

PROJECT ON ETHNIC RELATIONS

The Project on Ethnic Relations (PER) was founded in 1991 in anticipation of the serious interethnic conflicts that were to erupt following the collapse of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. PER conducts programs of high-level intervention and dialogue and serves as a neutral mediator in several major disputes in the region. PER also conducts programs of training, education, and research at international, national, and community levels.

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Individuals and institutions wishing to receive PER publications should write to:

**PROJECT ON
ETHNIC
RELATIONS**



15 Chambers Street
Princeton, New Jersey 08542-3707, USA
Telephone: (609) 683-5666
Fax: (609) 683-5888
E-mail: ethnic@compuserve.com
<http://www.netcom.com/~ethnic/per.html>

R e p o r t

DECEMBER 6, 1999



BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

Budapest

HUNGARY

THE ROMA IN HUNGARY:
GOVERNMENT POLICIES,
MINORITY EXPECTATIONS,
AND THE INTERNATIONAL
COMMUNITY

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PREFACE

The government of Hungary has launched a major program to improve the situation of Romani communities. The Roma are recognized as one of 13 historic ethnic minorities in Hungary's Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities Act. In 1993, Romani communities were given the right to establish their own self-government. By 1997 the former government developed a medium-term strategy for improving the situation of the Roma. The present government has been continuing these efforts: they reviewed the medium-term strategy and created an Interministerial Committee on Roma, including Romani representation to oversee and coordinate the implementation of the government program. Meanwhile, the Roma have become more politically active and are increasingly aware of their rights.

Nevertheless, the Roma in Hungary continue to suffer greatly from low social status and from discrimination. Some Roma charge that the government is not serious about carrying out its own medium-term strategy and cite what they consider to be insufficient financial resources devoted to it. They have also questioned the effectiveness of these programs and policies in actually improving life in Romani communities.

One of the conditions for Hungary's EU accession is improvement in the situation of the Hungarian Roma. The government's position is that its programs and policies do provide a basis for solutions, and that ministries have already been delegated specific tasks concerning Romani education, employment, and housing. Government officials claim that implementation of these tasks has begun, although they concede that financial constraints mean slower progress than they would like.

On December 6, 1999 a seminar was held in Budapest, Hungary organized by the Project on Ethnic Relations in cooperation with the National Gypsy Self-Government in Hungary. Titled, "The Roma in



From left to right: Csaba Hende, Florian Farkas, Allen Kassof, Michael Lake not shown.



From left to right: Toso Doncsev, Antal Heizer (back row center), Jenő Kaltenbach.

Hungary: Government Policies, Minority Expectations, and the International Community,” the seminar provided an opportunity for Romani leaders and government officials to assess the government’s medium-term program for the Roma and to consider how to strengthen it.

The discussion was valuable in several respects. First, it allowed Roma and government officials to share their perspectives on programs and policies toward the Roma. Second, it reinforced the shared desire of Romani leaders and government officials to ameliorate the situation of the Roma. Third, it emphasized that simultaneous improvements are needed at national, local and international levels. Finally, participants offered suggestions about how to reach these goals.

This report was written by Dr. Ferenc Melykuti, director of PER’s office in Budapest, Hungary and edited by Robert A. Feldmesser, PER’s Senior Editor, and PER staff. The participants in the meeting did not have an opportunity to review the text, for which PER assumes full responsibility.

Allen H. Kassof, *President*
Livia Plaks, *Executive Director*
Princeton, New Jersey
July 2000

A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

Gypsy is an English term used to denote ethnic groups formed by the dispersal of commercial, nomadic, and other groups from within India, beginning in the tenth century, and their mixing with European and other groups during their diaspora. The terms *Gypsy* and the several European variants of *Tsigan* are considered by many to be pejorative and are often replaced by the more neutral term *Rom*. However, because *Gypsy* is widely used in Hungary, and included in the official title of the *National Gypsy Self-Government*, the term *Gypsy* in this text is only used when mentioning *National Gypsy Self-Government*. In all other cases, the term *Roma* refers to the group as a whole, *Rom* refers to a member of the group, and *Romani* is the corresponding adjective.



