

Roma/Gypsies in Poland. Ethnic Identity, group differences, demographic characteristic, short history and elements of Culture¹

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Abstract

Romanis/Gypsies are the most numerous ethnic minorities in Europe. There are 6 – 12 million Gypsies dispersed around Europe with two-thirds living in Central and Eastern Europe. It is impossible to eliminate deep-rooted prejudice and racial stereotypes without acquiring rudimentary knowledge about the Romani community, their history, ethnic identity, structure, proper names, population, and social situation. The name „Gypsy“ will be used here interchangeably with ethnonym „Roma“ despite its derogatory connotation (Mirga, Mróz 1994, pp. 266-267; Ficowski, 1965). This text presents the basic information about Roma People/Gypsies in Poland.

Key words

Roma, Gypsies, Poland, ethnic identity, history, culture, social situation

Ethnic Identity

It is crucial that Roma lack a collective ethnic identity which only now is being reinforced by a small group of Gypsy elite. Their ethnic identity relates mainly to the non- Gypsies (Gadje). The name *gadjo*, n.sing. (*gadje* n. pl.) – non-Gypsy (Mirga, Mróz 1994, 263-271, Hancock 1992). Their ethnic boundary, based on the above dichotomy is additionally regulated by Gypsy purity laws. The first model is based on the contrasts

¹ This text was an element (supplement) of album publication of Roma People picture made by Chad Evans Wyatt. Ł. Kwadrans, J. Balkowski: *ROMARISING. Some of the Many as seen by photographer Chad Evans Wyatt*, Fundacja Integracji Społecznej PROM, Wrocław 2014.

„pure-impure” (Romanipen-Gadjipen). Romanis are pure since they know how to avoid contamination. Non-Gypsies are impure due to their constant violation of the Mageripen code. The mageripen code outlines the rules of conduct among the Gypsies (Bartosz 2004, 183, Kowarska 2005, 35-43). The contamination can occur on different levels, depending on a Roma group.

American romologist – Matt Salo, listed the below criteria distinguishing the Roma from the Gadjje (Mirga, Mróz 1994, 267-269):

- The first one – universal – characterizes all the Gypsy groups. It is the Gypsy kinship – membership inherited naturally, as a consequence of birth to Gypsy parents. It reflects a status of an individual in a social stratum. One can also become a member of a Gypsy community via brotherhood and mixed marriage. A child being born in a mixed marriage enjoys the full rights of a Gypsy.
- The second one reflects the contamination concept in the Gypsy culture, the concepts of appreciation and respect. The contamination is forbidden, it is a factor regulating the code of behaviour almost in all Gypsy groups (Kowarska 2005, 35-43). Rejection of Gadjje by the Gypsy community is caused by their disrespect of Romani cultural standards.
- The third criterion is related to the Romani language which symbolically separates the Roma from the Gadjje who cannot speak the Romani language (Kwadrans 2004).
- The fourth one reflects the norms, resulting from a group structure and the links between its members, which exclude non-Gypsy from the social organization of the Roma community.
- The fifth criterion constitutes the Gypsy economic business activity with the Gadjje considered fair game for exploitation.
- The sixth one reflects the external distinctive anthropological features perceived by the Roma as Gypsy, such as: outfits, specific gestures and so forth.

European Romanis, for centuries, have been faithful to their traditions and cultural heritage. This is reflected not only in their cultivation of the Romani language, maintenance of Romani customs and active participation in the lives of ancestral and tribal communities but is also manifested in the group exclusivism and compliance with solely Gypsy

communal forms of organization, systems of rules, code of conduct rather than with the mainstream – non-Gypsy structure. Similarly to the representatives of majority populations, the Romanis are living in times of constant social changes and the development of civilization. As a consequence, their identity has undergone various transformations provoked by globalization, European integration, political system transformations, educational reforms and more active participation of Romani students in the schooling process. The government programmes, for the Roma community not only in Poland but also in other countries, focus on amelioration of the Romani educational situation and their occupational development. The Romani identity is not closed since it has been undergoing, to a certain extent, transformations similar to the changes transforming the identities of other communities.

Group differences

Romanis are surely a heterogeneous ethnic group. The division into subgroups influences the Roma's comprehension of the surrounding environment. It can be easily noticed that tribal identities are being replaced by a broader concept of Romanihood – attempted to be defined in national categories. The Romani community has been subject to social transformations as a result of the Gypsy elite's concerted attempts to create a homogenous Romani identity. Romani inner integrity embodies the common elements of Roma identity and similarities between the Romani subgroups. The newly deconstructed identity is vital not only for the Romani elite. Borrowing solely symbolism from its predecessors aids the self-identification process of individuals or whole groups through the common language, tradition and cultural heritage. Gypsy group cohesion and their social behaviour are strictly regulated by the highly developed inner system of social control outlined in the code of conduct and represented by Gypsy institutions "the Romani traditional jurisdiction" (the rules of *mageripen*, *romanipen*, *manusipen*). Violation of *mageripen* rules causes contamination. *Romanipen* lays down ethnic rules. It is the interpretation of Gypsy traditions, binding solely within Roma community. *Manusipen* reflects humanity's noble values and compliance with Gypsy norms *Romanipen* (Ficowski 1985, 175-199, Bartosz 2004, 170-197, Kowarska, 2008, 91-92, Courthiade 2008, 13-32, Marushiakova, Popov 2008, 13-77). There are different institutions

