International Policy and Roma Education in Europe: Essential Inputs or Centralized Distractions?[1]

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This article examines the case of Roma inclusion in education as a study of the ways in which international policy can and cannot bring change at the local level. I first reflect on the numerous international organizations and initiatives to improve the educational outcomes of Roma, and to reduce segregation and other non-inclusionary practices. Given these actions— and their relatively small impact—I identify both benefits and drawbacks of international efforts to achieve Roma inclusion and improve education outcomes. I conclude that international organizations provide significant inputs for Roma inclusion, but also serve as centralized distractions that foster extremely high expectations and thus great disappointment with the results.

Cet article examine le cas de l'inclusion des Roms dans le système éducatif comme moyen d'évaluer la mesure dans laquelle la politique internationale peut effectuer des changements à l'échelle locale. Ma réflexion porte d'abord sur les nombreux organismes internationaux et les multiples initiatives qui visent l'amélioration de l'éducation aux Roms, et la réduction de la ségrégation et autres pratiques non-inclusives. Compte tenu de ces démarches—et de leur impact relativement petit—j'identifie tant les bienfaits que les désavantages des efforts internationaux qui essaient d'augmenter l'inclusion des Roms et améliorer leur éducation. Je conclus que les organismes internationaux contribuent de façon considérable à l'inclusion des Roms, mais qu'ils servent également de distractions centralisées qui favorisent des attentes extrêmement élevées et ainsi, une grande déception quant aux résultats.

Education has been a core focus of the European Union (EU) and other international organization (IO) reports, policies, and recommendations regarding Roma in Europe since at least the late 1990s. These organizations have thereby had an impact on Roma education policies, practices, and funding across Europe, especially in Central and Eastern Europe where their work has been focused. IO involvement in national and local education policies and practices has brought a number of benefits, but it also has significant limitations, and has brought new challenges. In examining and comparing the challenges and approaches of Roma education in different countries, it is important to understand how the international context can help, but can also serve as a distraction to necessary action and innovation on the national and local level. This article considers various international efforts and inputs regarding Roma education, especially by the European Union, and assesses their contribution to the resolution of

national and local education challenges for Roma in Europe. Incorporating the views of Roma activists working on this issue, as well as the self-evaluation of IOs themselves, I outline the key ways in which IOs have provided "added-value" on Roma inclusion, as well as the drawbacks of IO involvement. I argue that international policies and other inputs can facilitate Roma inclusion in education (and other fields), but can only do so successfully if the inputs they offer are effectively used at the national and local level.

National education policies and practices have long been a focus of international assessments, recommendations, policies, and funding. In the case of Roma, there is a long list of international organizations and programs that have provided inputs (financial or otherwise) intended to improve their social inclusion, and educational opportunities and outcomes. These include the EU (including the European Commission, European Parliament, and EU Agency for Fundamental Rights), the Council of Europe, the Council of Europe Development Bank, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the World Bank, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations (UN) Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Commission for Europe, UNESCO, the United Nations Population Fund, the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF, UNWOMEN, the World Health Organization, and the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015. Most of these organizations do not have education as the main focus of their work and none have Roma as the primary focus of their activities; Roma education, however, has become one of the issues on most of their agendas. Some IOs have come to these issues recently, others since many years ago, some through pre-existing programs, and others through new initiatives they have established specifically for this purpose. While some IOs have played a much larger role on Roma inclusion and education than others, together they represent a huge input of staff, time, funding, meetings, and reports focused on the same issue, albeit with different expertise, and from slightly different perspectives.

In addition to these IOs that were created by and answer to their member countries, many international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have also provided resources and input on Roma education practices and problems in multiple countries, and also affect the work of (and sometimes work with) IOs. Of particular prominence are the Open Society Foundations (OSF), the Roma Education Fund, the European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF), and the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC). All of these international actors and their inputs influence both debates and practice on Roma education in Europe. Their work is in addition to the various national and local level inputs (governmental and non-governmental) with the same presumed objectives.

Given the scope of this international involvement, and the hopes and demands of many activists and practitioners for IO actions to expand in order to address ongoing challenges, it is important to consider whether international actors have made a significant or meaningful contribution to Roma education, or more broadly Roma inclusion. Do they provide essential inputs, or might they create unreasonably inflated expectations, and detract or distract from domestic actions and responsibilities? The EU has itself repeatedly emphasized that responsibility for addressing needs of Roma populations lies at the national level. How can we be sure that these IOs—assuming they continue and perhaps expand their involvement—will provide additional benefits to Roma education that takes place at a local level in diverse countries and communities across Europe? In order to answer these questions, we need to consider what IOs are doing, how their work has helped support Roma inclusion and education

specifically, and how their involvement poses challenges for improving Roma educational outcomes.