From left to right: Andrzej Mirga, Bela Osztojkan, Florian Farkas.

INTRODUCTION

The Project on Ethnic Relations (PER), in cooperation with the National Gypsy Self-Government in Hungary, held an international conference at the Teleki Laszlo Foundation in Budapest on December 6, 1999, on the topic, "The Roma in Hungary: Government Policies, Minority Expectations, and the International Community." The meeting considered the Hungarian government's program for the improvement of the situation of the Roma. Participants assessed the potential of the program and discussed areas that need further attention. The participants in the conference were leaders and experts from the National Gypsy Self-Government and the Romani community, the Hungarian government's ombudsman for minorities, and other government officials, representatives of Hungary's political parties, experts on the Roma, and EU officials. PER's president, executive director and the chair of PER's Roma Advisory Council (PERRAC) also took part in the discussions.

Addressing the situation of the Roma is of great importance for Hungary because of the growing realization that the country's successful transformation into a sustainable, prospering democracy demands that the Roma be given an opportunity to overcome the social and economic disadvantages under which they live. Although both the previous and the present government in Hungary began to implement programs to improve the situation of the Roma, there has been considerable dispute over whether these programs have actually been effective in combating the disadvantages and discrimination afflicting Romani communities. A significant area of the dispute lies in whether such programs have received the political and financial support necessary for effective implementation.

The situation of the Roma is an important issue for Hungarian policy-making and politics. Since Hungary aspires to become a member of the European Union, it must pay close attention to any warning signals coming from the EU. Although Hungary has been ranked as one of the candidate nations most likely to become a member in a relatively short period of time, the situation of its Romani population has been a major element in the EU's critique of Hungary's performance. The EU has repeatedly indicated that the Hungarian government must make additional political and financial efforts to improve the situation of the Roma if it is to meet the criteria for accession.

THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE

An official of the Hungarian government opened the conference by discussing at length the various effects that actions of the international, especially the European, community have had on Hungary's policies with respect to the Roma. In 1950, he said, the Council of Europe concluded one of its first agreements on human rights, which, among other provisions, includes the general principle that discrimination against minorities is to be prohibited. In 1992, the UN General Assembly approved the declaration for the rights of persons belonging to national, ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities. This declaration obligates states to protect the identity of minorities through legal or other measures.

Since then, Hungary has ratified two other important European agreements on the protection of minorities: The Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Under the Framework Convention, Hungary banned discrimination against minorities and promoted their full, legal equality in every aspect of economic, social, political, and cultural life. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages obligates Hungary to acknowledge the protection of the language and culture of minorities, the promotion of their use, and the support of minority education. The charter does not provide rights for the people belonging to a minority, but it aims at protecting regional or minority languages. Its provisions have been accepted as applying to the Romani minority in Hungary, except for certain optional provisions in the charter's third chapter. Both agreements entered into force in 1998 and, in accordance with its commitments, Hungary submitted country reports to the Council of Europe in 1999. Another important act of the Council of Europe was the Vienna Declaration, approved by the presidents and prime ministers of the member states in 1993, as a result of which the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) was established. The main task of this organization is to examine and evaluate the legal, political, and other measures taken by member states against racism, xenophobia, anti-

Romani leaders must encourage the people in their communities to take advantage of opportunities to improve their situation, especially in education and training.

Semitism, and intolerance on the local, national, and European levels, to make general policy recommendations on the basis of these, and to study the international legal tools used in this field in order to strengthen them if necessary.