within various Roma groupings. Some institutions are more democratic, represented by a *kris* (group of persons) in collective decision taking. The others are ruled by one leader (Šero Rom, Jonkaro). They are institutions typical for particular groups e.g. Polish Roma (Kowarska, 2008, 95-102, Kowarska, 2005, 27-44; Bartosz, 2004). Inner relations and social stratification are regulated not only by the hereditary caste status but also by personal traits of an individual person. The diversity of Romani ethnic identity depends on the length and intensity of the assimilation process conducted towards particular representatives of the Romani minority group. Most of the Roma communities are characterized by a high spatial mobility. Their family home – a cradle of Gypsy culture, place of meetings, Gypsy fortress – and oral transfer of customs, history and cultural traditions to the younger generation (oral culture), played an integral part in the preservation of Romani cultural traditions. The Romani language is still spoken in the traditional Gypsy home.

Despite their subdivisions, Romani people have succeeded in retaining their inner integrity. One of its characteristic features is endogamy, the practice that facilitated the maintenance of Romani homogeneity. Furthermore, Roma integration into a host society or even into the global population might lead to the creation of a universal Romani identity. The Romanis might also skip the phase of national identity formation and adopt a broader European identity or even head towards New Tribalism – the phenomenon which embodies the return to traditional elements of the Romani identity.

Romanis are conscious of their common ancestry, cultural similarity, the same race background and language – the most common elements defining an ethnic group. Additionally, Gypsies, sharing an immigrant background, have been arriving in Europe since the Middle Ages. According to David M. Crowe, it is hard to provide a precise date of Gypsy arrival in Europe, however, basing on the source documents, Romanis can be assumed to have arrived on our continent in the Medieval Times (Crowe 1995, 31). They share the values and cultural elements absorbed in the country of origin, usually enriched with ethnic traditions and customs of the countries they had passed through. While creating their ethnic group, Romanis have formed their identity to define themselves and to emphasize their distinctness from others. The inner group boundaries are kept firm and are protected by the members.

Moreover, the self-perception of Gypsies, externally imposed, is also based on the stereotypes and has been conditioned by their position in the social stratum.

Furthermore, it can be claimed that the elements defining an ethnic group fully reflect the Romani community social structure and their minority group character. According to the legal definitions, (Compare *Provisions of 6 January 2005 o mniejszościach narodowych i etnicznych oraz o języku regionalnym*, Dziennik Ustaw 2005 No. 17, 141), Roma can be treated as an ethnic group for the following reasons:

- Romanis are less numerous than the mainstream population;
- They differ sharply in language, history and culture from the rest of society;
- They are striving to preserve their language, cultural heritage and traditions;
- They are conscious of their common ethnic features. They are ready to express and shelter them;
- Their ancestors have inhabited the host country for a long time (e.g. for 100 years);
- They do not identify with a mainstream population inhabiting a host country.

Gypsy Ethno names

The usage of the terms „Gypsy“ and „Rom“ and related issues need to be discussed in this work. Although the term „Gypsies“ lends itself to derogatory and paternalistic connotations, it will be interchangeably used with the name „Romanis“ in this research. The arguments given below prove that the proper name „Rom/Roma/Romanis“ should be introduced into the Polish language. A Similar process takes place in other European languages. In the Romani language „Rom“ has two meanings: it is used as an ethnic name (the same as Sinti or Manuše – corresponding to other Gypsy groups) and a masculine noun meaning man, husband in all the Romani dialects (Mirga, Mróz, 1994, 1-23). The above name has been used in the Polish language since the formation of the Gypsy/Roma Christian Ministry with the help of Roman Catholic Episcopate, in 1979. The name – Association of the Gypsies was officially replaced by the Socio-Cultural Association of the Romanis (Bartosz 2004, 87, 133). The term Gypsy, on the other hand, has originated from

the Modern Greek *Athiganoi* meaning untouchables—a heretical sect in the Byzantine Empire. In the Polish language, the word „Gypsy“ (Cygan) has a pejorative connotation. It is linked frequently with a thief and liar. The verb „ocyganić“ serves as the best example and it means „to cheat somebody“ (Ficowski 1985, 56). According to various researchers, not all the Gypsies want to be called Roma, contrary to the wishes of Gypsy elites. Some groups do not identify themselves with the name „Rom“, for example Sinti—the most dynamically developing Gypsy group in Germany (Fraser 2001, 215, Bartosz, 2004, 86-88). The term „Roma“ (Mirga, Mróz, 1994, 20, Davidová, 2004, 19) has been widely used in the legal system and in the local and international official documents for the last few decades (it carries positive emotions, is used by the Romani elite and the media). Both names will be used to describe the whole community. However, particular Romani groups will be distinguished by their proper names or by added adjectives.