International Efforts to Foster Roma Education

IOs, including the Council of Europe and the EU, have adopted policies and resolutions affecting Roma education as far back as the 1960s. For example, the Council of Europe, in 1969, adopted Recommendation (No. 563) on the Situation of Gypsies and other Travellers in Europe, addressing the education needs of Roma children. The European Parliament of the EU, in 1984, adopted a resolution on Education for Children whose Parents have no Fixed Abode, and in 1989, one on Illiteracy and Education for Children whose Parents have no Fixed Abode. Of particular importance in providing guiding principles on education policy for Roma children in Europe were the EU Council Resolution (89/C 153/02), in 1989, on School Provision for Gypsy and Traveller Children (European Union, 1989) and the Council of Europe (2000) Recommendation (No. R (2000) 4) on the education of Roma/Gypsy children in Europe.

Thus, international attention to Roma education is not new, but it has dramatically expanded in anticipation of, and following, the EU's enlargement to include ten Central and East European countries in 2004 and 2007,[2] a number of them with large Roma populations. Over time, IOs have also become more focused on "Roma inclusion," socio-economic improvements, and anti-discrimination, and less on issues specific to nomadic populations (which only account for a small proportion of Roma today). For over a decade now, the EU and other IOs have consistently linked education with employment, health, and housing as the four priority target areas for improving the situation of Roma. These are the issues, along with discrimination, that the EU asked candidate countries to address in regards to their Roma populations as a precondition for EU membership. Due to its substantial resources, its binding rules, and its potential policy influence in its now twenty-eight Member States and additional prospective members, the EU remains the IO that attracts the most attention of activists on Roma inclusion, and the highest expectations for improving the situation of Roma in Europe.

The 2011 EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies (hereafter EU Roma Framework) currently guides the EU's work on Roma education. When announced, the European Commission (2011a) described this EU Roma Framework as

> a means to complement and reinforce the EU's equality legislation and policies by addressing, at national, regional and local level, but also through dialogue with and participation of the Roma, the specific needs of Roma regarding equal access to employment, education, housing and healthcare. (p. 3)

Although EU law already prohibited discrimination in education and other areas, the European Commission acknowledged that this prohibition had not managed to combat the social exclusion of Roma. In accordance with the EU Roma Framework, every EU Member State designed and submitted a National Roma Integration Strategy addressing education and the three other priority areas.

The European Commission's annual evaluations of national progress on Roma integration will continue until 2020. The Roma integration goal for education that countries are expected to meet is to ensure that Roma have access to quality education and "all Roma children complete at least primary school" (European Commission, 2011a, p. 5). The European Commission's

assessment reports, however, go beyond the priority issue areas and also measure other factors considered essential for the achievement of issue goals. These are the "allocat[ion of] sufficient budgetary resources" and a number of "structural requirements": involvement of regional and local authorities and Roma civil society in design, implementation, and monitoring of the strategies; "effective monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation"; "measures to promote human rights and non-discrimination"; and the establishment of national contact points (European Commission, 2012b, pp. 11-15). EU Member States with large Roma populations are also expected to address the situation of Roma in order to meet the requirements of the EU's economic growth strategy (Europe 2020 Strategy), which includes education and social inclusion as two of its five goals (European Commission, 2012b). The EU Roma Framework is just the latest step in a series of European Commission, European Council, and European Parliament statements, resolutions, decisions, and recommendations on Roma since the mid-1990s.

In the field of education, another critical international effort has been the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 (hereafter the Roma Decade), a ten-year initiative proposed by the World Bank and the Open Society Foundations at an international Roma conference they convened with the European Commission in 2003. The Roma Decade established a multi-stakeholder forum for cooperation and coordination on Roma inclusion led by eight participating countries (now twelve) focusing on goals in education, employment, health, and housing. Participating countries include all of the new EU Member States with large Roma populations, one older EU member (Spain), and several countries in Eastern Europe that have yet to join the EU. Under the Roma Decade, countries set National Action Plans for addressing the situation of Roma in their countries, and pledged to "work toward eliminating discrimination and closing the unacceptable gaps between Roma and the rest of society, as identified in our Decade Action Plans" (Decade of Roma Inclusion, 2005, para. 1). Various processes were put in place to support, share, and monitor their progress. The Roma Decade considers itself the inspiration for the EU's similar Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, and given their similarities the two initiatives may merge in the future (at least for the EU Member States) to avoid further duplication (Decade of Roma Inclusion, n.d.).

The international Roma conference in 2003 that proposed the Roma Decade also led to the establishment of a Roma Education Fund (REF) to help close the education gap between Roma and non-Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. While the REF is an NGO (registered as both Swiss and Hungarian foundations), it was co-founded and continues to be supported by an IO—the World Bank (which also holds a seat on its Board)—and is funded by IOs, governments, and NGOs. It advocates for policy reforms, supports knowledge sharing, funds education projects and programs, provides university scholarships for Roma students, and helps NGOs and local governments access EU funds to support Roma education (Roma Education Fund [REF], n.d.).