The best-known activity of ECRI is the preparation of country-specific reports, in which ECRI analyzes the actions of the member states and makes concrete proposals to their governments. The first series of country-specific reports, published in July 1997, covered 11 states. The report on Hungary pointed to the Rights of the National and Ethnic Minorities Act, which affirms the collective and individual rights of national and ethnic minorities living in the country. The Hungarian government, it said, recognized the importance of the management of the minority issue on the governmental level and made it manifest in its organizational structure, as well. The ECRI report also stated that Hungary was aware of the problems of the Romani community and was making respectable efforts in housing, education, employment, and other areas to improve the situation of the community by attempting to reduce racial discrimination against it. The official went on to discuss the relevant activities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Although not of a legally binding nature, the documents and declarations of the OSCE do reflect a political commitment, and their implementation is examined at review conferences held every two years.

Over time, the question has been raised with increasing frequency whether general minority rights are sufficient for the protection of the Roma, or whether it is necessary to provide different or special forms of protection. For its part, the OSCE has paid increasing attention to the specific issue of the Roma. The Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues was established in 1994 by the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in Warsaw, Poland. The effectiveness of OSCE's work was increased in 1998 when a decision was made to increase cooperative efforts on Romani issues among the Council of Europe, the OSCE, and the European Commission. The OSCE has also helped raise international attention toward Romani issues through several reports. In 1996, ODIHR prepared a comprehensive report on the situation of the Roma. In 1993 and 1999, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities prepared a report on the situation of Romani communities in Europe.

A representative of the European Union then described the EU's con-

cerns with the issue of the Roma. The roots of the European Union go back to the Treaty of Rome which bans discrimination at several points. Subsequently, the Maastricht and Amsterdam treaties formulated democratic principles and values applicable to member states and to states wishing to join. The political criteria for EU membership, laid down in the Copenhagen agreement of 1993, state, "the applicant country must have achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities." All aspects of candidate countries' readiness for membership, including their treatment of minorities, are monitored by means of annual reports by the European Commission (the EU's administrative body). The latest report, published in October 1999, stated that Hungary fulfilled the Copenhagen criteria, though two areas still needed attention—corruption, and the situation of the Roma.

The report said that Hungary had made more progress in tackling the problems of the Roma than most, if not all, other candidate countries, but it urged that further steps be taken. These would include the implementation of the measures already set out in the "medium-term strategy" of the government's Roma Action Plan, adopted in April 1999. The EU is in the process of elaborating a set of guiding principles on policies for the integration of the Roma that candidate countries will be able to draw on. Some of the ideas in this document, such as establishing an ombudsman for minority affairs, are already in place in Hungary, and others form part of the medium-term strategy.

The EU representative stressed that the Hungarian government must provide the necessary financial support for the medium-term strategy, which may amount to several billion forints. Aid from the EU's PHARE program can be expected, but the promised matching funds must be allocated in the budget. Accession negotiations, in this as in other areas, will proceed parallel with the progress that is made in implementation. Further efforts, he said, are also needed to eliminate discrimination against the Roma in restaurants, nightclubs, and other public establishments. The EU welcomes training projects like the one, organized with the help of PER, on the human-rights problems experienced by the Roma for senior police officers; similar training for the judiciary and for lawyers should be conducted. Funding for legal aid would facilitate access to justice for disadvantaged sections of society.

The EU has allocated five million euros, continued the EU representa-

tive, to which will be added a similar amount from the Hungarian government, to projects promoting the social integration of young Roma, primarily through support for education. Among these projects are preschool programs, programs to reduce the dropout rate among Romani pupils at primary and secondary levels, and assistance for the “invisible college” program for talented Romani students. In addition, nongovernmental organizations supporting minorities generally receive about 10 percent of the funds allocated from the EU’s PHARE and LIEN programs for disadvantaged groups. The PHARE projects are developed and executed in cooperation with the government, but participation by the Roma would be welcome in the design of the projects.

