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Department of Central and East European Studies

University of Glasgow

Integrating Romani Communities in the Czech Republic: An analysis of policy implementation at the local level

by

Laura Cashman

Thesis submitted to the University of Glasgow

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

This thesis provides an analysis of the national integration strategy developed in the Czech Republic to address the social exclusion of Romani communities. Based on a careful study of policy documents and interviews with the key actors involved in implementing the integration policy in České Budějovice and Ostrava, this thesis identifies the main barriers which exclude Roma from the education system and the labour market and describes how national policy in the spheres of education and employment is being implemented at the local level. By discussing the integration strategy with the people responsible for its implementation, it was possible to look at the policy from a new perspective. These people are experts in dealing with the realities of social exclusion in Romani communities and are in the best position to assess the effectiveness of the different programmes which together make up the integration policy.

This study reveals that Romani communities continue to suffer from discrimination and that local authorities play a vital role in ensuring that the policies designed by central government become a reality. Communication between policy makers and those responsible for implementation is crucial to ensure that the programmes that form the core of the integration strategy are implemented fully. Some programmes have been more effective in certain places because local political and economic circumstances have a great deal of influence over the likely success of the policy. Anti-Romani prejudices in wider society and the apathy of Roma who are not interested in the programmes designed to help them remain significant obstacles but creating an inclusive society and addressing the mistrust which has developed over generations takes time and persistence. Therefore, for the integration policy to succeed, all the key agencies, policy makers and practitioners working with Romani communities must cooperate and share the same agenda.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCVM	<i>Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění</i> (Centre for Research into Public Opinion)
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CEECs	Central and Eastern European Countries
CMEA	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
CSI	Czech Schools Inspectorate
CSO	Czech Statistical Office
ČSSD	<i>Česká strana sociálně demokratická</i> (Czech Social Democratic Party)
DfES	Department for Education and Skills, UK
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
ERRC	European Roma Rights Centre
DG	Directorate General
EU	European Union
FSA	Field Social Assistant
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
KDU-ČSL	<i>Křesťanská a demokratická unie – Československá lidová strana</i> (Christian Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party)
KSČ	<i>Komunistická strana Československa</i> (Communist Party of Czechoslovakia),
KSČM	<i>Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy</i> (Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia)
MCE	Multicultural Education
MoE	Ministry of Education
MLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
MSA	Minimum Subsistence Amount
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Nongovernmental Organisation
ODS	Civic Democratic Party (<i>Občanská demokratická strana</i>)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OSI	Open Society Institute
PER	Project on Ethnic Relations
PHARE	Poland-Hungary Actions for European Reconstruction
RFE/RL	Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty
ROI	<i>Romská občanská iniciativa</i> (Romani Civic Initiative)
STEM	<i>Středisko empirických výzkumů</i> (Centre for Empirical Research)
TA	Teaching Assistant
UIV	<i>Ústav pro informace ve vzdělávání</i> (Institute for Information on Education)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
US	<i>Unie svobody</i> (Freedom Union)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how policies developed by the Czech state to improve the integration of Romani communities¹ into mainstream society are being implemented at the local level and to identify problems which continue to hamper the effectiveness of the reforms. Such policies were a key issue during the membership accession negotiations before the Czech Republic joined the European Union (EU). The European Commission was satisfied that progress had been made in dealing with the problems facing Czech Roma and this thesis examines whether these policies are as effective, in reality, as the rhetoric suggests. Based on an in-depth study of the key policy documents produced by the Ministries of Education and of Labour and Social Affairs and the Council for Romani Affairs along with interviews with local government officials, teachers, social workers and representatives of Romani communities in two cities in the Czech Republic, this thesis analyses the aims of the programmes and presents a detailed account of the reality of the situation facing the practitioners who are responsible for implementing these programmes. This research is important because it gives voice to the people who work directly with Romani communities and who are faced with the challenge of transforming the programmes from ideas on paper into effective tools of practice. Indeed it could be argued that such individuals are the real experts, even though they have few opportunities to participate in the policymaking process.

The idea for this research developed initially from an interest in the discussions within the media regarding the plight of Roma living in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Arguments about the merits of their claims for asylum dominated the press in the late 1990s. Questions were asked about the treatment of Roma and worrying stories of discrimination and racially motivated violence emerged. The Czech Republic in

¹ Roma have been traditionally referred to as Gypsies (*Cikáni* in Czech); however, these terms have acquired pejorative connotations and thus the name Roma is preferred by Romani activists. I respect this wish and throughout the thesis the term Rom is used when referring to a single person, Roma for the group and Romani as an adjective. Terms used by other authors are not changed when cited.

particular became the object of intense media interest as a consequence of the controversy over its strict interpretation of citizenship laws following the break-up of Czechoslovakia, which left many Roma effectively stateless. This was followed by the notorious plans to build a wall to segregate a group of Romani residents living on one side of Matiční Street in Ústí nad Labem, following complaints about their behaviour from other local residents. This apparent attempt to introduce a form of apartheid in a prospective EU member state prompted international outcry. During the 1990s, influential nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) including the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch highlighted the social exclusion of Romani communities, both in terms of racial discrimination and socio-economic inequalities. International organisations such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe, the World Bank and the EU also paid more attention to the problems and stressed the need for the governments of CEE states to take action to improve the living conditions of their Romani minorities. This pressure prompted the Czech government to tackle the problems of Romani citizens and led in 2000 to the approval of a national integration strategy, outlined in the *Concept of Romani Integration*, hereafter referred to as the 2000 Concept (Government Resolution 2000). The implementation of the policies embodied in the 2000 Concept is the main issue under examination in this thesis.

The 2000 Concept aims to improve the integration of Romani communities by effecting significant changes in every aspect of their lives. It includes chapters on employment, education, justice, culture and the security of Romani communities. The aim of this study was to gain a better understanding of how these proposed policies were being implemented but it quickly became apparent that it would be impossible to provide comprehensive coverage of all aspects of the policies within the remit of the doctoral thesis. The spheres of education and employment were therefore identified as key policy areas because they highlight significant problems facing Romani communities in terms of cultural and socio-economic exclusion. Many respondents identified low education levels as the primary cause of difficulties for Roma in the labour market and the research for the thesis also revealed that the high unemployment rates in Romani communities discouraged young people from pursuing further qualifications.

Roma in the Czech Republic constitute a small but significant minority. Although estimates of its size vary widely, given the reluctance of many Roma to declare their ethnicity on the national census, it is generally accepted that the number lies between 250,000 and 300,000, i.e. approximately 3 per cent of the Czech population (Liégeois and Gheorghe 1995: 7). Roma have lived in the region since the fourteenth century and relations with the majority population have always been strained (Fraser 1995; Guy 2001a). However, the transition since 1989 from state socialism to democracy and a market economy brought the question of how to deal with Romani communities to the fore once again. Economic restructuring has caused more economic hardship for Romani communities than any other social or ethnic group and traditional antipathy towards Roma has been exacerbated by right-wing radical groups who have capitalised on their new right to free speech (ECRI 2000; Amnesty International 2002; Ringold *et al.* 2005). The attempts of the Communist Party to assimilate Romani communities have left a problematic legacy. Many Roma no longer speak the Romani language and many more are afraid to admit ethnicity on official documents such as the census. This makes it difficult to establish the size of Romani communities and to evaluate their needs.²

It is important to stress the diversity of Romani communities in the Czech Republic and this thesis refers throughout to Romani *communities* rather than to *the* Romani *community* to emphasise this heterogeneity. Although the image traditionally associated with Roma is of poverty, illiteracy and crime, a middle class of well-educated Roma also exists and offers an alternative Romani discourse (Roma Rising 2007)³. However, some members of Romani communities need additional support to integrate properly into society and this thesis is concerned with Roma who suffer from the most serious forms of social exclusion: those who live in the worst housing conditions, who do not have any educational qualifications and who are unlikely to ever find employment. Such individuals and their children are the main target of the policies examined in this thesis and thus it is their lifestyles and their problems which receive the most attention. This is not to imply, however, that this socio-economic group represent all Roma or that despite

² This issue will be discussed in greater depth in Sections 1.5.2 and 4.1

³ Roma Rising is a photographic exhibition of the portraits of more than one hundred Romani citizens of the Czech Republic who belong to the growing middleclass and professional class. It toured the Czech Republic in 2005 to highlight an alternative image of Roma.

the traditional image, the Romani identity is inevitably linked to deprivation and anti-social behaviour.