These are among the most prominent of the many ongoing IO initiatives to improve the situation of Roma in the field of education and beyond.[3] IOs have devoted their funds and efforts mostly to data collection, meetings and conferences, reports, projects, and policy advice. Despite many years of such work, IOs themselves have acknowledged the lackluster results, as stated for example in a recent World Bank (2010) report:

> More political attention in recent years has not yet translated into notable improvements in the day-to-day lives of most Roma. In recent years, action, attention to, and coordination on Roma inclusion has improved, particularly since the 2005 inauguration of the Decade of Roma Inclusion and the first

EU expansion into Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) in 2004. However, poverty levels among Roma remain very high. (p. 6)

On education specifically, the World Bank (2010) reports, "The most recent education trends among young Roma are better than historic trends, but nonetheless hardly encouraging" (p. 10). Similarly, the European Commission (2011a) introduced its proposal for a Roma Framework with language recognizing insufficient outcomes to date:

In spite of some progress achieved both in the Member States and at EU level over the past years, little has changed in the day-to-day situation of most of the Roma ... strong and proportionate measures are still not yet in place to tackle the social and economic problems of a large part of the EU's Roma population. (p. 3)

The EU's 2014 assessment of EU Member State progress in achieving Roma education goals under the EU Roma Framework tries to ring a more positive note: "The first signs of improvement in the lives of Roma are slowly starting to show ... While challenges remain, improvements are visible" (European Commission, 2014c, p. 1). Reported improvements include a large increase in preschool attendance in Finland, and new requirements for two years of preschool in Hungary and Bulgaria (European Commission, 2014c, p. 2).

Despite some positive outcomes, considerable work is still needed. For example, the European Commission (2014b) reports that Romania has taken positive steps since 2011, such as increased use of the Romani language in schools, "extensive training of Roma mediators" (p. 45), and reserved spots for Roma students in all public universities. Nonetheless, the country still needs enforcement of its anti-discrimination legislation, more efforts towards achieving "inclusive education and desegregation" (p. 45), scaling up of projects with sustainable funding, a strategy for reducing early school leavers, and overall less reliance on EU funds, better monitoring, and a stronger commitment by public authorities (pp. 45-46). Given the discrepancy between international efforts to address Roma inclusion and outcomes, it is important to consider if and how IOs can actually help advance efforts on the ground. Should we expect IOs to do more, or is their impact necessarily limited?

IO Contributions to Roma Inclusion

Collection and Dissemination of Policy-Relevant Data

IOs have been and can continue to be helpful in advancing Roma inclusion, including in education, in a number of ways. First, IOs have helped advance the social inclusion of Roma by collecting and disseminating data to inform policy and practice. Multi-country surveys, research, and analysis of the situation of Roma in countries across Europe provide information that is essential to understanding the specific problems Roma face, addressing them appropriately, and assessing policy effectiveness. Having Europe-wide surveys also enables policymakers to see differences and similarities across countries in public opinion, discrimination, poverty, and education levels.

Recent major IO surveys that have provided such data include the household surveys conducted by UNDP (2002) in five Central and East European countries, a 2011 UNDP/World Bank/EC regional Roma survey (conducted by the UNDP and World Bank and co-financed by

the European Commission), a 2011 FRA-European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights Roma pilot survey, and various Eurobarometer surveys conducted by the European Commission. The 2011 surveys, for example, which included eleven EU Member States, found low preschool attendance of Roma children, high compulsory school attendance, and low completion rates of secondary and vocational education (under 15% completion for Roma adults surveyed age 20-24 years) (European Union Fundamental Rights Agency [FRA], 2014, p. 11). The Special Eurobarometer on discrimination in 2012 meanwhile demonstrated the widespread problem of societal resistance to Romani inclusion in education. For example, over half of respondents in Slovakia (58%) and the Czech Republic (52%), and a plurality in Luxembourg, Italy, Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, Cyprus, France, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, and Ireland believe fellow citizens would be "uncomfortable" with their children having Roma classmates. Among the twenty-seven EU Member States in 2012, less than one-third indicated fellow citizens would be "comfortable" with the idea (European Commission, 2012a, pp. 113-114). To monitor progress on the EU Roma Framework, the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) will continue to collect new data on the situation of Roma in all EU Member States—including on access to education—to expand on the 2011 household surveys and provide a better understanding of which measures lead to positive results (European Commission, 2011a, p. 13).

IOs also compile data that could directly encourage policy reform. For example, a recent World Bank (2010) report highlighted huge productivity losses (hundreds of millions of Euros) stemming from limited labor market opportunities for Roma in Europe, due in large part to the lack of secondary education of most Roma (de Laat & Bodewig, 2011; Muižnieks 2012). As the report argues, the necessary fiscal investment to eliminate the Roma education gap would be far exceeded by the fiscal benefits of greater labor market opportunities for Roma that would result (World Bank, 2010, p. 20).

Source of Legislative Reforms and Norms

A second way in which IOs support Roma inclusion is by requiring countries to undertake legislative reforms, and correct discriminatory practices. For example, all EU Member States must comply with the EU's Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/EC), which prohibits discrimination based on race or ethnic origin in employment, healthcare, education, and housing, among other areas (Art. 3). The European Commission monitors implementation of this legislation, and can punish countries for non-compliance; countries were also required to create or designate an Equality Body, where those facing discrimination could seek assistance. A number of treaties that prohibit discrimination and uphold the right to education also legally bind countries. For example, the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child all prohibit discrimination in education, and these treaties (in addition to EU law) are legally binding for EU Member States (European Commission, 2014a, p. 8). The European Court of Human Rights, the most active and successful regional human rights court, has also adjudicated numerous cases regarding discrimination against Roma, including many on segregated education. It is through both the EU and the European Court of Human Rights for example that the Czech Republic has been required to change its segregated education practices (Ram, 2007).