Although a great deal of effort is required from the government to bring about equality in every area of life, he pointed out, a response is required from the Romani communities themselves. A history of discrimination may have given rise to frustration and alienation among them, but Romani leaders must encourage the people in their communities to take advantage of opportunities to improve their situation, particularly in education and training. The Roma should be partners with the state in resolving their problems. However, this need not mean assimilation and the loss of the unique Romani identity. The EU recognizes the need to encourage the preservation and development of Romani languages, family ties, and special cultural values. Romani culture is an important part of Hungary’s culture, as seen particularly in the contributions of the many outstanding Romani musicians. The work of the Gandhi School in Pécs should be especially mentioned; here, Romani children have the opportunity to study their own language and culture, along with the standard curriculum. But education about the culture of the Roma should not be just for the Roma; it is important that all schools be equipped with the teaching materials, methodologies, and curriculum necessary to allow recognition to be given to diverse cultural backgrounds.

Concluding his presentation, the EU representative said that the development of positive and effective government policies for the Roma is an essential part of the process of Hungary’s accession to the EU. Programs to help the Roma must ultimately aim for the complete integration of Romani citizens into Hungarian society, without the loss of their valuable and distinctive identity. EU member states attach great importance to these issues.

GOVERNMENTAL MEASURES IN HUNGARY

A government official observed that the European Commission, in its “Agenda 2000” document, published in 1997, stated that there were no basic problems in Hungary’s political conditions. Democratic institutions were operating smoothly, elections were free, courts were independent and accessible, and civil, political, economic, social, cultural, and minority rights were guaranteed.

Several representatives of the Hungarian government continued the discussion by describing steps already taken by the government to improve the situation of the country’s Romani population. Being that the Roma are recognized as one of the 13 national and ethnic minorities in Hungary’s Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities Act, they have the same rights and status as other minorities do. With the introduction of the minority self-government system in 1993, it became possible for minorities to establish, not only nongovernmental civic organizations, but also local and national self-governments that are, as elected parts of the administration, legitimate partners of the municipal self-governments and of other governmental bodies. Approximately 3,000 local and national Romani politicians are working in these self-governments. The Hungarian state considers the Romani population to be, not merely a socially disadvantaged stratum, but also a group of people distinguished from other groups by its traditions, language, material and spiritual culture, they said.

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These government representatives suggested that solutions for the problems of the Romani community exist in governmental policies. Both Romani and non-Romani governmental and nongovernmental organizations participate in the coordination of the tasks and duties attendant upon these policies. The social integration of the Romani minority is also supported by legal, political, institutional, and financial means, they continued. In 1997, a package of “medium-term” measures was enacted (modified in 1999), which defined a set of tasks in the fields of education, culture, employment, agriculture, regional development, housing, health care, social welfare, anti-discrimination, and communication.

The overall goals were to eliminate unequal opportunities, to prevent and reduce prejudice and discrimination, and to strengthen the identity and culture of Romani communities. Deadlines were established, and specific ministries and other organs of national authority were made responsible for accomplishing specific tasks.

In the education of the Romani population, the most important tasks are the development of appropriate curricula in primary schools, reduction of the dropout rate in secondary and higher education, an increase in the number of degrees awarded, and the nurturing of talents. The government, in its budget for fiscal year 2000, allocated resources for the establishment of two "talent-management" colleges and for a scholarship to every talented Romani student, beginning with the upper grades of elementary school. A report prepared by the parliamentary commissioner of national and ethnic minority rights urged an increase in the proportion of Romani children in kindergartens and other schools. It also said that officials of the minority self-governments should be given professional help granted by the law.

In the field of culture, the National Roma Information and Education Center plays an important role. This center, managed by the National Gypsy Self-Government, began operation in the autumn of 1998. Romani "community houses," established by local initiatives and supported by the national budget, also perform a variety of functions in strengthening local communities and developing Romani culture.

In the field of employment, the government representatives directed attention toward agreements that exist between the county labor centers and the Romani minority self-governments. They recognized the necessity of continuing the central employment and training programs for unemployed people and of broadening the support system for youth entering the labor force. According to the representatives, communal and public-work programs should also be organized, and greater opportunities for entrepreneurship should be created.