Demographic structure

The demographic structure of the Romani community living in Poland is diversified and dependant on the characteristics of a particular region. A key factor making an impact on the structure is Gypsy's place of residence, but first of all, the contrast between the life in a city and village. Gypsies speak the same language but different dialects in both areas (Bartosz 2004, 109-118, Fraser 2001, 222-224). For centuries, the Gypsies have been offering the skills of craft and trade. Their traditional professions included: blacksmithing, coppersmithing, iron-working, peddling and fortunetelling. Many Gypsy families, living in the rural areas, became dependent on social welfare payments due to the disappearance of traditional nomadic business methods of earning a living. In two sub-regions, Romanis have a well below average life expectancy with inferior educational attainments and a lower economic status. Hence, it is hard for them to smash the fierce competition on the job market. However, many Gypsies in the cities, managed to find various pragmatic solutions to their economic difficulties provoked by the political transformations. Gypsy community internal subgroup divisions are determined by the distinct dialects, customs and lifestyles. There are plenty of Gypsy groups all over the world therefore, it is virtually impossible to list them all in this book. However, the Polish Gypsies

can be divided into four main groups/tribes according to their regional dialects, traditional customs and lifestyles. The first group and the most numerous *Polska Roma* (Polish Roma), the Lowland Gypsies have arrived in Poland in the 15th century. They can be further divided into subgroups: *Chaładytka Roma*, *Sasytka Roma*, *Warmijaki*, *Jaglaki*, *Węgry*, *Bosaki*, *Berniki*, *Tońaki*, *Servy*, *Pluńaki*, *Pachowiaki*, *Kaliszaki*, and so on. The above division is most likely related to the individual names of the clans, different times of arrival in Poland and agreements within the Gypsy groups. All Gypsies belonging to *Polska Roma* (Polish Roma) consider their group superior to other Romani groups. They usually adopt the surnames of various Polish noble clans, tree-related surnames and the names of German descent. They change them often and zealously. They are an autochthonous group, in comparison to other Gypsy groups living in Poland, whom they consider foreign. Their social behaviour is strictly regulated by the principles of the Gypsy code of conduct, guarded by their chief *Śero Rom*. This group is characterized by a patriotic fervour fully reflected in the poems of Mrs. Papusza. The second group comprises *Kelderasze – Kotlarze* (Kelderash – Kotlary), *Lowarzy* (Lovari) and *Wlachowie* (Vlax, Olach) Romanis who migrated to Poland in the 19th century from Romania, also known as tinkers. The disdain shown for the representatives of other Gypsy groups does not stop them from committing kidnappings of the girls from the Polish Roma group. Contrary to the representatives of Polish Roma, the Kelderash population, belonging to the Gypsy elite both in Poland and around the world, have not developed a strong unity inside their own group. Long „regnal years“ of so called „Kotlary kings“ may be the evidence of their inner group incoherence. Upon the arrival in Poland, the Kelderash community managed to assimilate smaller *vice* (families, tribes) – except for the Lovari Gypsies. Lovari are the most similar to Kelderash in the folklore traditions and arrived in Poland at the same time. In the past, they had engaged mainly in horse dealing and at present they trade in cars. They consider themselves as Gypsy aristocracy and like indulging themselves in a life of luxury e.g. they build magnificent headstones for the deceased. They have cosmopolitan character, and similarly to the Kelderash Gypsies, they are dispersed across the world. The groups *Wurdonara and Vlax*, resembling Lovari with their customs and professions, live in close concentrations within the whole

territory of Poland and constitute a small fraction of the Romani population in our country (Bartosz 2004, 97, 100). The third Gypsy tribe, inhabiting our country is *Bergitka Roma* – Polish highland Gypsies from the Karpackie Foothills, who have been settled in the Podkarpackie Province (Bartosz, 2004, 94-96) for a few generations and they are called also contemptuously *Łabanca* by other Gypsy groups. They are the poorest Gypsy group living in Poland. Their surnames did not originate from the noble clans or Hungarian and Romanian families – by contrast, they are related to the Polish peasant names. The closest to this group are *Cyntury* – *Sanocka Roma* who slowly got assimilated into other Gypsy groups. The fourth group comprises the Gypsies migrating into the territory of Poland for various reasons or as a consequence of coercive settlement: German Sinti and Russian *Chaladytka Roma* live within the whole territory of Poland (Bartosz 2004, 96-97). The migration of the Gypsies from Romania to Poland was of a temporary character. A high population of Romanis is migrating to the countries of Western Europe at the moment (Bartosz 2004, 102).