Relatedly, IOs can establish the international community's expectations of appropriate behavior on specific issues, and thus may be an important source of norms (e.g., Finnemore,

1993). As Laffan, O'Donnell, and Smith (2000) write, "The EU has become a more salient political arena for its member states, important for agenda setting and for the generation of European norms that establish the reference point for national policies" (p. 84). Thus, governments could be inspired, encouraged, or shamed into the adoption of international education standards—as outlined in treaties and IO reports—even where enforcement may be weak or nonexistent. NGOs also use such international norms and rules as tools to support their own advocacy for national reforms, as exemplified by a recent Letter of Concern from the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC, 2014) to the Czech Minister of Education on the segregated education of Roma.

Forums for Cooperation and Information Sharing

A third way in which IOs help advance Roma inclusion is by providing forums for countries to share information and best practices, and to bring governments and civil society together, encouraging necessary communication between them on appropriate actions and challenges. These forums include European Roma Summits (begun in 2007) and the European Platform for Roma Inclusion, proposed at a Roma Summit meeting and launched in 2009, both of which are ongoing. The Roma Platform (similar to the Summits) was created to bring all stakeholders together—including governments, IOs, and civil society—to share experiences and coordinate, cooperate, debate, and develop Roma inclusion and integration policies and practices (European Commission, 2015b); its participants could also provide input on National Roma Integration Strategies (European Commission, 2011a, p. 12). The European Commission (2015a) also expected to establish National Roma Platforms to bring together national, regional, and local stakeholders for communication and cooperation. In addition, the National Roma Contact Points established by EU Member States as required under the EU Roma Framework form a network that meets regularly to exchange experiences and support coordination and implementation (European Commission, 2012b, 2014b). Governments also meet twice a year in International Steering Committee meetings of the Roma Decade (which include IOs and civil society representatives). Through such cross-country stakeholder forums and the numerous other Roma conferences and events supported by IOs, IOs help countries address their challenges, and promote and facilitate the participation of Roma civil society in national Roma policies and practices.

Encouraging Continued Government Attention and Actions on Roma Inclusion

Fourth, IOs have contributed to Roma inclusion and education by keeping Roma inclusion on the agenda of national authorities, and monitoring their progress in achieving stated goals. As the European Commission (2014b) proclaims of its own efforts, "concerted action by the European Commission has put Roma integration firmly on the political agenda across Europe" (p. 1), and many activists would agree. One way in which IOs such as the EU are able to keep these issues on national agendas is by requiring periodic written reports on plans and achievements. For example, as mentioned above, countries were required to submit National Action Plans for the Decade of Roma Inclusion and National Roma Integration Strategies for the European Commission; both are monitored for progress. Another way is by holding various conferences and meetings where government officials from multiple countries must report their progress on Roma inclusion, and discuss their challenges. Such reports, monitoring, and

meetings do not necessarily force change or effective action, but they do incentivize states to take measures that might enable them to proclaim positive results. Frequent statements by officials from the European Commission, Council of Europe, and OSCE about the importance of Roma inclusion and continuing shortcomings (often outlined in IO reports) also help to keep Roma on the agenda of national governments.

Funding Programs and Projects to Improve Roma Inclusion

Finally, and most importantly to many, IOs provide funds for government and NGO programs and projects to address inequities and improve Roma inclusion. The EU is the IO that provides most of this funding, with about €26.5 billion made available to states from 2007-2013 to finance social inclusion projects, including ones addressing Roma education (European Commission, 2013, p. 3). In the current budget period (2014-2020), Member States are *required* to earmark a certain percentage of EU funds for social inclusion (at least 20% of their European Social Fund allocation) (European Commission, 2014d). Another way in which EU funds have supported work on the ground is through financial support for the EU Roma Platform, the Roma Task Force, and the EURoma network (European Commission, 2011c, p. 1). The EURoma network (established in 2008) and the Roma Task Force (established in 2010) are intended to facilitate the effective use of EU funds to support Roma social inclusion. The European Commission and Council of Europe will also support the training of approximately one thousand cultural/school mediators to help countries reach the education goals set under the 2011 EU Roma Framework (European Commission, 2011a, p. 5). Finally, IO funds support research and data collection, as outlined above, as well as pilot projects; both build knowledge that could facilitate effective approaches for Roma inclusion. For example, the EU-funded pilot project "A Good Start" (implemented by the Roma Education Fund) demonstrated that "increased access to high quality non-segregated early childhood education can play a key role in overcoming the educational disadvantage faced by Roma children" (European Commission, 2011a, p. 5).