This introductory chapter will next discuss the main themes in literature concerning Roma living in the Czech Republic and establish how the research conducted for this thesis relates to current literature examining Romani communities with regard to their relationships with the majority society, minority rights, political representation and the influence of international organisations. It then establishes how this thesis, as a study of policy implementation at the local level, complements existing literature examining policy implementation. Particular attention is also given to literature examining discrimination in the spheres of education and employment. The literature review is followed by a discussion of the methodological approach which informed the research and the chapter concludes by identifying the key questions which will be addressed in the thesis.

1.1 Romani Studies: An Overview of Existing Literature

The intense media scrutiny of Roma in CEE prompted renewed interest from academics in the 1990s but even during the communist period, Roma in Czechoslovakia attracted academic interest. Milena Hübschmannová was the foremost Czech scholar of Romani studies, particularly linguistics, since the 1960s. Although her work is not directly referenced in this thesis, her ideas have influenced much of the thinking of subsequent Czech academics. In particular, her identification of the use of an ethnolect combining elements of Czech and Romani vocabulary and grammar structures by Romani school children has helped teachers and educational psychologists to find more effective ways to teach Romani children (Šotolová 2001: 26). Similarly, Otto Ulč published an article critically examining Communist policy towards Romani communities in Czechoslovakia before the Prague Spring (Ulč 1969), which was followed by a reassessment of the situation in 1988 (Ulč 1988). In 1975, Will Guy published his study “Ways of Looking at Roms: The Case of Czechoslovakia” (Guy 1975), examining the impact of forced resettlement programmes on Romani communities in Czechoslovakia. He is one of the leading experts on the situation in the Czech Republic and Slovakia and has since edited many volumes addressing Romani issues. More recent publications,

(Guy 2001a; Guy 2001b) provide a comprehensive analysis of Czech and Slovak policy towards Romani communities. His work is one of the main sources of reference for this thesis.

Other scholars who have worked in the field of Romani studies (in Western and Central and Eastern Europe) for many years include Acton, Hancock and Okely. Their work has provided the basis for the scholarship of the 1990s and beyond. Today the field of Romani studies is extremely diverse, encompassing anthropologists, sociologists, historians, political scientists and economists. Fonseca (1996) and Stewart (1997) have provided enlightening anthropological studies examining life in Romani communities in the Balkans and Hungary. Their research highlights the diversity within Romani communities and attempts to challenge some of the assumptions non-Roma often have about Roma. Stewart's discussion of how Roma have successfully defended their culture from the assimilationist pressures of the state socialist regimes is particularly helpful. It demonstrates the necessity of dealing with Romani culture and traditions sensitively when trying to tackle the social exclusion of Romani communities.

In terms of historical analysis of the experiences of Roma, there have been problems finding reliable sources because Roma do not have their own written documents recording their historical experiences. Nevertheless, Fraser's "*The Gypsies*" (1995) stands out as a thoroughly researched piece of work, popular with other scholars as a source of reliable information. Until recently, the genocide of Roma during the Holocaust, or *Porrajmos* (the Devouring) as it is known among Roma, had not received as much attention from scholars as the experiences of the Jews. Discussions of the suffering of Roma in labour camps and their execution in the concentration camps has tended to refer to them along with homosexuals, vagrants and other 'social deviants'. This may explain why the Ghetto and concentration camp at Terezín in the Czech Republic is preserved as an important national memorial, whereas the camp at Lety, where more than 300 Roma (mostly children) died and a further 800 were held until they were transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau has been used as an industrial pig farm for the past 30 years. Kenrick and Puxon (1972) provided one of the first detailed accounts of the experiences of Roma during World War Two. This was published as a new edition under the title "*Gypsies under the Swastika*" (Kenrick and Puxon 1995) and

remains the most comprehensive overview available on the subject, covering the experiences of Roma across Europe during the War. The Czech historian, Ctibor Nečas, has written extensively on the history of Czech Roma and his book “*The Holocaust of the Czech Roma*” (1999) uses the records kept at the camps and the testimony of survivors to provide a detailed account of the experiences of Roma sent to the camps at Lety, Hodonín and Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Books published in English tend to provide a comparative analysis of the experiences of Roma across Eastern Europe rather than focusing on single country studies (Barany 2002; Guy 2001; Liégeois 1994; Ringold *et al.* 2005). Accounts of the situation in the Czech Republic are generally published as chapters in edited collections dealing with Roma across CEE or as journal articles. Traditionally, Czech authors have given more attention to the situation in the Czech Republic. In 2003, Navrátil *et al.* published an edited volume examining the social exclusion of Roma in the Czech Republic, which they hoped would be a useful handbook for social workers and other practitioners dealing with Romani communities. Šotolová’s (2001) discussion of education of Romani children in the Czech Republic and elsewhere in Europe offers a clear and concise account of the main problems facing Romani pupils and the Czech Ministry of Education’s strategy to give Romani pupils more support. Roček (1999) provided a detailed account of the building of the wall in Matiční Street in Ústí nad Labem in 1998, which developed into an international scandal causing much embarrassment to the Czech government of the time. A more controversial contribution to the debate on the position of Roma in Czech society came from Petr Balalář in 2004. His book “*Psychologie Romů*” (The psychology of Roma) claims to break new ground by challenging taboos in the field of social sciences, and asserting that Roma have particular psychological characteristics which have been determined genetically. However, the Czech academic community has rejected his work on the grounds that it is based on questionable sources and uses unscientific methods to make claims which are fundamentally racist (Halatka 2004). The rest of this review will focus on how particular themes relevant to this thesis have been approached by other authors.

1.1.1 Relations Between Romani and Non-Romani Communities

The key issue of relations between Roma and the rest of Czech society has been examined by a number of authors. Fawn (2001) questions why a nation such as the Czechs, long regarded as one of the most liberal and tolerant in CEE, could be accused of treating Roma in such a discriminatory manner. He identifies a number of factors including the legacy of communist policy which did little to challenge stereotypes of Roma and the process of nation building undertaken in the 1990s which left little room for Roma in the image of the homogenous Czech nation. He also refers to Ladislav Holy's (1996: 64) account of the exclusivity of Czech national identity – that to be Czech means not only to be born in the Czech Republic and to speak Czech but most importantly, to be born to Czech parents. Thus Roma can never be considered Czech. Čulík (1999; 2000) describes relations between the majority and minority as complicated, with faults on both sides. He is pessimistic that change can happen quickly in a society where prejudices are deeply entrenched in both communities. Burjanek (2001) examined the phenomenon of xenophobia in the Czech Republic. Using data from national opinion polls to identify a profile of a typical xenophobe, he has demonstrated that Roma are rejected by many Czechs on the grounds of their “foreignness,” despite being resident in the country for generations.⁴

The role of the media in propagating or challenging stereotypes and prejudices of the majority society has been examined by scholars including Fawn (2002) and Homoláč *et al.* (2003). Press reviews conducted by Homoláč *et al.* (2003) examined how cases involving Roma were handled by Czech media during the early to mid 1990s and demonstrated that the media was guilty of reproducing negative stereotypes of Roma. However, a study of press coverage of Roma in the later period (1998 - 2002) by Fawn (2002), revealed a change in the editorial policy of the main newspapers, whereby much more politically correct language was used when discussing Roma. Fawn also argues that this change in approach by the press did not always reflect the views of the readers.

