete failure of Slovakia's legal system. Unfortunately, the facts of the case indicate it was the victim's ethnic affiliation that essentially influenced the conduct of law enforcement organs throughout the investigation. In my opinion, Hedviga Žáková Malinová may be perceived

not only as the victim of an ethnically motivated crime but also the victim of political populism in Slovakia and Hungary.

While Žáková Malinová and her family are perhaps the most deplorable victims of this populism, they are not alone. Along with Žáková Malinová, populism holds hostage the entire community of ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia who have relatives in Slovakia as well as in Hungary. While they want to feel at home in Slovakia, they see no reason to give up their ties with Hungary. That is why they are often portrayed as disloyal to this country, which often gets reflected not only in rhetoric of most political leaders in Slovakia but also in the diction of the Slovak Constitution and even certain regular laws.

For instance, the amendment to Citizenship Act passed in July 2010,[4] which still applies today, presented ethnic Hungarians with a symbolic ultimatum: either they become loyal Slovak citizens or this country no longer wants them. In this case, loyalty

is defined as exclusive affiliation to the Slovak Republic, which is incompatible to maintaining any symbolic bonds with Hungary. Breaking this bond, which many ethnic Hungarians aim to preserve by opting for dual citizenship, thus becomes the hard-and-fast condition to accepting ethnic Hungarians as full-fledged members of this country's political community. Unfortunately, neither Slovak nor Hungarian government have shown enough good will to eliminate this tension that negatively affects especially ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia.

According to available news reports, the incumbent administration does not even consider the possibility of restoring the legal *status quo* from before July 2010. Instead, it racks its brains over a solution that would allow it not to lose one category of citizens (i.e. ethnic Slovaks who live abroad in the long term) and simultaneously prevent another category citizens (i.e. ethnic Hungarians who live in Slovakia) to "collaborate" with Hungary by opting for dual citizenship. In other words, the incumbent administration views the problem at hand through the prism created by the preamble of the Slovak Constitution, which *de facto* established two categories of Slovak citizens – those who have the right to decide about this country's future fate (i.e. Slovaks as the statehood nation) and those whose future fate and the scope of granted rights depend on the majority (i.e. ethnic minorities). The incumbent administration strives to incorporate this principle directly into Citizenship Act.

Although the case of Hedviga Žáková Malinová and the stalemate regarding dual citizenship did not recently attract as much media attention as the so-called Roma issue, both are highly relevant problems that call for swift and solemn resolution, otherwise they threaten to become bruises that will gnaw Slovakia's conscience for years to come. ▪

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2   Modika Tódová, "Súd zamietol žiadosť o skúmanie Malinovej v ústave" ['Court Rejects Request for Institutional Examination of Malinová'], *Sme* daily, September 26, 2012, p. 2.

3   Slovak Government Resolution No. 35/2012 of February 1, 2012.

4   For further details, please see Jarmila Lajčáková, "How (Not) to Resolve Slovak Citizenship Act", Minority Policy in Slovakia No. 1/2011, p. 3; available at: http://www.cvek.sk/uploaded/files/2011_01_mensinova_politika.pdf

HOW SLOVAK POLITICIANS SPEAK OF IMMIGRANTS

BY KAROLÍNA KOŠČOVÁ

The so-called Copenhagen school of security studies examines securitization of political issues through verbal acts by key actors in a concrete society. A certain phenomenon is verbally portrayed as a threat

and thus becomes an object of the security discourse. If the audience (i.e. the general public) begins to perceive the addressed phenomenon as a threat, the phenomenon becomes securitized. Let us take

a closer look at how relevant Slovak politicians treat the issue of immigration and immigrants. In other words, do their public statements show securitization tendencies?

I have analyzed public statements by leading Slovak politicians since 2004, using media outputs and official documents published by political parties (e.g. election programs and news releases addressing relevant issues), transcripts of legislative debates in the National Council of the Slovak Republic and statements individual political actors made for the two largest non-tabloid daily papers in the country.

"In Slovakia's political discourse migration continues to be perceived as an issue that is closely related to security although recently there have been some isolated attempts to transfer the issue into the realm of social policy."