Thus, data collection and analysis; requiring legal reforms; promoting standards or norms; providing forums for information exchange and cross-country and multi-stakeholder discussions (including civil society); maintaining government attention to Roma through meetings, monitoring, and reports; and providing funding are among the ways in which IOs have helped to advance Roma education and inclusion more generally. A recent Decade of Roma Inclusion (n.d.) policy paper assessing the future of the 2005-2015 Decade considers a number of these IO benefits to be among its own key achievements. Many who work in the field also recognize such benefits of IO involvement. For example, Michal Miko, a project coordinator at a Czech NGO that has long worked on Roma projects in education and other fields, sums up his impression of the European Roma Platform and EU impact in his country as follows:

> Sessions of the Platform have a big influence on how the Czech Republic behaves. Without the European Commission, integration could not be implemented, [*sic*] the EU's financial options and resources are enormous. Thanks to these sessions, Romani nonprofits have succeeded, for example, in leading the Commission toward the decision to initiate infringement proceedings against the Czech Republic over the discrimination of Romani children in the Czech education system. The pressure the European Commission places on the states in the area of inclusion is important. (as cited in Baudyšová, 2015, para. 3)

Thus, there are many ways in which IOs have positively contributed to Roma inclusion.

Drawbacks of IO Inputs on Roma Inclusion

On all issues that cross borders, there are benefits that can be uniquely achieved through or with the help of international organizations, but there are clear limitations to what IOs can do to precipitate national or local level change. This is simply because implementation must happen at the national and local levels, and international organizations do not have the power to force states or societies to make changes they do not wish to make. As Laffan (1997) argues in her analysis of EU policy implementation failures, while the EU may be successful as a "policy entrepreneur," it is a much weaker organization when it comes to implementing the new policies it generates. While the EU has a monitoring and enforcement role, it still depends largely on governments and non-state actors to implement and monitor policies adopted to comply with EU law. Most other IOs have even less "policy management" capacity than the EU.

State and societal interests can and do change over time, in part due to international norms, incentives, and actions, but sustainable changes inevitably must have internal support. As Cortell and Davis (1996) argue, the impact of international rules and norms on state behavior depends on both the domestic legitimacy of the norm, and the level of participation of societal actors in the domestic policy-making process. Both factors are weak in the case of Roma education in most Central and East European countries. Other scholars have long recognized that various domestic factors have restrained the implementation of EU policies or membership conditions regarding ethnic minorities in these countries (e.g., Hughes & Sasse, 2003; Kelley, 2004; Ram, 2003).

Moreover, external actors divert resources, distract from domestic action and commitment, and are usually too far removed from the grassroots level to provide the most effective inputs. The European Commission (2011b) acknowledges that in the case of Roma it can only play a supplemental role to that of Member States, as it has reiterated on many occasions:

> Member States have the primary responsibility for Roma integration, because the key areas which are the biggest challenge for Roma inclusion remain mostly national responsibilities. These include access to quality education, to the job market, housing and essential services, and healthcare. (p. 1)

Activists and practitioners should be aware of the major limitations to what IOs can achieve regardless of the amount of funds they may provide, especially in cases where there is significant national or societal resistance to the laws or norms prescribed from above. The results of at least two decades of international organization attention to Roma issues highlight a number of cautions.

Slow and Resistant Response and Uneven Implementation

First, international pressure, law, and even litigation often do not bring actual changes, and may take a very long time to yield even small responses. This is especially true if what is mandated at the international level is not congruent with government or societal views where the policies require implementation, and thus lacks local legitimacy. For example, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) case regarding segregated education of Roma children in the Czech

Republic began with a complaint to local authorities, and an appeal to the Czech Constitutional Court regarding actions that occurred from 1996 to 1999. In 2007, following an appeal of the original judgment, the ECHR found that the placement of Roma children in special schools violated the prohibition of discrimination and the right to education (European Court of Human Rights [ECHR], 2007). Nevertheless, little change followed this ruling, even after almost a decade awaiting the final court decision, and despite consistent international criticism from IOs and NGOs. In 2012, efforts by the Czech government to address segregated schooling by closing the separate "practical primary schools" that many Roma attended were blocked by public opinion, including a petition signed by tens of thousands of people and submitted to the Czech Ministry of Education. In response, the government backtracked on its own Strategy for the Fight against Social Exclusion ("Czech," 2012, as cited in Ram, 2014, p. 33). Even three years later, a Council of Europe (2015) monitoring report on the Czech Republic reported little progress, summarizing its findings that "The Concept for Roma Integration and Strategy for Combating Social Exclusion have had little effect. Many 'Roma-only' schools continue to exist providing a reduced curriculum and lower-quality education" (p. 9).

Moreover, despite EU and international law that the government is bound to uphold, even the Czech President, Miloš Zeman, expressed his support for separate practical schools and opposition to inclusion, seemingly endorsing the lack of implementation of internationally promoted policies:

> I am not an advocate of the opinion that children who are handicapped in a certain way should be placed into classrooms with non-handicapped pupils because that is unfortunate for both ... I personally believe this is not racism, not a preference for any ethnic group, but that children are far happier when they are in a community of their equals than when they are placed into [a different] community ... So I really just love all that multiculturalism. I believe it was invented by crazy intellectuals in a café in Prague ... I am against inclusion ... From the point of view of their well-being it is far better that the practical classes exist. (as cited in Komárek, 2015)

Thus, although many Roma activists were relatively satisfied with the Czech government's Romani Integration Strategy (adopted in 2015) and its Strategy for the Fight against Social Exclusion (adopted in 2011), designed with Romani participation and in fulfillment of EU requirements, there is little satisfaction with the government's record of implementation (e.g., Baudyšová & Komárek, 2015; Horváth, 2012).