⁴ Almost all Czech Roma were exterminated during World War Two. Most Roma living in the Czech Republic today are descended from Slovak migrants who moved to the Czech Lands to find employment during the Communist period.

Bancroft (1999) argues that western observers cannot dismiss the exclusion of Roma from Czech society as a phenomenon of uncivilised and backward nations. Instead, he argues that the kind of racism suffered by Roma is part of the modern European experience. In a more recent publication, Bancroft (2005) puts forward a thesis that Roma are suffering from “new-old” forms of exclusion – which combine old methods in new forms. His argument is that the firmly established power of the nation-state to control spaces, institutional frameworks and the identity of the nation has resulted in the “squeezing out” of Roma and Gypsy-Traveller communities, who find that there is no room for their identity or lifestyle in modern Europe (Bancroft, 2005:2-5).

Research for this thesis revealed that to a large extent Roma and non-Roma live parallel lives. They live in different neighbourhoods, work in different places and their children go to different schools. This lack of meaningful interaction leads to mistrust and fear on both sides. Instances where Roma and non-Roma had been obliged to work together generally led to the development of good relationships and the breakdown of prejudice. Therefore, a theme in this thesis is the need to develop new ways to break down the socio-cultural divisions which separate Roma and non-Roma and to gradually improve the integration of both groups into a more inclusive society.

1.1.2 National Minority Rights and Social Exclusion Frameworks

Czech Roma are recognised as a national minority and, at least in theory, they enjoy the same rights as other national minorities such as Poles or Ukrainians to education in their mother tongue and support for cultural activities. However, these rights have not proven to be an effective tool for improving the living conditions of Romani communities and many scholars including Kymlicka (2001) and Pognány (2006) have questioned the usefulness of minority rights for Roma. Kymlicka (2001: 74) describes Roma as a “hard case” in terms of minority rights models because they cannot be classified as immigrants and “their homeland is both everywhere and nowhere”. Their lack of a kin state means that they do not properly fit into the usual model of national minorities. They do not have a homeland to which they can return to or from which they can seek support when their interests are threatened, nor can they rely on the protection often offered to other national minorities by bilateral agreements concluded by the home state

and the state in which they are resident. The transnational model is equally unsuitable because the majority of Roma have become settled in particular states and adapted to the local culture. Therefore, they identify less with settled Roma in other countries. Pognány (2006) goes further, arguing that minority rights such as education in the Romani language and support for the promotion of cultural activities are luxuries which are of little use to Roma who are much more urgently in need of solutions to the socio-economic inequalities they face. He also agrees with Kymlicka that the model of minority rights no longer fits Romani communities because Roma across Europe do not share the same religion, culture or language and even within individual states the assimilation policies of previous regimes have led to many Roma losing any sense of a Romani ethnic identity (Pognány 2006 15 – 18). In spite of the reservations of scholars, many Romani activists continue to frame their demands in terms of national minority rights. Mirga and Gheorghe (1997) argue that this is an attempt to promote an ethnic consciousness among Roma to increase the levels of dignity and respect afforded to the group – “moving from a status of a despised, ignored and marginal community of “Gypsies” to that of a Romani/Sinti minority demanding respect and rights” (Mirga and Gheorghe 1997: 15).

The limitations of the application of minority rights as a framework for the integration of Czech Roma have led scholars and government officials to frame the issue as one of social exclusion. Barša (2001) describes Romani communities as suffering from triple exclusion – socio-economic, cultural and political and Ringold *et al.* (2005) stress the problems of spatial and socio-economic exclusion. Barany (2002) highlights low educational attainment to explain why Roma remain on the margins of society. Sirovátka (2002) argues that the main barrier to fair inclusion into mainstream society is the lack of social capital in Romani communities in terms of networks which would offer them resources and routes to inclusion. However, he is also careful to stress that the Czech Romani minority is not a homogenous entity. Different strata within Romani communities encounter separate problems, or are affected by the barriers to inclusion to different degrees. Navrátil *et al.* (2003: 34) argue that the social exclusion of Roma is not only detrimental to those particular Roma who are excluded from society but to society as a whole, as a result of the break down in social relationships and solidarity. The choice of certain Romani communities to self-exclude is also discussed in the

literature (Fonseca 1996; Stewart 1997; Barany 2002; Bancroft 2005). However, all the authors recognise that for centuries Romani self-exclusion has gone hand-in-hand with suspicion on the part of the majority society who ostracised Romani communities and made little attempt to welcome or include them.

Whereas many western academics have focused on the tools available through the political representation of minority groups, Czech authors stress the need for adaptation on both the part of the non-Romani majority and the Romani minority to allow for the successful inclusion of Romani communities into all aspects of Czech society. Navrátil *et al.* (2003:11 – 12) maintain that the key concern should not be the difficulties the majority society has with Roma, but that the problem is one of a lack of respect on *both* sides which would allow for peaceful co-existence. Říčan (1998) also argues that Czech society has to adapt and find ways to include and accommodate Roma because centuries of experience have shown that policies of extermination or assimilation cannot force Roma to abandon their identity or change their behaviour to conform to the norms of the majority. Therefore, he calls for a re-think of how relations between both communities should be managed. Barša (2001) argues that a multicultural model of integration is the only possible solution to the question of how Roma and non-Roma can live as equals in Czech society. He believes that Czechs have to transform their own cultural identity to make room for Roma within Czech society and stresses the need to differentiate properly between civic and ethnic identities, allowing for difference without assuming that one culture is superior to another. On the other hand, Vermeersch (2005) finds the discourse of multiculturalism unhelpful insofar as it essentialises the Romani identity and assumes that there are fixed boundaries between identities. Kovats (2003) agrees that stressing differences between Roma and the majority population lends support to the ideology of segregation. The question of how best to address problems within Romani communities, whether through specific policies to support Roma, or ethnoculturally neutral policies to tackle wider social inequalities is at the heart of my thesis.

1.1.3 Political Representation of Roma

Pečínka's (2004) review of party political programmes revealed that mainstream parties do not pay much attention to the specific problems of Romani communities because winning Romani votes was not their main priority. Sobotka (2001b), Vermeersch (2001) and Barany (2002) have focused on what Roma themselves can achieve by participating in mainstream politics and through NGO networks. Sobotka (2001b) has examined the structures established by the states of CEE which give Roma an opportunity to influence policies affecting them. She argues that both the Hungarian system of minority self-government and the Czech and Slovak models of advisory bodies with no political powers are ineffective and that a combination of both systems is necessary to allow Roma real influence over policy formation. She also argues that the lack of Romani politicians cannot be blamed entirely on discrimination in mainstream political parties and may also be accounted for by wealthy NGOs luring away Romani activists, who might otherwise be engaged in mainstream politics. Barany (2002: 233) has also investigated why Romani political parties have not been more successful in local and national elections. He blames the high thresholds needed by parties to enter the Chamber of Deputies (5 percent), discrimination in the mainstream parties who are reluctant to put forward Romani candidates, who they suspect will not be popular with non-Romani voters and the lack of experience of Romani politicians who do not organise their campaign strategies very well. A final problem is that many Romani voters prefer to vote for mainstream parties rather than ethnic Romani parties.