The analysis of available documents revealed that in Slovakia's political discourse, migration continues to be perceived as an issue that is closely related to security, although recently there have been some isolated attempts to transfer the issue into the realm of social policy. The strong securitization tone of the country's public discourse on this issue has been set particularly by top officials of interior and justice ministries who hailed from the ranks of the conservative Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), namely former ministers Daniel Lipšic and Vladimír Palko who represented the movement's more conservative wing. While one may assume that the palette of views on migration is in fact much more colourful across the political spectrum, the distribution of cabinet posts within the centre-right ruling coalition along with the fact that the public debate on the issue began to unfold largely outside the political mainstream allowed leaders of Christian conservative parties to assume control over the mainstream public discourse.

"There is no respected political leader who would in the long term focus on building a positive public image of foreigners in Slovakia and would have an ambition to pursue a migration policy that is not based on negative perception of immigrants. Equally importantly, politicians do not always distinguish between legal and illegal migrants and tend to view both categories equally negatively."

Another hallmark of the political debate on immigration in Slovakia is the virtual non-existence of a relevant alternative to the dominant Christian conservative take on the subject. There is no respected political leader who would in the long term focus on building a positive public image of foreigners in Slovakia and would have an ambition to pursue a migration policy that is not based on negative perception of immigrants. Equally importantly, politicians do not always distinguish between legal and illegal migrants and tend to view both categories equally negatively.

Election programs and related public documents released by Slovak political parties also indicate that migration is neither urgent nor interesting issue for political communication and/or campaigning. When addressing migration, relevant parties' program documents – with very few exceptions – use general formulations that are completely free of ideas and concrete solutions. For instance, the currently ruling Smer-Social Democracy (Smer-SD) views migration and the country's unfavourable demographic situation as the greatest challenges; on the other hand, it aims to solve these issues through active participation in international institutions or a rather vague commitment to reject xenophobia while failing to specify pro-active means of tackling them on the national level.

Regardless of its legality, political parties also tend to view migration as a security issue, this despite the fact that Slovakia's official policy documents treat migration as an issue that requires a cross-sectional and multi-departmental approach. Before the 2006 parliamentary elections, the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKÚ-DS) placed

migration into its program pillar titled "Secure Slovakia" while the KDH featured it in the chapter titled "Order and Security".

In terms of migration, Ukraine have recently attracted special attention of Slovak political parties' program advisors; with respect to management of migration flows, the country has been explicitly mentioned in election programs of Smer-SD, SDKÚ-DS, KDH and Freedom and Solidarity (SaS).

Political parties' programs reveal a clear trend toward transferring migration issues from the area of internal policy into the agenda that needs to be tackled on the level of integration groupings and international institutions. On the one hand, it is a logical consequence of Slovakia's membership in these groupings and institutions and may be viewed as endeavour for international cooperation; on the other hand, it may also be interpreted as an attempt to edge the agenda out of the sensitive area of internal policy. The KDH was the only relevant political party to offer an institutional solution within the framework of the country's internal policy when it proposed to create the Immigration and Naturalization Office.

The SDKÚ-DS, for its part, was the only subject to describe migration as a potentially beneficial and positive phenomenon. In its program introduced before the 2012 parliamentary elections, migration was not discussed merely as a security issue but was included in one of the party's four basic priorities, namely "Protection and Support of Job Opportunities, Economic and Social Stability".

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The records of parliament's deliberations also corroborate that Slovak politicians tend to view migration and related phenomena as rather marginal issues; however, this is not to say that politicians would refrain from strong feelings and statements on the subject. KDH representatives were particularly active during plenary sessions that discussed migration issues.

In their public statements, most Slovak politicians clearly tend to link migration to the issue of security. In 2004, Interior Minister Vladimír Palko described the increasing number of immigrants as a "problem" and later as a "security and cultural risk". Parliament's former chairman warned about "conflicts between social and ethnic groups" if national states continue to lose influence on the European level and immigration continues to grow. The then MP Ivan Šimko (KDH) said that the influx of immigrants onto Slovakia's territory might grow into "violent activity of migrants" and ranked among seven most serious threats facing the Slovak Republic.

On the other hand, there are also politicians whose perception of migration is less pronounced. For instance József Berényi, MP for the Party of Hungarian Coalition (SMK), called migration and asylum policy to be one the greatest "challenges" facing the contemporary European Union.