In agriculture, the representatives continued, the social land program should be expanded. It should also provide training and consulting services to encourage those in this program to become primary producers or smallholders. For purposes of improving health care and housing, infrastructure and institutions of Romani settlements must also be developed. A research program is needed to find ways of promoting the health of the Romani population and to eliminate discrimination in health-care ser-

vices. The housing program carried out by the National Gypsy Self-Government should be evaluated and used as a model for improvement. Attention should also be paid to the implementation of regulations banning discrimination and to the behavior of the police toward persons belonging to the Romani minority. Furthermore, organizations should be supported that offer legal protection and that focus on preventing and managing ethnic conflicts.

In order for these measures to be successful, the government representatives agreed, a larger segment of the population must become involved. Citizens that are not directly involved in Romani issues have received only limited information on these issues and on the steps taken to deal with them. In fact, events of the past year showed that the great majority of Hungarians are not aware of the problems of the Roma and are not interested in the improvement of their conditions. Such widespread prejudices greatly impede the social integration of the Roma. With the help of the National Gypsy Self-Government and of various experts, a strategic plan should be formulated to present a more realistic picture of the Roma to the majority society, to reduce discrimination against the Roma, and to establish a network for conflict prevention and management.

One of the most positive developments by the Hungarian government, suggested the representatives is the *Interministerial Committee on Roma Issues*. This committee acts as an advisory group for government officials in the creation of appropriate Romani programs. In addition to representatives of the ministries, the president of the National Gypsy Self-Government is a member of the committee. The parliamentary commissioner on national and ethnic minorities is a permanent invitee, and the president of the Gandhi Public Foundation and the Hungarian Public Foundation for the Roma are invited on a case-to-case basis. Under the provisions of the medium-term strategy, the president of the interministerial committee makes recommendations to the government about the resources needed for next steps. For the first time, each of the relevant ministries constructed an action plan for the year 2000, and is expected to earmark funds in its budget for the fulfillment of its designated tasks.

The Hungarian government representatives recognized that further steps have to be taken to improve the situation of the country's Romani population. Nevertheless, they said, given the difficulties of the economy and the many demands of the process of accession, it has been very

difficult to achieve immediate results. Despite these challenges, the government has been committed to continuous and assiduous work toward the goals of reducing discrimination and prejudice against the Roma and bringing about broad social cooperation and solidarity.

THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE GYPSY SELF-GOVERNMENT

Several representatives of the National Gypsy Self-Government discussed the situation from their point-of-view. They agreed that the Roma in Hungary look upon the medium-term action program of the government as holding great promise for their development and integration; however, the Roma themselves must be involved in every phase of implementing this program.

In order to ensure that adequate financial resources are reserved for the implementation of the program, there should be a special chapter in the national budget for supporting the program, instead of allowing each ministry to earmark amounts in their own budget, suggested a representative. This would not only reinforce the commitment of the government to complete the program; it would also give an impetus to real sectoral implementation through the allocation of funds to a specific sub-program of each ministry.

Every government official must realize that neither a respectable image of the nation nor integration into the EU can be achieved without bringing about substantial improvement to the situation of the Roma.

The rate of unemployment among the Roma is very high, especially in the eastern and northeastern parts of Hungary, where it is between 70 and 100 percent. According to one representative, no effective measures have been undertaken to deal with this problem. Many Roma feel trapped in a “subsidy” ghetto in which they have been socialized into distancing themselves from jobs and have become accustomed to an idle life. Serious and substantive government intervention is needed to help these people become productive members of society. Romani leaders, this representative continued, also have the responsibility to cooperate with whatever government is in power, in improving the situation of the Roma. It is crucial that every government official realize that neither a respectable image of the nation nor integra-

tion into the EU can be achieved without bringing about substantial improvement to the situation of the Roma, he continued. Since international organizations are also obligated to keep the issue of the Roma as a priority, government officials must see to it that the Gypsy Self-Government has a voice in the distribution of funds that come from international organizations for the support of programs directed toward the Roma.