Vermeersch (2001) argues that while NGOs, particularly international human rights organisations, have been effective at influencing the agendas of national governments, the legitimacy of Romani representatives who advise on policy is being called into question because they have not been elected by Romani communities. This problem has also been raised by Mirga and Gheorghe (1997). They identify divisions in the Romani rights movement between traditional leaders, who gained their authority through traditional power structures based on extended family networks, and a new elite of younger Roma, educated in majority society institutions. These younger Roma are more familiar with the workings of mainstream politics and tend to be consulted more often by the state authorities. In later work, Vermeersch (2005) questions whether the activities of Romani NGOs are in fact helping Roma or if their activities are

counterproductive. He fears that by consistently highlighting the worst cases of Romani suffering in order to attract attention to their cause these NGOs are actually reinforcing negative stereotypes held by majority populations about Roma. This is a theme also addressed by Bancroft (2005: 16) who warns of the danger of reconstructing the “Gypsy” identity as a socially delinquent sub-culture.

1.1.4 Influence of International Organisations

As the largest ethnic minority in Europe (Barany 2002; Pognány 2006), the profile of Roma has increased significantly since the collapse of communism. Kovats (2001) provides a critique of the policy approach of the OSCE and Council of Europe towards Roma, arguing that these organisations cannot develop effective policies because they fail to appreciate the diversity of Roma, preferring to treat them as a homogenous group sharing the same interests and problems. The OSCE and Council of Europe were particularly influential in the 1990s, highlighting cases of minority rights abuses in CEE, for example, the problems Czech Roma had in obtaining citizenship in the new Czech Republic. However, it is the EU which has emerged as the most important institution, in terms of European Roma policy, by making the protection of minorities a key condition of entry into the EU. The extent of EU influence has been examined by many scholars including Ram (2003), Guglielmo (2004) and Vermeersch (2004) and but they are not convinced that the EU has effected as much positive change for Romani communities in the accession countries as purported. Vermeersch (2004) notes that Roma were not initially a priority of EU minority policy; rather, the condition of minority protection was introduced with the problems regarding national minorities in the Balkans in mind. The Copenhagen Criteria were very vague as a result and in his opinion, other factors such as the influence of international NGOs and domestic political conditions must be taken into account.

The problem of double standards between what was expected of candidate countries in terms of minority protection policies and the lack of similar pressure on existing member states has been a key theme in the literature. Guglielmo (2004: 42) notes that once the membership of CEE candidates was confirmed in May 2004, monitoring of their minority policies would cease, implying that “membership paradoxically requires

less minority protection than candidacy”. Ram (2003) agrees that the perceived double standards in the EU accession process caused problems for the effective implementation of policies to deal with the problems in Romani communities. She also finds that the anti-Romani prejudices in existing member states weakened the effectiveness of criticism from the Commission. She cites the case of checks by British officials at Prague Ruzyně airport to prevent Romani asylum seekers from boarding flights to Britain as an example. On a more optimistic note, Guglielmo (2004) found that while the question of Roma rights received more attention, steps were taken within the EU to develop anti-discrimination legislation which would apply in all member states. By imposing higher standards on the candidate states, the EU also created a higher standard for itself.

This thesis also argues that the repeated requests from the Commission to find ways to tackle the problems in Romani communities provided the impetus for the Czech government to take action. The aforementioned theories were tested by asking respondents to assess the impact of pressure from the EU on the development of Romani policy and in many respects these arguments were confirmed. A more detailed discussion follows in Chapter 3.

1.1.5 State Policy Towards Roma

Studies of Czech government policy towards Roma have been conducted by Ulč (1969; 1988), Guy (1975; 2001a), Kostelancik (1989), Sobotka (2001a; 2001b), Barany (2002), Sirovátka (2002) and Navrátil *et al.* (2003: 34). Using newspaper reports, policy documents and information provided by key officials involved in developing the policies Barany, Guy, Kostelancik and Ulč provide critical accounts of the policies pursued by the communist authorities, discussing the ideology behind the policies and their legacy. More recent studies also use these methods as a means to find out more about the development of policy and the situation in Romani communities. Sirovátka's research (2002) is based on a large-scale study of relations between Romani and non-Romani communities in ten Czech cities using both qualitative and quantitative methods of collecting information. Based on his findings, he argues that Roma cannot be treated as a homogenous group and policy must be adjusted to take this into account.

Furthermore, the design of integration policies are helpful to Roma who already have some social capital and are capable of fitting into mainstream society. However, he argues that given the general reluctance of the majority society to change in order to accommodate more marginalised Roma, they will remain excluded unless more effective policies are developed which take their needs into account. Navrátil *et al.* (2003) use a variety of studies and surveys to create a more rounded picture of the social and economic situation in Romani communities. They find that the social exclusion suffered by Roma is an issue which the whole of Czech society must take seriously and propose that social workers play a more active role in dealing with the problems. They also provide recommendations to improve cooperation between social workers and minority ethnic communities, including Roma.

Whilst previous studies published about Czech government policy and the experiences of Czech Roma are based on surveys of the attitudes of local residents in Romani and non-Romani communities or the opinions of high profile Romani representatives, they do not take the views of the practitioners involved in implementing government policy into account. Therefore, this thesis aims to complement current studies by exploring the policy implementation process from a new perspective, which should provide new insights into the question of Romani social exclusion and integration.

Barany, Guy and Sobotka discuss the development of the current Czech policy towards Romani communities as outlined in the 2000 Concept. These accounts were written shortly after the 2000 Concept was approved by the government. Therefore, the authors base their assessments on analysis of the plans as laid out on paper. Sobotka (2001a) is the most critical, believing that the 2000 Concept should have been bolder in its demands and objectives. She notes that the original language used and aims of the 2000 Concept were watered down before it was approved by the cabinet and suspects that there will not be sufficient support from within the government to ensure that the targets are met. Barany (2002) agrees that given the degree of controversy within the cabinet with regard to the scope of the policy, implementation could prove to be difficult. Guy (2001a) is also not hopeful that the policy will be successful. Based on his experiences with previous attempts to implement pro-Romani policies, he suspects that the local authorities may again thwart the plans of the central policy makers.

Although they did not have the 2000 Concept specifically in mind, Marushiakova and Popov (2001: 44-47) also worry that the legacy of previous attempts to resolve the “Romani question” will influence the new policies and limit their chances of success. They fear that it will be impossible to move away from the old paternalistic approach towards Romani communities and that the policy of assimilation will continue to be regarded favourably. It is amid such debates that this thesis is situated. Taking the predictions of these scholars into account, my thesis evaluates how the 2000 Concept is being implemented at the local level. It identifies problems within the implementation process, some which were predicted by scholars who are very familiar with the Czech case and some which emerged during discussions with the people who are directly involved in running programmes and implementing policies. This work is therefore original in that it provides new empirical data and its analysis brings new insights into issues which have not yet been fully resolved by other scholars.

The first part of this literature review has demonstrated where the research for this thesis fits into the overall body of knowledge which is developing with regard to Czech Roma and government policies being developed to help them. There is a particular focus within this thesis on the spheres of education and employment and thus the following two sections outline the main debates in the literature with regard to discrimination and inclusion in schools and in the labour market.