Moreover, all the Gypsies living in Poland can be divided into nomadic groups such as: Polish Roma, Kelderash, Lovari, Vlax and fully settled *Bergitka Roma* (Ficowski 1965, 130-141). The biggest Gypsy group living in Poland is Polish Roma, comprising 80 % of the total Gypsy population. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Gypsies living in Poland do not form an integral community. By contrast, they are frequently divided into antagonistic groups, displaying profound contempt for one another. Some groups communicate better due to the similar dialects. The magnitude of differences is multi-fold. The Gypsy elite have been trying to lessen their extent and to create an integral Roma community.

Population of Roma People in Poland

Exceptional for the Roma was the fact that only in the 20th century professional attempts have been made to count the Gypsy inhabitants and to translate the gathered data into the official numbers. The estimates of the total population of ethnic Gypsies in many countries and also in Poland were uncertain due to the failure of the authorities in those countries to prepare reliable official lists of Roma citizens. A number of Romani Holocaust victims perished in the death camps and during

mass executions. As a consequence, only a small number of Romanis survived the World War II. The term „estimates“ in relation to the number of Gypsies will be used in this publication due to the fact that the size of the overall Roma population is uncertain. The data obtained in the official census comprises not so much the Gypsies who speak the Romani language as the persons who declare their Romani origin. There are no ethno-sociological surveys involved while conducting a census of the Roma. Moreover, the numerical data related to the size of the overall Roma population in the homogenous social democratic countries, surely was deliberately decreased for political reasons. There are 6 – 12 million Gypsies dispersed around Europe with two-thirds living in Central and Eastern Europe. According to the official estimates, there are 15 000 – 20 000 Romanis living in Poland. Some activists claim that their number is higher comprising 30 000 – 35 000 persons (Compare: Fraser 2001, Żołędziowski 1995; the internet – official website of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration, <http://www.mswia.gov.pl> and Roma Association in Poland, <http://www.stowarzyszenie.romowie.net/>). However, during the 2002 national census 12 731 citizens of the Republic of Poland declared their ethnic origin (http://www.mswia.gov.pl/index_a.html). It was caused by the numerous acts of aggression against the Gypsy community. The Romanian Gypsy migration into our country, in the 1980s and 1990s, contributed to a significant increase in the Romani population in Poland. So far, no viable analysis has been conducted of numerical change in the Roma population comprising their characteristic demographic features.

Table No. 1. The Roma population in Poland

Data	Poland (2002)	Poland (2011)
Census data	12 855 (0,03 % of total Polish population)	16 000 (0,04 % of total Polish population)
Demographic estimates	15 000 – 25 000 (0,04 % – 0,6 % of total Polish population)	20 000 – 30 000 (0,05 % – 0,07 % of total Polish population)
Overall number of Roma population	38 200 037	38 501 000

Source: Barany, Z.: *The East European Gypsies. Regime Change, Marginality and Ethnopolitics*, Cambridge 2002, p. 126; Ł. Kwadrans, *Education of the Roma in the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia – gap confrontation between expectations and reality – comparative research*, Wrocław 2011, p. 98; *idem*, *Romowie*, In: *Mniejszości narodowe i etniczne w Polsce po II wojnie światowej. Wybrane elementy polityki państwa*, ed. by S. Dudra, B. Nitschke, Kraków 2010 pp. 237-239; http://www.stat.gov.pl/gus/5840_12766_PLK_HTML.htm (13 July 2012).

Short history of the Romanis/Gypsies - XX and XXI Centuries

A major part of the Gypsy history has been hardly put into words or has not been outlined at all. Many works related to Gypsies have been written by non-Gypsies. As a consequence they include lots of errors stemming from ingrained prejudice and blatant ignorance.

The 19th century nationalist Europe and the emergence of national identities did not make a major impact on the Gypsy group. In absence of their written language, Gypsy intelligentsia and supranational solidarity, Romanis failed to develop their national identity.

The government of the inter-war Poland did not display any interest in the Romani issues. According to Andrzej Mirga, it was rather the Gypsies who were trying to spark public interest and catch attention of the press with their exoticism and folklore (Mirga 1998, 116). Their social situation became stagnant and their educational circumstances hopeless. Furthermore, the analysis on the Roma educational situation during the inter-war period is hard to conduct due to the insufficient reliable sources on this subject matter.

During World War II, all the Romanis were marked for extermination. Pure ideology was a basic motivation for Hitler's death project. The Nazis were searching various justifications in the racial theories for death programmes to be conducted later in a meticulous and consistent manner.

Contrary to anti-Semitism, anti-Gypsy attitudes were manifested as general social hatred against individuals of a lower social status, weaker, marginalized and inferior. The anti-Gypsy approach was not ruled by fear or myth. The Romanis constituted a group without any political representation hence they were never treated as a dangerous community.

Poland, comprising the main Nazi death camps, became the Nazi extermination centre of all the Gypsies from the whole Europe. However,

most of the Polish Gypsies were murdered in numerous mass executions rather than in concentration camps. To avoid frequent escapes of the Polish Gypsies, the Nazis resigned from the transit camps and constricted the Roma Holocaust to the out of the death camp extermination. Even the ones grouped in Szepietowo and further transported to Oswiecim, managed to last only several weeks in the concentration camp (Ficowski 1965, 111-112).