The medium-term program, noted one Romani representative, is only one of the means, though a very important one, of integrating the Roma into Hungarian society. Another representative pointed to four major conditions needed for the effective implementation of the medium-term program: the allocation of appropriate financial resources from the central budget, effective institutional relations between the national government and the Gypsy Self-Government, the political will to carry out the program on the part of the government and of the majority society, and finally, increased representation of the Roma, in addition to other minorities, in parliament.

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF EXPERTS

A researcher called attention to the significance of the social context in which the Roma live. This environment is characterized by prejudice, negative and belligerent attitudes, and stigmatization. Politicians and other members of the elite bear a special responsibility in forming this social context, because the general public is influenced by what they say and do.

An expert who was a representative of a political party stressed that external pressure, especially from the EU, can reinforce the commitment of the government to the initiation and implementation of programs for the improvement of the situation of the Roma in Hungary. From that point of view, it is quite unfortunate that the EU legal code itself does not contain any specific provisions on the Roma. There are a number of positive models regarding the management of the issue of minorities in the EU but there is no “Roma model.” He said that the real situation of the Roma differs from the one depicted in the EU’s country report on Hungary: It is both better and worse. It is better in that discrimination is not as severe as the report indicated. On the other hand, whereas previously 35 percent of children in the lower strata managed to graduate from university, the proportion is now less than 2 percent.

A member of the Hungarian parliament emphasized that although the government is not exclusively responsible for the successes and problems of programs directed at improving the situation of the Roma, it does possess most of the necessary resources. It must use both legal and social approaches. In terms of laws on the books, Hungary has good marks; for example, the anti-discrimination provisions of its labor law seem to be more elaborate than those of a similar legal instrument in France. However, one has to keep in mind the difference between *de jure* and *de facto*. Can genuine pluralism and multiculturalism be achieved? Representation of the Roma in parliament remains low. Between 1990 and 1994, there were three Romani members of parliament who had been elected from party lists. Now there are none.

The chair of a parliamentary committee added that the nation's majority group should not merely "tolerate" other cultures, but should recognize them as being equally valuable. The country should present itself as containing a diversity of cultures.

An expert representing a political party asserted that because of the depth of the problems involved, the integration of the Roma is a task of several decades. One obstacle to progress is the lack of county-level organizations that could connect national programs with the local level.

An expert from the National Gypsy Self-Government stressed that excessively high expectations could hinder professional execution of the government's program for social integration of the Roma. Another important factor is that the program must be communicated in a way that will not arouse negative reactions from the majority. The work of the Interministerial Committee on Roma Issues has become more professional, and the ministries themselves have become more accountable, by virtue of the requirement that they draw up concrete action plans for each year of the medium-term program. A representative of the Hungarian Public Foundation for the Roma said the foundation's programs were most likely to be successful in areas where the minority self-government and the local municipal self-government had good cooperative relations. Because the form and content of cooperation and the division of authority have not been regulated, this cooperation is dependent on the particular individuals that are involved on both sides. The support of civic organizations for minority self-government also increases the likelihood of successful programs.

An expert from the Ministry of Education said that the "sliding" of

Romani children starts as early as nursery school, because of the low level of attendance. The ministry is trying to work out a system that will raise attendance. Dropout rates are even higher in the elementary schools. Very few Romani youth enter secondary schools, and most of them go to vocational-type schools.

An expert from the Ministry of Culture said that the ministry's task is to ensure the survival of the Romani cultural heritage by supporting cultural events and activities of the Roma. It is hoped that, in the future, local civic organizations (both Romani and non-Romani), cultural houses, and municipal and minority self-governments will cooperate in organizing these events and activities.