1.2 Policy Implementation: Theory and Practice

Until the 1970s, studies of public policy tended to focus on policy design and decision-making processes. However, the realisation that policies were not performing as well as had been hoped led to a growing interest in how policies were being delivered (Parsons 1995: 457). The earliest theories of policy implementation were developed amid vigorous debates on the question of whether top-down or bottom-up approaches were more appropriate to explain the outcomes of public policies. Pressman and Wildavsky’s seminal work, *Implementation*, published in 1973, may not have been the first study of policy implementation but it was instrumental in introducing the concept of

implementation as an “explicit analytic research term” (Saetren 2005: 569, see also Hill and Hupe 2002; Parsons 1995). This rational theory of implementation argued that for a policy to succeed it had to be designed correctly and there had to be an effective chain of command to ensure the policy was implemented in the manner anticipated by its designers. This top-down model was criticised by many authors for not considering the multiple levels of implementation and the important roles of other actors in the process (Hill and Hupe 2002; Parsons 1995). The most important challenge in this respect came from Lipsky (1971; 1980) who emphasised the role of ‘street level bureaucrats’ and the impact of their interaction with clients. Central to Lipsky’s argument was the high margin of discretion, which bureaucrats could exercise, and the need to acknowledge the pressures and political conditions which create the context in which any given policy will be implemented.

Critics considered both top-down and bottom-up approaches to be too simplistic but attempts in the 1980s to develop a general causal theory which could explain the successes and failures of all policy implementation failed (Sabatier 1989). Alternative frameworks which explain how the implementation of a national policy can vary across a state included Hjerm and Porter’s (1981) ‘inter-organisational analysis’ which recognised that implementation involved many networks and organisations who would have to find ways to work together; Kingdon’s (1984) policy streams, based on the assumption that policy changes as problems arise and political priorities shift; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith’s (1989) ‘advocacy coalition framework’ which attempted to synthesise top-down and bottom-up approaches by focusing on subsystems of actors who shared a ‘policy belief’ regardless of their role in the policy-making hierarchy and Goggin *et al.*’s (1990) ‘communications theory’ which highlighted how policy implementers at the local level can be overwhelmed by all the instructions they receive from the centre and the impact this has on the ways they interpret and prioritise information. While each of these theories or frameworks (along with many more not listed here) helped to explain particular aspects of the policy implementation process, no theory was considered completely satisfactory.

At the turn of the millennium many scholars published articles assessing the current state of policy implementation theory (Barrett 2004; deLeon 1999; Kettl 2000; Lester

and Goggin 1998; Meier 1999; O'Toole 2000; Saetren 2005; Schneider 1999; Schofield and Sausman 2004 and Winter 1999). While some authors feared that policy implementation was 'unfashionable', having been dismissed by political scientists because of the failure to develop a complete theory (Barrett 2004; deLeon 1999; Lester and Goggin 1998 and Winter 1999), the general conclusion was that policy implementation is still an important branch of political science (Hill and Hupe 2002; Meier 1999; O'Toole 2000 and Schofield and Sausman 2004). There have been calls to revitalise policy implementation by embracing its evolution into a multi-disciplinary area of study (Meier 1999; Saetren 2005). Other scholars claim that the polarising debates of the 1980s have been resolved and it is less important to discover the grand theory than it is to be flexible about combining aspects of theoretical frameworks which explain particular case studies (John 1998; Meier 1999; O'Toole 2000). Schneider (1999) argues that studies of policy implementation, which provide information of use to the individuals designing and implementing policy, will not always make a contribution to theoretical understandings and that this should not be considered a weakness of the study. Instead she suggests developing studies in two phases, with Phase I providing detailed information about how a policy is implemented and Phase II comparing and measuring differences in the outcomes of a variety of policy implementation case studies (Schneider 1999: 4).

This thesis takes its cue from these implementation analysts. It does not attempt to develop a new theory of implementation; rather it uses a multi-disciplinary approach to assess the case of integration policy in the Czech Republic. Using Schneider's (1999) definition, this is a Phase I study: a detailed analysis conducted as policy is being implemented. It draws in particular on the ideas of Lipsky with its focus on practitioners at the 'street level', Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith's coalitions of actors sharing policy beliefs and particularly Goggins *et al.*'s communication theory. The top-down versus bottom up debates have been largely resolved in the sense that scholars now acknowledge that both perspectives have their merits (Hill and Hupe 2002: 56; O'Toole 2000: 283). However, this thesis focuses on the perspective of the individuals responsible for policy delivery – Lipsky's 'street level bureaucrats'. This is not intended to contradict the general wisdom about the value of synthesising studies, but rather is considered necessary because this level of analysis is largely absent from current

Romani studies literature, as demonstrated in the preceding section of the literature review.

When Lester and Goggin (1998: 4) called for a fresh look at implementation theory, they cited the need to understand the implications for policy administration of devolving power from central government to local administrations as a key reason for more studies. Schofield and Sausman (2004: 241) concur with this view noting that the rise of both supra-national and sub-national institutions which influence how states are governed, has implications for policy implementation which demand closer examination. Studies of decentralisation have tended to frame the issue as one of changing forms of governance (Goss 2001; John, 2001) or of regionalism (Halkier and Sagan 2005; Keating 1998; MacLeod 2001), which have implications for democratisation and representation. There is still a great deal of scope for studies looking at how policy implementation is affected by these changes to power structures and relationships and there is a particular need for studies of policy implementation in CEE, where power is gradually being returned to municipalities and regions after the democratic centralism of the communist period.

Decentralisation of power in the Czech Republic has been analysed by Davey (1995), Illner (1999) and Lacina and Vajdová (2000). Their work focuses primarily on structural issues regarding the reform of municipal government. Davey (1995) provides an account of the earliest stages of local government reform in the Czech Republic and Slovakia and identifies key challenges to the reforms, particularly the size of municipalities, the consequences of returning property to municipal ownership and the decisions about which powers should be devolved to the local administration. Illner (1999) highlights how decentralisation of power has strengthened local democracy and led to the introduction of many new councillors, who had little experience of politics or public administration but who were not tainted by the communist past. However, Illner's research identifies fragmentation as a negative consequence of decentralisation. Many previously amalgamated municipalities split into tiny units and this has led to problems, as small municipalities cannot find enough suitably qualified staff and councillors to manage their affairs. Lacina and Vajdová (2000) also note the importance of localism, reporting that national political parties have little influence at the local

level. In terms of administrative reform they argue that the main challenge is to develop legislation to define the property and financial resources of municipalities.

A later study by Illner (2002) highlights concerns regarding the establishment of the regional level of government. He claims that regional authorities have less political legitimacy because the territorial boundaries of regions do not correlate to specific regional identities and many citizens fail to appreciate why this level of government is necessary. He argues that regional authorities will have to work hard to prove their usefulness to citizens. The need to amalgamate some regions to create NUTS II level regions to comply with EU standards will, according to Illner, lead to more problems in terms of territorial identification, political legitimacy and the sharing of power and responsibilities. The difficulties this complicated situation raises are also discussed by Ferry and McMaster (2005a, 2005b) and Myant and Smith (2006). In a comparative study of regional governance in industrial regions in Poland and the Czech Republic Ferry and McMaster (2005a) argue that regional authorities are constrained from above and below because they are overly dependent on the central authorities for funding and local actors and networks are not yet convinced of the necessity of this additional layer of administration.