The Gypsies received the same inhumane treatment as the tortured and murdered Jews during Holocaust (Chrostowski 1997, 38-46, Arendt 1987). However, the SS murderers complained about a thankless task of the Gypsy mass extermination. According to them, the performance of the operation was hindered by the Gypsy uncompromising, passionate zest for life and their bold resistance (Ficowski 1965, 121-122).

Auschwitz - although one of many Gypsy death camps, has the deepest symbolic significance. Primarily, the highest number of Gypsies deported for extermination to this concentration camp from the German-occupied countries. When the first transport of Gypsies arrived at Auschwitz, on 26 February 1943, the camp was still being constructed. All the Gypsies deported earlier, were placed temporarily in the Birkenau camp, block 18. The Gypsy extermination camp in Auschwitz was in operation until all the victims were killed by gassing, on 3 August 1944, in just single night (Ficowski, 1965, 138-151; Fraser 2001, 194-196).

The Gypsy camps at Auschwitz comprised thirty-two brick barrack buildings and six sanitation barracks. The record books recovered in January 1949 revealed that 10 094 men and 10 849 women and altogether 20 943 Romanis were detained in *Zigeunerlager* (The above numbers are based on the data provided by J. Ficowski, 1965. According to Angus Fraser, there were 23 000 prisoners and 20 078 murdered). Around 50 000 Gypsies from the whole Europe (with a high proportion of the Polish Romanis) were brutally murdered by the Nazis. The figures also include the Gypsies serving in the Wehrmacht Army confined in the main Auschwitz camp, Gypsies imprisoned in other death camps and a few lucky ones who managed to escape.

Porajmos – the Gypsy Holocaust played a significant role in raising self-awareness of Romanis in Diaspora, dispersed across the world and about the significance of belonging to the same nation. The Roma Holocaust (in the Romani language I. Hancock introduced the term

Porajmos, the devouring), adopted mostly by non-Gypsy researchers. Romani intellectuals propose the term Samudaripen, meaning the utter extermination) during the World War II, the Gypsy tragic experience throughout war period, gathered in the consciousness of all the Roma groups, castes, tribes, shored up a foundation for the Gypsy common historical heritage.

In the communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Roma community constituted the politically marginalized problem of a socio-economic character. By contrast to other minorities, their national minority status has not been historically and legally recognized. Additionally, they were not supported by their parent states, any bilateral agreements or treaty obligations. Roma ethnic and cultural alleged strangeness, particularly in the respect of their different lifestyle, values, cultural traditions, was a critical factor causing the prejudice against Gypsies. Gypsies, contrary to Jews, after the war, were not treated as Holocaust victims deserving compassion. The war did not change a Gypsy image (stereotype) in the consciousness of the Poles (Mirga 1998, 111) which was further reflected in the government policies towards this minority group.

The World War II impacted the Gypsy way of life, led to the dispersal of Gypsy families and the disappearance of certain Romanipen principles. After 1945, the communist authorities were busy arranging the country's inner affairs and the issues concerning the marginal Gypsy community have clearly been left by the wayside (Mirga 1998, 111).

The total number of Gypsies in Poland, after the war, was estimated between 15 000 and 20 000 (Chałupczak, Browarek 1998, 235, Olejnik 2003, 563-566). According to some data, the Gypsy population reached even 30 000 persons (Ficowski 1953, 182). After the war the Gypsy community, small and internally diversified, was busy reconstructing their family ties. The files kept by the Ministry of Internal Affairs revealed that the Roma population was smaller and could have reached 15 000 in the post-war period since in 1970 it comprised 17 534 persons.

Almost 75 % of the Romanis were leading a nomadic lifestyle at that time (Mirga 2003). The communist authorities would not generally tolerate their vagabond way of life; however, Romanis continued to travel practising their craft and peddling. The communists offered the Gypsies permanent employment and housing within the integration programme

(Barany 2002, 119). Many Gypsy children were enrolled in schools. Moreover, the authorities also proposed opening a traditional craft cooperative e.g. blacksmithing. The jobs offered to the Gypsies were low-paid, physically exhausting and did not require any qualifications. They worked mainly in farming employed by the State Agricultural Holdings and Agricultural Production Cooperatives.

The communist authorities strived to bridge the socio-economic gap between the Romanis and the majority Polish population through the Roma complete assimilation. However, each of the East Bloc Countries, under the same influences of USSR, conducted distinct assimilation initiatives towards the Romani population. Since the Gypsies were not a homogenous group and Romani communities differed from each other in particular countries, the policies towards them were also different. While some of the Gypsy communities were seeking a permanent settlement, the others were still leading a nomadic lifestyle. However, the Gypsies were not solely the passive target of communists' activities. On the contrary, they strived to organize their life in the hostile and incomprehensible world of *the gadje*. The improvements in Romani social situation were hindered by the unresolved legal issues of this minority group. Lech Mróz writes about different experience related to the assimilation of various Gypsy groups living in Poland (Mróz 2001, 252-267).