A sociologist pointed out that the question of "special schools" was not mentioned in the medium-term government program. In these schools, the proportion of Romani children is six or seven times greater than in other schools. Even in ordinary schools, a form of "internal segregation" is evident, when all Romani children are put in one class. The program of "catch-up education" should be revised, or perhaps it should be replaced by "personality-centered" educational methodology. The director of an alternative school pointed to "living positive examples" of educational institutions that serve Romani children. He named the Gandhi Gymnasium in Pécs. More schools like these are needed, he said, instead of the "Prussian type" of municipal schools. They teach the same basic national curriculum but in a different form and with specially trained teachers. Half of the pupils in these schools are Roma, but all pupils learn about Romani ethnography. The drop out rate in these schools is less than 10 percent.

The nation's majority group should not merely "tolerate" other cultures, but should recognize them as being equally valuable.

An expert on education called for the appointment of an "educational ombudsman," who would keep tabs on the situation of Romani children in elementary schools. The participant also emphasized that Romani representation should exist in regional councils and resources should be transferred to local and minority self-governments. Furthermore, legislation should be enacted that would hinder the ghettoization of schools.

An expert from the Ministry of Social Issues said that it does not deal with issues on an ethnic basis. The problems of unemployment differ in

kind from county to county. The government's ability to create jobs rests with the Ministry of Economy and with the regional development councils, but they do not have authority to operate programs specifically for Roma; however, county labor councils are active in training Romani activists and "assistants" in family support, community development, and labor organization.

An expert from the Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Development noted that the number of industrial workers has dropped to 300 thousand from the level of 1.7 million in the 1980s. In order to create new jobs and to integrate the Roma into the economy, cooperation is needed between the state, the municipalities, and the minority self-governments. The ministry is working with the National Gypsy Self-Government and with the Ministry of Social Issues in the financing and design of land programs.

A representative of the Romani press criticized the medium-term program for not putting sufficient emphasis on the role of the media, although he acknowledged that the government has had limited means in this field. There is a lack of information on the medium-term program among the Roma. He also stressed that there is a need for strong and diverse Romani media to modify the majority's perception of the Roma.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In the concluding session, participants agreed that three basic conditions are needed for the effective implementation of the medium-term program:

- realistic budgetary support, including the resources from the EU's PHARE program;
- involvement of the Roma self-government in every phase of the program, and;
- political will of the government to carry out the program.

Participants also expressed their conviction that the issue of the Roma in Hungary should be seen not only as a condition for integration into the EU, but also as a broad social concern for the well-being of a large disadvantaged group of people.

In his closing speech, a representative of the National Gypsy Self-Government emphasized that thanks to their high level of organization, and to the existence of elaborate and wide-ranging legal regulations, the Roma in Hungary may enjoy a status that is above average in the region—and yet, they are still burdened with many problems. It is the objective of, and, at the same time, a condition for the integration of the Roma into Hungarian society that the Roma progress toward greater autonomy.

An official of the Hungarian government requested that PER continue playing a catalytic role in the field of minority issues in Hungary. Another representative of the government said that the medium-term program could be modified and supplemented and that the conference had helped to identify how and where changes should be made. Lessons drawn from this meeting would be considered when corrective steps are taken in areas such as regional development, education, and employment policy.

Leaders and representatives of the National Gypsy Self-Government said that they, too, considered the conference to have been useful and important, and they suggested that it be considered as the first in a series. Subsequent conferences could be devoted to specific issues, such as education, employment, and culture. Representatives of both the national government and the Gypsy Self-Government expressed a desire to continue cooperating with PER in exploring ways to further improve the situation of the Romani community in Hungary.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Romani Representatives