Not surprisingly, cases of domestic public pressure frustrating international efforts to desegregate public schools can be found elsewhere in Europe. For example, in Croatia in 2012, forty adults prevented dozens of Roma children from entering a new preschool, and the local police observed but did not interfere (Muižnieks, 2012). Moreover, even good policies cannot prevent *de facto* segregation due to non-Roma parents removing their children from schools Romani children attend (as has happened in Bulgaria, Hungary, and Slovakia) (Council of Europe, 2012), or Roma parents keeping their children from attending mixed schools (at least in part due to discrimination they face there). Likewise, international norms and expectations, national legislation prohibiting segregated education, and an ECHR ruling have done little to halt the use of separate schools or separate classes for Roma in Hungary (Council of Europe, 2012). In fact, the very international attention to Roma that has helped improve their situation in small ways—i.e. the singling out of this group by IOs as having special challenges in need of special funds and measures—has also reinforced Roma as the 'Other,' inadvertently making

integration or inclusion in education and elsewhere more difficult. At the local level, the issue becomes framed in a way that blames Roma parents or culture for poor educational outcomes, and thus fails to provide necessary supportive measures for inclusive education; these deficiencies and inadequate results in turn diminish societal support for desegregation, and increase Roma stigmatization, creating a vicious circle (Rostas & Kostka, 2014).

Noting limited compliance with five recent ECHR judgments on segregated education of Roma in four different countries, O'Nions (2015) concludes that "there's a real risk that desegregation will continue to remain empty rhetoric" (p. 9) and argues that European institutions must be "much more assertive" (p. 4). Activists have also placed hope in the EU to fix such problems (e.g., ERRC, 2014), but when there is lack of political will from the highest levels, and there is little public support for change—and minimal, if any, punishment for lack of compliance—international efforts are likely to be ineffective.

Bureaucratic Costs May Exceed Meaningful Benefits

A second caution is that international meetings and required reports have high costs that often do not yield meaningful results. Most meetings, even those with productive discussions, are not likely to directly lead to action; nor is it clear that monitoring reports have triggered sustainable reforms. Cyril Koky, Romani Affairs Coordinator for the Central Bohemian Regional Authority in the Czech Republic, expressed this concern well:

> It's good that the Member States meet to discuss what has succeeded in this area and what hasn't. Nevertheless, I do not believe that such meetings influence the lives or the positions of Romani communities in the Czech Republic or anywhere else in Europe in any basic way. (as cited in Baudyšová, 2015, para. 5)

Moreover, these meetings and reports, along with the IO offices and staff that support them, divert time and resources from productive activity on the ground, reducing the resources that end up at the local level for project implementation. As Romanian activist (and often vocal critic) Valeriu Nicolae (2012) argues, "research, reports, high-level meetings and trainings" are favored over project implementation (where goals are harder to fulfill), resulting in "an expensive paper and hot air industry" with a small Roma elite, a large number of bureaucrats and researchers, and four and five star hotels as the key "beneficiaries" (para. 9).

IOs Tend to Proliferate, Expanding International Bureaucracy

Third, bureaucracies have a tendency to expand and replicate themselves; relatively few die once established, as organizations look for ways to continue to make themselves needed to ensure their survival. A brochure explaining the UN's role in advancing Roma inclusion, for example, explained how "the strengthened commitment of the European institutions to Roma inclusion globally *provides the UN with an opportunity* to increase significantly the range and scope of its Roma rights and Roma inclusion work worldwide" (United Nations, 2013, p. 5, emphasis added). The latest international Roma initiative, announced by the Council of Europe and the Open Society Foundations (OSF) in March 2015, is a European Roma Institute. A European Parliament report on Roma also suggested the EU establish a new EU Agency for Roma Inclusion to help coordinate the various other bodies the EU previously established (European

Parliament, 2011, p. 204).

While more organizations working on Roma inclusion have the ability to contribute greater financial and human resources, IOs joining on to an existing effort do not always provide a significant added benefit to account for the increased cost, and their work is not always sufficiently coordinated to avoid duplicating other work. For example, one can find numerous different IO reports on Roma covering similar ground, sometimes even produced by different bodies of the same IO, and sometimes based on the older data of another IO report. The proliferation of IO work on Roma also risks overburdening national governments, directing their time, staff, and resources to be spent on designing various strategies requested by IOs and reporting on their progress in multiple forums and meetings rather than devoting these resources to actions on the ground.