Poland's policy towards the Romani community, aiming for their integration or rather assimilation, determined the Gypsies' fate. As a part of a general plan, they were frequently encouraged to settle and seek permanent employment. A time of impending crisis and political transformations did not directly affect the Roma community. They were the issues majority population had to face and deal with. Andrzej Mirga writes about two crucial transformation periods in the post-war Poland (1944 – 1947 and 1980 – 1981) and various crisis periods (Mirga 1998, 113). The Romanis were busier tackling the local officials' and the Militia's activities towards their own community, affecting directly Gypsy affairs and wellbeing. The Romani group did not perceive the consequences of the assimilation policy straight away. The actions, undertaken at that time, were to provide the Roma with the state-mandated employment and Roma children with a proper education. Finally, they were to lead to their full assimilation. However, authorities were not aware of how important a nomadic lifestyle was to the Gypsy community. It constituted

their group identity and allowed them to obtain the basic means of subsistence.

During the Stalin's rule, the state policies towards Roma assumed mainly paternalistic nature. Their concepts and implementation methods were included in the government's Resolution No. 452/52 of 24 May 1952. The document, related to the state's assistance for the Roma in their sedentarization process (Bartosz 1996), confirmed the fact that the government carried out a separate minority policy towards Romanis. The initial efforts of the authorities did not produce the expected results since they were only of persuasive character and were carried out within the state's social policy. Because only 25 % of Romanis decided to give up their current way of life, the officials decided to tighten the state policy towards this minority group by introducing penal and administrative coercion. In this way they had solidified the policy trend towards Romanis, which had lasted until the mid-1980s.

On 3 June 1952, the document was sent to the presidiums of national councils. In September, the same year, a Commander-in-Chief of the Citizens' Militia ordered to register all the Gypsy population and appointed the Committee for Operation Survey „C“. The details were discussed with voivodship and powiat committees of the Committee of Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR). The operation comprised the Gypsy's photographing, finger printing. Consequently Romanis were issued vital records, residence registration cards and Gypsy chiefs were distributed registration books (Sołtysik 2009, 148). In February 1955, the authorities took a decision to reregister the Roma population. The Social Administration Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs issued a decree to commence, so-called, the Roma passport operation. The term passport operation was used in relation to the official documents and the Roma identity cards distribution 7-10 March 1955 (Sołtysik 2009, 141-179). The Vital Records and Identity Card Department, Citizens' Militia had to issue the Roma temporary identity cards basing on their birth certificates. However, not all the Roma were in possession of the necessary documents and the administrative organs were busier providing the missing vital records. The passport operation also served as an element of propaganda campaign persuading the Roma to adopt a settled lifestyle, to form production cooperatives, seek permanent employment and to attend literacy courses. The operation was conducted

in a close cooperation with the Committees of Polish United Workers' Party and Presidiums of National Councils. Both projects, (Operation Survey "C" and Roma passport operation), were initiated by the central authorities and centred on the Roma inclusion into all-Poland registration records. As a result, the authorities managed to obtain the official number of the Gypsies, the information related to their situation in Poland and proceed further with their sedentarization, productivization and education process (Sołtysik 2009, 166-179). On 23-25 March 1964, the *Communist Government carried out the operation aiming to prevent the Gypsies from travelling with their wagons* (Olejnik 2003, 582-585). The Roma community was forcibly registered and coerced to adopt a settled lifestyle. The ones, who failed to obey the order, were treated as criminals, intimidated, punished for vagrancy, threatened with high fines. The authorities spared no efforts to obtain the names of Gypsy chiefs, the addresses of winter encampments, the Gypsy wagon routes and the location of Gypsy caravan sites in summer. They even intended to hire secret agents among the Gypsy community, however with no success. As a consequence, Gypsy caravans ceased travelling. The official data reveals that 10 360 persons (3 500 adults, 6 860 children aged 16 and under) – 1 146 nomadic families (Bartosz 2004, 150, Mirga 1998, 137-138, Mirga 1997, 167-168, Olejnik, 2003, 583, Ostałowska, 2000, 9) were affected – 75 % of the total Gypsy population in Poland. Twenty-one persons were detained for having committed a crime, 297 individuals without residence registration cards, 1 529 Romanis for having invalid identity cards (Mirga 1998, 137).

In the second half of the 1970s, the state re-intensified coercive assimilation practices towards the Roma minority. The coercive arguments used by the government were producing the desired outcome. As a result, Gypsies stopped travelling in their caravans, sold their horses and wagons and frequently adopted a settled lifestyle. A car, according to Andrzej Mirga, became a synonym of Roma adaptation to new conditions (Mirga 1998, 156-157). While forced to settle in one location, thanks to new modes of transport, Gypsies still displayed a high mobility rate. However, Roma sedentarization provoked the conflicts between the Gypsy community and the mainstream population, deepened prejudice and ethnic stereotypes. Sedentarization of the Roma caused many problems. In the second half of the 1970s and in the 1980s, there were

lots of conflicts between new inhabitants and their mainstream neighbours. While the Roma in their new places of residence separated themselves from the Polish population, the Polish majority also did not strive to have better relations with the Gypsies. A stereotype picture of the Polish-Gypsy community social relations was reinforced. The Gypsies were accused of earning their living in an illegal way, leading a parasitic lifestyle and enjoying a privileged position in the social system (flats, jobs). Consequently, the state's assimilation policy toward Romanis reinforced the feelings of resentment and prejudice against Romanis (Depczyńska, 1978).