Studies of how decentralisation has impacted on particular policies have been published by Ferry and McMaster (2005b), Myant and Smith (2006), Krátký *et al.* (2002) and Lux (2004). In a study focusing on the implementation of structural funds in Poland and the Czech Republic Ferry and McMaster (2005b) argue that Czech regions are fragile and under-resourced and this limits their role in managing EU structural funds. They report the complaints of actors in the region that there is not enough coordination between all the different organisations that have a role to play in regional development. Myant and Smith (2006) also stress the failure of regions to effectively coordinate the activities of municipalities and other local actors. They cite the example of Regional Operational Programmes where regional authorities failed to resist the recentralising decisions of the government and where there was no effective consultation with municipalities. However, they predict that with time the regions will become financially more secure and will gain more prestige and influence. Ferry and McMaster (2005b) and Myant and Smith (2006) both note the tensions which have emerged between central, regional and

municipal authorities in terms of the allocation of resources and responsibilities for economic development. Krátký *et al.* (2002) provide a detailed overview of how the education system has been affected by decentralisation, focusing in particular on tensions between municipalities and the central authorities regarding how schools are financed. Lux (2004) examines the implications of the decentralisation of housing policy. His study reveals disparities among municipalities – in particular among sub-municipal wards – and inefficiencies in how housing is managed, which could lead to the ghettoisation of some communities. In a study of the civic inclusion of Roma at the local level, Castle-Kanerova and Jordan (2001) highlight tensions in the relationships between Romani advisors and the senior officials they are accountable to. While this is not explicitly a study of how policy implementation is affected by decentralisation, it provides useful insights into how a national policy – the employment of Romani advisors – can have different outcomes depending on local circumstances and the nature of the relationships between the advisors, the local Romani communities and the local authorities.

By examining how the integration policy is being implemented at the local level, this thesis also contributes to understandings of how decentralisation of power affects policy implementation. It looks at the roles of central, regional and municipal authorities in implementing national policy and the tensions, which arise among the different levels of government, and it also provides insights into the implementation of education and employment policies in addition to its analysis of the integration policy.

1.3 Education and Discrimination

The literature on discrimination in education is dominated by the theoretical commitment that racist attitudes can either be propagated or challenged by the education system. Figueroa (1991) argues that racism can be sustained through either the school's failure to challenge it directly in the classroom or through the organisational and procedural structures in use, such as the ways in which pupils are assessed. Cole (1989) agrees that the classroom is an important site for challenging pupils' attitudes, but he argues that anti-racist policies will not succeed unless the strong connection between problems of class, gender and racial inequality are recognised. Gillborn (1995:2) also

argues that while schools do not have the power and influence to permanently rid society of racism, the education system can improve social relationships in the long term by teaching pupils to question racist attitudes. Many authors highlight the important role that teachers occupy in transmitting anti-racist values. Jones and Street-Porter (1989) and Figueroa (1991) take the view that teachers need to be given more training to gain a better understanding of the issues and problems surrounding discrimination, both during their initial teacher training and throughout their careers by means of in-service seminars.

An important aspect of racism in schools is institutional racism and the ways in which the education system reflects and systematically perpetuates racist values. Gillborn (2002: 17) refers to the significance of the definition of institutional racism in the Macpherson Report on the Inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence (Macpherson 1999). For Gillborn (2002: 17) this definition is important because it highlights that there is more to racism than the mindless actions of a few ignorant 'bad apples' and shifts the focus to the attitudes and behaviour of people, whether deliberate or unconscious and to the failure of larger social structures to provide appropriate services and support. Figueroa (1991: 182 - 193) argues that the underachievement of some ethnic minority children is a symptom of inequality in the system⁵. He identifies problems such as using testing procedures that are culturally biased and the influence of racist attitudes among teachers who tend to criticise and discipline these children more harshly than other pupils in the class. There is general consensus among academic authors that for anti-racist policies to succeed, the entire ethos of schools and education authorities must be transformed. For example, Jones and Street-Porter (1989: 216 - 217) identify the key changes which institutions must make. These include clearly defining what constitutes racism or racist incidents; introducing policies to ensure equal opportunities; changes to the curriculum of teacher training thus ensuring that teachers understand the issues in relation to professional practice; further education of all staff, not only teaching staff, and close monitoring and evaluation of all strategies introduced.

⁵ Statistics show that in the UK children from some ethnic minority backgrounds perform worse at school than their 'white' peers while children from other ethnic minority backgrounds do as well or better than their 'white' peers (DfES 2005: 2).

The difficulties involved in assessing children with special educational needs from ethnic minority groups are widely discussed in the literature. Gipps and Murphy (1994) discuss the problems involved in using IQ tests such as those traditionally used by Czech educational psychologists. They emphasise the need to take into account the kinds of bias that are inherent in many tests, whether gender, ethnicity, class or cultural. Neisser *et al.* (1996) provide an overview of many of the issues and misunderstandings surrounding IQ testing, outlining what it can and cannot explain, especially when these tests are used on children from ethnic minorities. Williams (1984) highlights the particular concerns regarding special education provision for children from minority communities, including linguistic, cultural and ethnic minorities. The primary concerns are diagnosing a child with special educational needs when there is a language barrier between the child and those carrying out the assessment and then subsequently the problems involved in providing the best possible service for the child. This research is of particular relevance in the case of Czech Romani children as research has shown that they speak an ethnolect of Czech at home, combining Czech and Romani vocabulary and language structures. This has not always been recognised by educational psychologists and in the past, problems with the language of the tests have been misdiagnosed as specific learning difficulties. These problems and the efforts of Czech educational psychologists and teachers to improve testing methods will be discussed in detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

Research on the specific problems of Romani pupils in the Czech education system has been published by NGOs and academics. The focus has been on understanding the obstacles and barriers Romani children have to overcome in order to get a full mainstream education. In 1999, the ERRC published a major study highlighting the overrepresentation of Romani children in remedial special schools, which formed the basis of the case they brought to the European Court of Human Rights against the Czech Republic (ERRC 1999). The Czech Helsinki Committee, the UN Development Programme, the Open Society Institute (OSI) and Save the Children have also published reports highlighting the problems of poverty, discrimination and social exclusion that cause Roma to have problems completing their education. In terms of academic studies, Kňážíková and Zabrša (2004) offer a useful review of the current literature published in Czech. Šotolová (2001) provides a comprehensive overview of the main issues

concerning the education of Romani pupils, highlighting in particular the question of how to educate pupils who speak Romani or an ethnolect combining elements of both Romani and Czech languages at home. She also describes the main aims of the MoE's strategy to improve the educational attainment of Romani children and compares this to the current situation of Roma internationally. Polechová (2003) discusses the problems in the Czech education system, which she describes as explicitly exclusionary, given the high utilisation of special schools in comparison with other OECD countries.

Igarashi (2005) assesses the effectiveness of the very different approaches of two schools in a Czech city towards their Romani pupils. One school developed particular programmes with the needs of Romani children in mind, whereas the other school treated all children equally, not providing any special treatment for Romani pupils. Her conclusion was that the school with the specific programmes for Romani children was not as successful as had been envisaged. The special programmes resulted in a more chaotic learning environment and the neglect of more able pupils who were held back because the pace of the curriculum was slower and focused on pupils who had problems keeping up. Igarashi's study is in many respects similar to the design of the research conducted for this thesis, the main difference being her decision to focus on only two schools. Step by Step, the main NGO involved in promoting new educational practices to support the integration of Romani pupils into mainstream education has commissioned research to evaluate the effectiveness of its programmes (Proactive Information Services 2003). However, there remains a dearth of literature evaluating the implementation of the policies adopted by the MoE through the 2001 Strategy for the improved education of Romani children. This thesis addresses this gap by providing a detailed analysis of the implementation of education reforms in two Czech cities, České Budějovice and Ostrava.

1.4 Employment and Discrimination

The extent to which members of ethnic minorities suffer disadvantage in the labour market because of racist discrimination has been examined by many scholars. Pilkington (2003: 67) reports that even when factors such as gender, place of residence, level of qualifications or age are taken into account, unemployment levels are still higher for ethnic minority groups in the UK than for members of the 'white' majority.