Migration is often linked to or directly labelled as the source of negative phenomena such as terrorism, extremism and asylum abuse. "The lesser migra-

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tion of some persons from certain cultures to Slovakia, the lesser the danger of terrorism", said Interior Minister Róbert Kaliňák (Smer-SD) in 2008.

A year later, he mentioned "police problems with the Muslim population". With respect to Slovakia's accession to the Schengen Area, two MPs publicly feared "mass rallies of anti-globalists, anarchists, neo-Nazis and [members of] various extremist groupings" and "mass demonstrations", respectively.

Parliamentary debates are virtually free of discussants who would view migration positively; one of very few exceptions was an MP who pointed out the universally humanistic aspect of the institution of asylum, declaring it was utterly humane to offer help to asylum seekers who were facing political or safety problems in their home country. Other MPs tend to apply a rather selective approach when advocating asylum as the means to help immigrants; for instance, some Christian conservatives argued that persecuted Christians such as those from Iraq should receive preferential treatment.

Asylum seekers' dissimilarity from Slovak cultural and religious habits and traditions is perceived negatively. For instance, former interior minister Palko publicly divided asylum seekers into "peace-loving" and "problematic", depending on the "culture" they come from. He also labelled other cultures "competitive" and potentially troublemaking. Muslim migrants are often linked to terrorism and radicalism and accused of abusing the procedure of granting Slovak citizenship.

The advocates of strict management of migration inflow presented their integral vision in the media. Former interior minister Lipšic publicly compared migrants to guests, saying that polite guests must unconditionally accept Slovakia's culture and traditions and that forming parallel communities was an unacceptable security threat that would not be tolerated. According to his concept, Slovakia welcomes and lures migrants in an organized manner but those migrants who refuse to accept the host country's values should leave, or better yet, should not be allowed entry. At the same time, Lipšic accentuated the importance of potential migrants' cultural closeness.

Nevertheless, it is only fair to ask at this point: Is securitization the overriding prism to view Slovakia's political discourse on immigration? Most importantly, the issue fails to receive the space and attention that would make it a full-bodied public discourse; obviously, migration is not the news of the day in Slovakia. And although the political discourse on immigration features contributions that may be interpreted as attempts to securitize the issue, pronounced opinions presented by some conservative politicians should not be automatically viewed as securitization of the issue in line with the criteria set by the Copenhagen school of security studies.

It seems more appropriate and generally beneficial to ponder practical ways of cultivating the fledgling public discourse on immigration in which politicians will certainly play an important role. Perhaps the best way to begin cultivating the public discourse is to demand politicians to distinguish consistently between legal and illegal immigrants, to respect facts when presenting public statements about alleged threat posed by immigrants (e.g. the actual ratio of immigrants and autochthonous population), to contemplate on migration in the light of the country's demographic development and to revise the currently prevailing concept of the so-called "cultural threat". Last but not least, it is necessary for politicians to view the immigration agenda in a way that seems to become inevitable in the future, i.e. to transfer the entire agenda into the realm of social policy while accentuating the reciprocity of relations between the "guests" and the "hosts".

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FIRST SELF-GOVERNMENT IN SLOVAKIA ADOPTED LOCAL MIGRANT INTEGRATION STRATEGY

BY ELENA GALLOVÁ KRIGLEROVÁ
& TINA GAŽOVIČOVÁ

> *"Government circles continue to view migration largely as a potential threat to Slovakia's economic and cultural stability. On the other hand, various policies aimed at migrants' integration are being shaped that are based on a different philosophical approach as they emphasize respect for cultural diversity and perceive inward migration to Slovakia as potential benefit rather than threat. This schizophrenic situation is the basic framework for most foreigners in Slovakia whose overall number continues to grow by the year."*

The situation of migrants in Slovakia gradually began to be targeted by public policies in recent years. But as we have pointed out in our quarterly newsletter, the country's official migration and integration policies still have a long way to go to accommodate their needs. Government circles continue to view migration largely as a potential threat to Slovakia's economic and cultural stability. This is also reflected in national legislation that regulates residence of foreigners, which has been repeatedly tightened in recent years. On the other hand, various policies aimed at migrants' integration are being shaped that are based on a different philosophical approach as they emphasize respect for cultural diversity and perceive inward migration to Slovakia as potential benefit rather than threat. This schizophrenic situation is the basic framework for most foreigners in Slovakia whose overall number continues to grow by the year. Some of them have begun to form their own (more or less isolated) communities while others strive to participate on the life of the autochthonous society based on individual ties they form upon their arrival. Regardless of their situation, their participation in the life of broader communities is a challenge not only for the central government but also for local self-governments.