Inefficient Use of IO Funding

A fourth caveat is that regardless of the amount of funds offered by international organizations, available funds are often not used effectively, if they are used at all, and successful projects often are not scaled up. A European Commission (2012b) report recognizes this problem:

> EU funds (in particular the Structural Funds) could be a powerful tool to improve the socio-economic situation of disadvantaged groups, such as Roma, but too little of the €26.5 billion allocated to support Member States' efforts in the field of social inclusion for the 2007-2013 period benefits disadvantaged Roma communities. (p. 3)

This lack of effective targeted funding is despite the creation of international institutions specifically to facilitate the use of EU funds for Roma. As Romanian Roma activist Nicolae (2012) writes, this is in part because there is no incentive for local administrations to seek funding for Roma projects, given that it will not improve their salaries, they have little expertise on the issue, and there is little public support for it. Thus, he later concludes, "EU funding when it comes to Roma is a catastrophic failure—an immense waste of public money" (Nicolae, 2014, para. 6). Moreover, Roma NGOs typically have difficulty accessing this funding, or can only manage to obtain funding for short-term pilot projects. This is the case even in fields like education where support for long-term sustainable projects is especially needed (Delia Grigore and Raluca Negrulescu, as stated in Open Society Foundations [OSF], 2014). EU funding has thus tended to support countries undertaking "random projects" and "cosmetic 'reforms,'" rather than the necessary "holistic strategy" (European Roma and Travellers Forum [ERTF], 2015, p. 3). Furthermore, as many have pointed out, the monitoring and evaluation that has been done has been minimal and not sufficiently critical, and impact still cannot be evaluated effectively because data disaggregated by ethnicity is often not collected (e.g., Decade of Roma Inclusion, n.d.). For all of these reasons, even large economic inputs from IOs and other external donors often do not achieve significant outputs.

Limited Roma Participation at the International Level

A fifth limitation of IO inputs on Roma inclusion is the limited participation of affected communities in IO policy-making and other activities. This is not because IOs do not try to get Roma input; indeed, they have encouraged Roma participation, and IO staff often consider it

important and helpful to their work (although IO policies ultimately must be in line with the wishes of member countries). Some Roma have also participated in the many stakeholder forums and conferences organized by IOs. International policy-making by its very nature, however, limits local participation. Since a forum in which hundreds of participants are given a voice is less likely to produce productive outcomes (and would also significantly increase costs), input is typically only possible from a limited group of non-state actors, sometimes the same ones. Nor is it practicable to attain actionable input from all affected individuals from all targeted countries, or often even a large cross-section of them. Inevitably, many voices, experiences, challenges, and ideas will not be heard, and vocal or less diplomatic critics may be sidelined. Thus, while some Roma and pro-Roma activists have campaigned for a stronger EU role on Roma inclusion, Roma have likewise criticized that their participation in EU decision-making is limited. For example, the latest European Roma Summit in 2014 was criticized for not having any added value and not having sufficient participation of Roma (e.g., Hrabaňová, 2014; Kawczynski, 2014).

In addition, many Roma activists believe international efforts to foster communication and cooperation between Roma and local and national policy-makers have not adequately achieved that objective. Some complain that foreign donor agendas are often not congruent with the needs of Roma communities, and meeting the interests of those who wish to fund Roma projects does not always mean meeting the needs and interests of these target communities (Carmen Gheorghe, as stated in OSF, 2014). Roma experts are often not consulted, and those who are tend to be more closely aligned with the EU and the demands of external donors, and more divorced from the needs of their communities (Nicolae, 2014; Nicoleta Bitu, as stated in OSF, 2014). Meanwhile, other activists view IO consultation with Roma as often merely symbolic, intended "to legitimize projects rather than be the source of knowledge and expertise" (Anna Mirga, as stated in OSF, 2014) and lacking any clear decision-making authority (Decade of Roma Inclusion, n.d.; Ram, 2014, pp. 29-32). Thus, increased international policy efforts regarding Roma run the risk of reducing the role of Roma in actions that are directed at them and require their participation in order to be successful.

"Europeanizing" Roma Inclusion

A final concern is the "Europeanization" of the Roma issue. As has been frequently noted, characterizing Roma as a "European problem" has in some ways reduced the sense of individual responsibility on the part of each country with a Roma population (despite the European Commission's emphasis that it is a national responsibility). Moreover, while sharing practices across countries and comparing results can be helpful, it does not take into account that effective solutions likely need to be country-specific, and tailored to the specific interests, needs, and characteristics of Roma in individual countries and communities (size of population, language needs, housing situation, education experiences, community support, etc.). This includes taking into account the interests and concerns of Roma parents in the community (e.g., Rostas & Kostka, 2014). Thus, 'best practices' in one country cannot necessarily be replicated effectively in very different contexts. In annually assessing each country's implementation of its Roma integration strategy, the European Commission often emphasizes similar concerns and recommendations in multiple countries based on a common understanding of the problems. As the ERTF (2015) recently argued, however, this may not be an effective approach:

> Each individual member state has its own particular problem which requires a specific solution ... progress can only be achieved by establishing a bilateral dialogue with Member States on the obstacles and difficulties they face and on the measures to overcome them. (p. 3)

Locally driven solutions would also be better able to foster community support for government actions than any international prescriptions can, and community dialogue and participation may well be an essential element of successful desegregation policies (e.g., Ryder, Rostas, & Taba, 2014). Thus, as Rostas and Kostka (2014) write, Roma activists would be better served by "mobilizing local constituencies" (p. 278) than by targeting their advocacy at international organizations.