- Pál Aradi**, Vice-President, National Gypsy Self-Government
Gábor Bernáth, Director, Roma Press Center
Béla Csillei, Director, “Roma Chance” Alternative Foundation School
Tamás Eperjesi, President, Hungarian Public Foundation for the Roma
Flórián Farkas, President, National Gypsy Self-Government
Gabriella Farkas, Director, Hungarian Public Foundation for the Roma
Tibor Farkas, Vice-President, National Gypsy Self-Government
Gál József, Vice-President, National Gypsy Self-Government
István Horváth, Chairman, Professional Union of Roma Leaders
József Kolompár, Program Manager, National Public Foundation on Employment
Angéla Kóczé, expert, Council of Europe
István Kovács, expert, National Gypsy Self-Government
Béla Lakatos, expert on education
Mihály Lukács, Vice-President, National Gypsy Self-Government
Erika Muhi, Director, Rights Protection Bureau for National and Ethnic Minorities
Béla Osztójkán, Vice-President, National Gypsy Self-Government
Ferenc Pákó, expert, National Gypsy Self-Government
Miklós Pálfi, Vice-President, National Gypsy Self-Government
Sándor Petróczi, Adviser, National Gypsy Self-Government
Lajos Rácz, expert, Lungo Drom
László Rostás, Vice-President, National Gypsy Self-Government
Erika Csovcsecs, Director, Gandhi Gymnasium
László Teleki, Vice-President, National Gypsy Self-Government

Parliamentary Representatives

- Péter Göndör**, Senior Adviser, Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Ethnic and National Minorities
Jenő Kaltenbách, Parliamentary Commissioner for National and Ethnic Minorities
Magda Kósa Kovács, Chair, Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights, Minorities, and Religion
Csaba Tabajdi, Member, Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights, Minorities, and Religion

Governmental and Political Representatives

- Edit Bicskei**, Romani Education Counselor, Ministry of Education
Klára Csányi, Department Head, Ministry of Interior
Toso Doncsev, President, Office for National and Ethnic Minorities
Antal Heizer, Vice-President, Office for National and Ethnic Minorities
Csaba Hende, Political State Secretary, Ministry of Justice
László Kovács, Senior Adviser, Ministry of Social and Family Issues
Tamás Major, Head of Department of Foreign Relations, Young Democrats-FIDESZ
Endre Miklóssy, Senior Adviser, Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Development
Péter Szegvári, Head of Secretariat of the State Secretary on Public Administration and Regional Policy, Office of the Prime Minister
József Varga, Adviser, Office of the Prime Minister’s Cabinet
Gabriella Varjú, Vice-President, Office for National and Ethnic Minorities
József Tóth Zoltán, Department Head, Ministry of National Cultural Heritage

Experts

- Sándor Geskó**, Director, Mediator Advisory Bureau
Gábor Havas, Sociologist, Sociology Institute, Hungarian Academy of Sciences

Ernö Kállai, Minority Research Workshop, Hungarian Academy of Sciences

Ferenc Mélykúti, Director, Budapest Office, Project on Ethnic Relations

Antal Örkény, Department of Sociology, Eötvös Lóránd University of the Sciences

László Szarka, Director, Minority Research Workshop, Hungarian Academy of Sciences

Erika Törzsök, Director, Institute of European Comparative Research on Minorities

Foreign Participants

Allen H. Kassof, President, Project on Ethnic Relations

Michael Lake, Head, Delegation of the European Commission to Hungary

Sheila McGovern, Adviser, Delegation of the European Commission to Hungary

Andrzej Mirga, Chair, Project on Ethnic Relations Romany Advisory Council; Co-Chair, Council of Europe's Specialist Group on Roma/Gypsies

Livia Plaks, Executive Director, Project on Ethnic Relations



From left to right: Angela Kocze, Gabriela Varju, Laszlo Teleki.



From left to right: Laszlo Rostas, Magola Kosa Kovacs, Csaba Tabajdi.

OTHER PER PUBLICATIONS

- *Romanian-American Symposium on Inter-Ethnic Relations (1991)*
- *The Romanies in Central and Eastern Europe: Illusions and Reality (1992)*
- *Nationality Policy in the Russian Federation (1992)*
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- *Countering Anti-Roma Violence in Eastern Europe: The Snagov Conference and Related Efforts (1994)*
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- *The New York Roundtable: Toward Peaceful Accommodation in Kosovo (1997)*
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