The operations conducted throughout the Polish People's Republic, related to the 1952 Ordinance, changed radically the Roma situation. Romanis adopted a settled lifestyle and obtained the government's financial assistance. The state's policy included repressive and coercive elements however, primarily, its aim was to protect and promote the economic and social well-being of the Romani population. The authorities made a mistake by assuming a paternalistic and instrumental approach towards Romanis. The Romani representatives were excluded from participation in the project implementation-although they were the key policy recipients.

The collapse of the Communism opened up many different possibilities for the Romanis and their elite. Political transformations facilitated the formation of new Roma organizations and the development of existing ones (There were following Romani organizations involved in the Programme for the Roma community in Poland (2003). During the Communism, Romanis felt that their ethnic identity, language, cultural heritage and social structure were brutally destroyed by the government, which affected the Roma/Gypsy self-esteem. As a consequence of the reforms conducted in the transformation period (privatization and industry restructuring) Romanis lost their jobs and places of residence. Moreover, Romanis experience problems in accessing both health and education system. All those aspects create even bigger distance between the Romani people and the mainstream population. When comparing the situation of the Roma in the Communism with the last 20 years, it needs to be mentioned that political transformations brought a clearer involvement of the state in the Romani issues.

In the following social researches conducted in the past few years, many persons declare reluctance towards the persons of Romani origin. Moreover, in public opinion polls Gypsies are the least tolerated minority. In the research conducted by the Centre of Public Opinion – 60 % of persons displayed their aversion towards Romanis. Negative emotions among the non-Roma community are very strong, reflected in the Gypsy pogroms and in various individual and group intolerance acts, which took place in Poland. The system transformation contributed to rise in the Roma standard of living. When a private entrepreneurship ceased to be an offence, Gypsies took advantage of a free market economy and commenced trading in deficit goods. The Gypsy ostentatious wealth exhibition reinforced the feelings of resentment and prejudice against Roma, fuelled fierce jealousy and led to the future anti-Gypsy incidents. The non-Roma nation needed scapegoats. Therefore, the Gypsies became an imaginative source of social and economic problems e.g. in Mława (Bartosz 2004, 74, Giza-Poleszczuk, Poleszczuk 2001). Economic crisis coincided with the authority erosion in the whole country.

Nonetheless, recently conducted research prove that there was an improvement in the attitude of Poles towards Romanis, particularly when comparing with other countries of the Visegrad Group.

Table No. 2. *The Czechs', Poles', Slovaks' and Hungarians' attitude towards Romanis*

Attitudes towards Romanis	Czechs	Poles	Slovaks	Hungarians
Lack of acceptance, hostile attitude	57 %	33 %	71 %	52 %
Neutral attitude	12 %	17 %	11 %	13 %
Acceptance, friendly attitude	31 %	50 %	18 %	35 %

Source: Feliksiak, M.: *Postawy wobec Romów w Polsce, Czechach, na Węgrzech i Słowacji. Komunikat z badań*, Warszawa, June 2008, http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2008/K_104_08.PDF (19 September 2011)

Despite a slight improvement, Roma educational situation is still deemed as being poor. They have lower education attainment than the majority population. In Poland, Gypsy children are relatively often

directed to „special schools“ for children with learning disabilities and specialist counselling centres. The whole Poland was characterized by the *disability epidemic* supposedly existing among Gypsy children. The Children's intellectual abilities were falsely measured basing on the Romani children's poor command of the official language being a second language for most of the Gypsies. Many teachers and educators blamed the fact that very few Romani children attended Kindergartens and so-called reception classes (zero level), where they could get appropriately socialized. Moreover, as previously stated, teachers do not possess proper qualifications necessary to work with the Romani minority (they do not have sufficient knowledge about Romani cultural heritage, tradition, history and language).

While defining the conditions which applicant states had to meet, the EU increased the pressure on aspiring candidate countries to draw the programmes, projects and conduct actions focussing on amelioration of the Roma living circumstances. In 1999, the EU's officials prepared reports comprising summary of progress in achieving strategic improvement in the living situation of various minority groups, including Romanis. Special attention was paid to the discrimination and intolerance in education, services and employment. The countries, which carried out activities centring on the amelioration of the Roma minority living conditions, were praised in the reports for their efforts and persistence. Some of the government projects were co-financed by the EU. The Romani ethnic movement, more effective at the beginning of the 1990s, involved more actively international and local Non-Governmental Organization (Romani and non-Romani) in the projects focussing on the amelioration of their living situation and minority rights protection. Nonetheless, the member states and the EU institutions are aware that they will need to wait for definite and noticeable improvements.