It is local self-governments that may turn out to be best equipped to accommodate migrants' needs in terms of facilitating their arrival as well as their life in the country. Various actors that operate on the local level may make their integration process significantly easier or more complicated. The important role of self-governments is also reflected by the *Concept of Foreigners' Integration*.[1] Although this na-

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1   Concept of Foreigners' Integration in the Slovak Republic was adopted by the Government Resolution No. 338 in May 2009.

tional policy document was adopted in 2009, self-governments have largely ignored the issue and have not viewed migrants' situation as their priority.

The Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture (CVEK) strives not only to analyze and monitor public policies but also to employ its expertise in the process of shaping them. It was in the field of migrant integration on the local level that CVEK achieved its most recent success as it managed to convince local leaders that it is in their own interest to pay attention to this issue. The partner approach is among CVEK's basic pillars, which is why we decided to launch direct cooperation with four self-governments in order to help them draft local strategies of migrants' integration as part of the project specifically aimed at enhancing migrants' integration on the local level.[2]

The town of Martin has been among the project's most active partners from the outset. Throughout the process, the Martin town hall has shown devoted commitment to the task at hand. In September 2012, the Martin town council crowned its endeavour by adopting the *General Migrant Integration Strategy for the Town of Martin*, which is the first commitment of such magnitude on the part of a local self-government to pay complex attention to this issue.

The adoption of the strategy was preceded by a series of meetings with leaders of relevant institutions on the local level. They were attended by representatives of migrant communities, city council, alien police, local university, Social Insurance Company, health insurance companies and others. The meetings revealed a strong need to improve mutual communication on the local level. Currently, there is a broad range of areas and issues that are tackled by participating institutions. Although their activities remain completely uncoordinated for the time being, the meetings helped identify many areas that require concentrated attention.

The meetings also helped clarify how applicable authorities should behave in unusual situations in which foreigners may found themselves. For instance, a representative of a local private company that employs a large number of people including foreigners pointed out that the company would welcome trainings about legislative changes concerning employment of foreigners. Some demands presented by foreigners surprised all those

> *"The main goal of strategies of foreigners' integration on the local level is not only to map out the situation of migrants in a given locality but especially to propose concrete measures that may be implemented by local self-governments."*

who believe that all integration activities require hefty funding. For instance, the town of Martin has a relatively large community of medical students from Norway. Representatives of this community of foreigners, which is well organized internally, expressed desire to participate on the voluntary basis in town beautification activities such as cleaning up public areas or painting climbing frames on playgrounds near local kindergartens.

The principal outcome of these meetings was creation of framework integration strategies. Their main goal is not only to map out the situation of migrants in a given locality but especially to propose concrete measures that may be implemented by local self-governments. These activities include, for instance, establishing and maintaining the platform for mutual exchange of information between relevant institutions and migrants on the local level, incorporating foreigners into local communities' life or promoting

peaceful coexistence of all inhabitants.

The adoption of the local migrant integration strategy in the town of Martin has not only practical but also symbolic significance. The importance of local integration policies is very likely to increase in the future. The knowledge that they are *full-fledged inhabitants* of the given municipality (although not citizens of this country) is very important to migrants' overall recognition as part of local communities. The example of Norwegian students from Martin shows that migrants everywhere in Slovakia feel the need to be viewed as *full-fledged members* of local communities. In order to achieve this goal, it is necessary for state and public administration organs to refrain from obstructionism with respect to these communities and individuals and to strive to create favourable conditions for their integration so that local communities around Slovakia may finally learn to perceive migrants as a benefit (as opposed to burden, let alone threat) to our society. It turns out this goal is more easily attainable on the local than on the national level. ■

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