IOs as Essential Inputs or Centralized Distractions?

It is evident from the past two decades that—despite the resources, pressures, laws, forums, and norms that come from IOs—the impact of their positive inputs are limited by several factors. These include insufficient IO enforcement capability; the singling out of Roma as different; unsupportive public opinion and lack of political will in target countries; funds diverted to international bureaucracies, meetings, reports, and donor agendas; insufficient input from affected communities; little effort to effectively evaluate and scale up successful approaches within countries; and inadequate appreciation of individual contexts. Such limitations have led to disappointing outcomes. In large part due to international efforts, we can thus find in countries across Central and Eastern Europe a large number of inclusive measures towards Roma alongside exclusionary policies and practices (Ram, 2014).

Although more Roma have become educated since IOs initiated their attention to this issue, educational outcomes have remained inadequate and long-term challenges like segregation persist. Broader social inclusion, which education is expected to facilitate, is also far from being achieved. While acknowledging that large gaps in available data make evaluations and comparisons difficult, a civil society monitoring report on country progress and achievements under the Decade of Roma Inclusion drew devastating conclusions:

> Despite the efforts of the governments, and support from the European Union and other donors ... individual indicators point towards limited progress or no progress at all in the Decade priority areas of education, employment, health and housing. (Decade Watch, 2010, pp. 29-30)

A European Parliament (2011) report also notes the lack of a basis on which to evaluate outcomes, thereby leading to disappointment with results: "Due to the lack of impact assessment studies, the knowledge base on the actual effectiveness of different education policies directed at Roma students is rather feeble" (p. 107). Thus, it is not surprising that forty-five percent of Europeans in a recent survey rated efforts in their countries to integrate Roma in the fields of education, health, housing, and employment as ineffective. There were even higher levels of dissatisfaction in some countries; for example, 60 to 70% rated their country's efforts as ineffective in Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Greece (European Commission, 2012a).

IOs provide significant inputs while at the same time serving as centralized distractions, leading to extremely high expectations of their potential contributions, and equally high disappointment with their unclear achievements. No one has systematically monitored the impact of international efforts to see what is working and what is not, and how international

resources might be used more effectively. The continued shortcomings of international involvement on Roma inclusion nonetheless recently led to a similarly negative assessment by the ERTF (2015):

> It has to be admitted that the results of social inclusion of the Roma in member states is not proportionate to the efforts employed by all international organisations in that direction. In spite of some positive changes, the social inclusion of Roma has been a failure throughout Europe… Multilateral fora and similar big gatherings should be avoided. They tend to generalize issues which are by nature specific, solve little and develop into talking shops. (pp. 2-3)

Conclusion

Despite the insufficient outcomes, many working in this field continue to support an even wider role for IOs, particularly the EU. There is also strong popular support across Europe for better integrating Romani populations. According to recent polls, most Europeans believe better integration of Roma would benefit society, and this view was held by the majority of people in most of the twenty-seven EU Member States in 2012. Support for Roma integration was even stronger among those with Roma friends or acquaintances, and among the more educated (European Commission, 2012a).

Finding the right balance where international institutions support and encourage, but do not supplant local action is essential to making the best use of human and financial resources and demonstrating tangible results. As Andrew Ryder (2015) concludes in his study of the United Kingdom's changing policies on Gypsy and Traveller sites, there are pitfalls of both "localism" and "centralism" for addressing the needs of marginalized minorities. Sometimes we need a strong central authority to mandate action, incentivize equitable local policies, and apply punishments where needed, but successful policies also require local participation, consultation, and consensus building. IOs can play some of the same beneficial roles that states do as a centralized authority (albeit with additional, critical shortcomings given their very limited enforcement powers), but cultivating participation and support from both national and local government authorities, Roma themselves, and majority populations is necessary as well. The European Commission (2011a) itself largely makes this argument:

> The framework [for national Roma integrations strategies] spells out EU level goals for Roma integration to be achieved at national, regional and local level. Those ambitious goals will only be reached if there is a clear commitment from Member States and national, regional and local authorities coupled with involvement of Roma civil society organisations. (p. 14)

Although IOs can focus on streamlining, coordinating, and consolidating their activities to reduce unnecessary overlap and wasted resources, practitioners can strengthen the essential local elements by sharing successful approaches within countries, highlighting the achievements of Roma who are afforded educational opportunities, facilitating local consultations, building support for the expansion of successful interventions, and increasing interaction between Roma and non-Roma individuals on a level playing field. Without local societal support and input, local and national political support will remain limited, and without political will, IO efforts will continue to achieve only limited outputs despite their growing inputs.

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Notes

1 An earlier version of this paper was presented at the conference on "Policy, Inclusion and Education

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2 The Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia joined the EU in 2004, Bulgaria and Romania in 2007.
3 For a historical overview of the many steps that the EU and some other IOs have taken regarding Roma since before enlargement up to 2011, see Ram (2012).

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