Jenkins (1986), Blakemore and Drake (1996) and Ratcliffe (2004) report similar findings based on data collected in the UK whilst Craig (2002) uses the limited statistical evidence available to demonstrate that there are similar problems in labour markets across Europe. However, the question of discrimination in the labour market is more nuanced than these statistics suggest at first glance. Generally, direct racism is only part of the problem; another significant factor is that ethnic minority groups often lack the social capital – in terms of qualifications and networking connections – necessary to find employment. Given the strict laws prohibiting direct racism, indirect forms of discrimination are more common in the recruitment process. Racial stereotypes, which many employers hold to be common sense knowledge rather than prejudices have a detrimental impact upon the chances of success of job seekers from ethnic minorities. Jenkins (1986:235) argues that employers often make decisions about the suitability of candidates based on their acceptability rather than their suitability for the position. By this, he means that even if the applicant has qualifications and experience which make them suitable for the position, the employer may decide that they are unacceptable on the basis of stereotypes which the employer believes to be true about the character or behaviour of members of a particular ethnic group. Kennelly (1999) reports similar findings in her research of recruiting practices of employers in the US. She describes the rationales used by employers to make decisions about recruiting women and members of ethnic minorities as “sincere fictions” (Kennelly 1999: 169), which employers believe are based on informed logical opinions although they are in fact based on stereotypes.

In the UK, the performance of ethnic minority groups in the labour market varies widely, leading Virdee (2006) among others to seek explanations for these different rates of success. While Pilkington (2003: 88) suggests that the different forms of social capital and other resources possessed by different minority ethnic groups is an important factor, Virdee (2006) presents a more complex picture, identifying how geographical location, educational qualifications, anti-racist activism and racism have impacted to varying degrees on members of different ethnic communities. This research is relevant to the case of the Czech Republic where the situation of Vietnamese communities and Romani communities differ significantly. Some critics of Romani policies blame the exclusion of Romani communities from the labour market on the

unwillingness of Roma to actively participate, instead of recognising the structural and social problems which bar their entry to the labour force.

The impact of anti-discrimination legislation and equal opportunities policies has been carefully examined by many scholars. Blakemore and Drake (1996) provide a comprehensive overview of the impact of different legislation introduced in the UK to protect people who could be at risk of discrimination in the labour market, in particular on the grounds of gender, age, disability and ethnicity. Their assessment of the impact of the Race Relations Act concludes that its main achievement has been to transmit to the general public that direct racial discrimination is unacceptable (Blakemore and Drake 1996: 121). EU legislation to prevent discrimination in the labour market has also been carefully examined by scholars. The introduction of the Race Equality Directive in 2000 to target racial discrimination is regarded as a significant step forward in terms of social legislation by Guild (2000) and Bell (2002). However, some problems have been identified with the legislation. Guild (2000: 418) notes that the lack of a definition of 'racial or ethnic origin' will lead to some confusion over who will be entitled to bring a case under the legislation. Scottish and Irish Traveller communities, for example, may have difficulty using the law as it stands, as they still seek recognition as a separate ethnic group. Guild hopes this issue will be resolved through case law and predicts that the extended scope of protection under the Directive and the shift of the burden of proof on to the defendant rather than the claimant should lead to more cases being successfully prosecuted. Waddington and Bell (2001) and Schiek (2002) agree that the differing styles of the equality directives⁶ indicate that victims of race discrimination are afforded the most protection under EU law, reflecting the growing awareness of the problem of racism in Europe. Waddington and Bell (2001: 610) argue that the rising popularity of extreme right-wing politicians and parties in the late 1990s and the entry of Jorg Haider's Freedom Party into the Austrian government while the Directive was being debated in the European Council added to the sense that ethnic minorities needed more protection under the law. In terms of how effective anti-discrimination policies

⁶ The Race Equality Directive (Directive 2000/43/EC), implements the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin. As well as in employment relations, discrimination is also prohibited in education, social welfare and healthcare and the provision of all goods and services. The General Framework Directive (Directive 2000/78/EC) addresses discrimination based on disability, age, religious belief and sexual preference but only offers these groups protection in the sphere of employment.

and in particular the EU directives have been in protecting the rights of jobseekers from ethnic minorities, Mirga (2005) argues that the various policy and legal instruments available to Roma have not yet been fully utilised because awareness among Roma about anti-discrimination legislation remains low. In a detailed study of Czech legislation, Bukovská and Boučková (2003) demonstrate that many aspects of the Race Equality Directive are not yet covered by Czech law thus the Chamber of Deputies must pass new anti-discrimination legislation to comply with the Directive. The difficulties experienced by the Czech government in passing this legislation are discussed in detail in Chapter 8.

The problem of unemployment in Romani communities has not received as much attention as their problems in the sphere of education but it is still identified by scholars and NGOs as a serious problem with no easy solutions. Extremely high unemployment in Romani communities is attributed to the rapid economic transformation which swept through CEE in the 1990s and the inability of Roma to adapt to the new situation (Ringold *et al.* 2005: 38; Barany 2002: 173; Guy 2001: 296). In their study of the employment and unemployment patterns of Roma in Central and South Eastern Europe, O'Higgins and Ivanov (2006) found that educational attainment and race discrimination were the main factors explaining the higher unemployment of Roma compared to non-Roma living in the same neighbourhoods. Racism in the recruitment process is certainly a problem which has been well documented by NGOs (See ERRC 2006). Barany (2002: 174) highlights the problem of long-term unemployment in Romani communities which has led to apathy and a reluctance to participate in programmes to enhance job seeking capabilities. The most detailed study of unemployment in Czech Romani communities was carried out by Sirovátka (2002). He reports that educational attainment is a key factor but the lack of social capital, particularly social networks who could aid in the search for employment, are an equally important explanatory factor for Romani unemployment.

There have been no detailed studies of the effectiveness of the policies of the MLSA to tackle unemployment in Romani communities. This is due in part to the fact that the policies themselves are designed to be ethnically neutral and support jobseekers of all ethnic backgrounds and also partly because the Employment Offices do not keep

statistics indicating their success rates of helping Roma to find employment. Therefore, the Part 3 of this thesis examining the implementation of policies to support Roma in employment makes an important contribution to understanding the issues relating to Romani unemployment, and to exploring the most effective methods to support their entry to the labour force.

1.5 Methodology

Research for this thesis was based on a comprehensive review of legislation and official reports followed by fieldwork conducted in two cities, Ostrava and České Budějovice, over a period of four months between October 2004 and May 2005. Following Lipsky's (1980) argument that 'street-level bureaucrats' have an important influence over how policy is translated from official documents into practice, I chose to interview people who were directly involved with Romani communities and who were responsible for implementing the policies outlined in the 2000 Concept, such as teachers, social workers and local government officials. I also interviewed representatives of Romani communities and NGO workers to get their opinions and assessments of the policies. In total 75 people were interviewed and a further 67 teachers completed survey questionnaires. Practitioners working at the local level can provide valuable insights because they have to deal with the problems which the policies are supposed to address on a daily basis. I sought their opinions on whether these programmes were appropriate to tackle the problems in their communities. I also wished to discover the strategies they used to overcome problems they encountered. As noted in Section 1.1.5, most research examining pro-Romani policy is based on the views of experts at the elite level, therefore, a discussion of the views of practitioners at the local level adds a new dimension to the current debate.