Towards the end of the 1990s, the post-communist countries intensified their actions focussing on amelioration of the Roma living circumstances. It was the consequence of the EU's increased pressure on aspiring candidate countries to draw the programmes, projects for the Roma community and also their fear of a few million Roma migrants from the new member states flooding the EU. After the mass migration of the Gypsy asylum seekers to the United Kingdom, Ireland, Belgium

and Scandinavian countries, public opinion and the governing bodies in the Western European countries realized how grave the Roma social situation was in the post-communist candidate states. The miserable and unregulated situation of the Gypsies in the post-communist countries did not hinder their EU accession process. The European institutions provided the new member states with a significant financial support for the projects aiming to ameliorate the disadvantaged situation of the Roma community.

The programmes for the Roma community in Poland were conducted as a consequence of the introduction of international obligations and bilateral agreements. Additionally, the situation was influenced by the migrations of the Polish Gypsies to the EU's member states – mainly to the UK, a publication of the critical report of 10 December 1999, prepared by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance and ratification of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, in December 2000.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the authorities took far-reaching measures to improve the Roma situation in Poland. The Ordinance adopted by the Council of Ministers, on 13 February 2001, involved also the education system. In the 2001 – 2003 period, the pilot programme was restricted solely to Małopolskie Voivodship. However, after its successful implementation, since 2004 it has been carried out on a national scale. Nevertheless the principal reason for launching the above project was a miserable situation of Karpacki Roma (Bergitka Roma) from Małopolska province. The assessment of the pilot project's performance has confirmed its importance and validity particularly in the area of education. Its results have confirmed that the miserable situation of the Romanis has been caused by the Roma's extremely low educational competencies. Nevertheless, to obtain the positive results of the conducted projects, we need to wait for a few more years. The programme contributed to the increase in the mutual acquaintance and recognition of the minority and majority population, and to the raise of educational awareness among the Romanis. Consequently, the number of Gypsy children attending kindergartens increased. The relations between the school authorities and the Roma community have improved significantly. Roma parents more willingly participate in the school activities and show more interest in their children school's performance. It can be said

that Roma assistants and learning support teachers have contributed to the above positive results. The pilot programme has not only shored up a solid foundation for a bigger, all-Poland educational project, but also led to the amelioration of Roma standard of living and has given the public a more positive image of the Gypsy community.

On the 19 August 2003, the Council of Ministers, adopted the Resolution on the implementation of the multiannual project: The Programme for the Roma community in Poland to continue the challenges of its pilot project conducted in Małopolska province. The government administration wanted to support self-governments in solving the problems related to the Roma community such as: improvement in education; amelioration of living, social and health conditions; fight against unemployment; safety; development of Gypsy cultural traditions and Romani identity; education of the non-Gypsy population about the Roma community. The project has been financed through a specific budgetary allowance and should not increase 100 million zlotys. Self-governments participating in the project should devote not less than 20 % of the funds obtained from the state's budget. The persons taking part in the Programme are not only the representatives of self-governments but also the Roma community and Non-governmental Organizations familiar with Romani issues. There are two Ministers involved in the coordination of the project: the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration and also for educational matters – the Minister of National Education. Voivodes and their offices are accountable for the field tasks performance: application processing, acceptance, preparation and screening.

Romanis associate political transformations with various disadvantages: unemployment, poverty, unequal access to health services. However, they have also been granted the basic rights enjoyed by all the minorities. Romanis started to issue their own magazines, co-produce various TV and radio programmes. The first school books in the Romani language (The modern school book supporting Romani children's educational process: Parno Gierliński, K.: *Miri Szkoła, Romano elementaris*, Kostrzyn nad Odrą 2008) and many publications about the Roma community were issued at that time. A thorough analysis of the harsh situation of the Roma in many countries contributed to the implementation of various government programmes to improve their standard of living.

Various states, European institutions and non-governmental organizations concentrated their efforts to improve the Roma's disadvantaged situation.

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The Romani (also spelled Romany /rɒˈmæni/, /rɒˈni-/), colloquially known as Roma, are an Indo-Aryan ethnic group, traditionally itinerant, living mostly in Europe and the Americas and originating from the northern Indian subcontinent, from the Rajasthan, Haryana, and Punjab regions of modern-day India. Genetic findings appear to confirm that the Romani "came from a single group that left northwestern India about 1,500 years ago". Genetic research published in the European Journal of Human Genetics While the Romani ethnic identity is the basis of present-day emancipatory mobilization, it is difficult to say to what extent a shared consciousness of belonging together can be ascribed to the larger group of communities labeled by the external world as Gypsies. For example, in Albania, while the historic relatedness of the Jevgjit to the Roma is a subject of scholarly debate, the members of these two groups, seen indiscriminately as "Gypsies" by the surrounding majority, in fact consider themselves separate peoples and reveal negative attitudes toward one another.