1.5.1 Fieldwork Sites

Figure 1.1: Map of the Czech Republic



Ostrava and České Budějovice were chosen as fieldwork sites because they offered interesting contrasts in terms of how cities in different regions have coped with the impact of economic transition and in terms of the size of the local Romani population. These contrasts were useful to identify differences which arise during the implementation of national policies due to local economic and social circumstances. Ostrava, capital of the Moravia-Silesia Region (Figure 1.1), is the third largest city in the Czech Republic with a population of 320,000. Ostrava is home to two universities but according to the 2001 national census, the percentage of the adult population who had attended university is slightly less than the average for capital cities of administrative regions (See table 1.1). The city is proud of its working-class traditions and left wing parties still attract many votes. The municipal council for the period 2002 – 2006 was a coalition of ČSSD, KSČM, KDU-ČSL and two independents excluding the right wing ODS party.

During the communist period, the city was a major centre for the steel and coal industry, which attracted many Romani migrants from rural Slovakia. According to the 2001 census, there are 658 Roma living in Ostrava but the Romani Advisor for the city estimates that the true number is between 20,000 and 30,000, which is approximately 8

percent of the city's population. The transition to a full market economy in the 1990s had a major impact on the city because the steel and coal industries could not function without the substantial state subsidies which had previously sustained them. The unemployment rate is among the highest in the country. In 2005, 15.3 percent of the working age population was unemployed (MLSA 2006b). The location of the city on the eastern border of the country, combined with poor transport links has made efforts to attract investment more difficult, but the city received a significant boost in 2005 with the decision of the Hyundai Motor company to locate its European Assembly plant in the city (Hyundai 2005). (These issues are discussed in more detail in Section 10.3.)

For the purposes of this research project, Ostrava is an interesting case study because many of the policies now being promoted by the state were first piloted in the city by NGOs. The first preparatory classes and teaching assistants (TAs) were introduced in Ostrava and the municipal authorities employed the first field social assistants (FSAs) in the country.⁷ Ostrava gained notoriety when the city's schools were taken to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in Strasbourg by a group of Romani schoolchildren and their parents in 2000. With the assistance of the ERRC, an international Romani Rights NGO, they argued that the city's schools and educational psychologists deliberately discriminated against Romani children. They claimed that they were denied a quality education in mainstream schools because biased officials and poor testing procedures caused a disproportionate number of Romani pupils to be misdiagnosed with learning difficulties and placed in remedial special schools. The families lost the case, but there were some positive results because the issue received a higher profile in the media and politicians began to take notice.⁸

České Budějovice, capital of the South Bohemia Region (Figure 1.1), differs from Ostrava in many ways. It is a smaller city with a population of approximately 100,000 and it has a much smaller Romani community. Again, the census figures are no reflection of the real numbers of Roma in the city. The official number of Romani inhabitants according to the 2001 census is 125. However, local Romani representatives estimate the true number to be around 2,500 (2.5 percent of the population). The

⁷ These are key reforms targeting socially disadvantaged families and particularly Roma which will be discussed in detail in Chapters 6 and 9.

⁸ This case is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

University of Southern Bohemia is based in the city and according to the 2001 census, 13 percent of the adult population attended university, which is slightly more than the average for capital cities of administrative regions (see Table 1.1). The transition to a market economy was less painful than in other parts of the country as the industries in the region were quite diversified encompassing food processing, most notably the Budvar beer, and textile, mechanical and electronic industries. Given its proximity to the Austrian border and to the UNESCO World Heritage site of Český Krumlov, tourism is an important contributor to the local economy. As a result, unemployment has remained low (approximately 4 percent).

Given the smaller size of the city and the smaller proportion of Romani inhabitants, České Budějovice does not have a high national or international profile in terms of Romani issues. However, the problems which Roma have to contend with elsewhere in the country are also very much in evidence here. Education officials reported that Romani children have problems at school and many are placed in the city's remedial special school. There is high unemployment among Roma despite the low level of general unemployment in the city and problems with housing segregation are developing as non-Romani residents who can afford to, are moving away from areas where Roma live. Notwithstanding these problems, the smaller concentration of Roma in the city should mean that in theory the issues are easier to manage and that the policies, if appropriate, can be successful. However, the research conducted in the city revealed that the solution is not as straightforward as this.

As Ostrava and České Budějovice are both the capitals of the newly created administrative regions, it may be helpful to place them in context with other regional capitals. Prague is not a regional capital; it has special status as the national capital, but it is included in Table 1.1 for the sake of comparison. As has already been noted, Ostrava is the third largest city in the country and is one of the main centres for the Romani population. České Budějovice is a more typical Czech city in terms of size of population; its low unemployment rate is its most distinguishing feature.

Table 1.1: Overview of key indicators for capitals of administrative regions

	Region	Total population¹	Romani population²	Unemployment rate³	% Adults with university education⁴
Brno	South Moravian Region	376,172	374	9.3	18
České Budějovice	South Bohemia Region	97,339	125	3.9	13
Hradec Králové	Hradec Králové Region	97,155	76	6.1	14
Jihlava	Vysočina Region	50,702	54	6.4	10
Karlovy Vary	Karlovy Vary Region	53,358	77	9.7	10
Liberec	Liberec Region	99,102	97	7.9	11
Olomouc	Olomouc Region	10,2607	70	9.4	16
Ostrava	Moravia-Silesia Region	316,744	658	15.3	11
Pardubice	Pardubice Region	90,668	141	6.5	12
Plzeň	Plzeň Region	165,259	174	5.7	13
Prague	Capital city	1,169,106	653	3.3	19
Ústí nad Labem	Ústí Region	95,436	296	12.7	8
Zlín	Zlín Region	80,854	58	7.7	12

1. According to the 2001 national census (CSO 2001)

2. According to the 2001 national census (CSO 2001) As has been highlighted above these figures bear no relation to the actual numbers of Roma resident in municipalities, but they indicate the trend in terms of the size of Romani populations in different cities.

3. According to figures published by the MLSA for May 2005 (MLSA 2005)

4. According to the 2001 national census (CSO 2001)

1.5.2 Research Design

In order to gain a better understanding of the processes involved in implementing policies to support Romani integration, I used a variety of sources and research methods. Analysis of legislation and policy documents and an extensive press and literature review were conducted before I began my fieldwork in October 2004. The main aim of this background research was to learn more about the debates surrounding the integration policy in order to formulate the questions I would ask in the course of my own research. During the data analysis stage, it was necessary to examine even more

government documents and other debates in the press, which had been identified as significant by respondents. Field research consisted of semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and ethnographic observation. By using a variety of data sources and research methods, it was possible to examine the research questions from different angles. Mason (2002: 190) argues that triangulation through the use of a mixture of methods should not lead to comparisons to determine which data is most valid, instead it should allow the researcher to appreciate and understand the many dimensions of the social phenomena in question and to give the study more depth. Dowell *et al.* (1995: 36) also recommend triangulation in qualitative research in order to enhance analysis because “any marked differences can be highlighted, investigated and explained”.

The project was based on qualitative research methods because these allowed me a greater degree of freedom to adapt the framework of the project as I learned more about the main issues. An iterative approach, whereby the data generation and analysis were conducted simultaneously, also allowed me to evaluate the progress of the study and reflect on the information in an on-going manner. The semi-structured nature of interviews and the open-ended questions in the questionnaire gave space to the respondents to explain their views in more detail and provided them with the opportunity to guide the discussion to areas not included in my interview schedule. This also allowed me to learn more about aspects of the research questions which I had not already considered but which deserved more attention. Semi-structured interviews were preferred to unstructured interviews for two main reasons. Firstly, given that I was not conducting interviews in my native language it was helpful to have the main questions prepared in advance and also, in the course of a semi-structured interview I was able to steer the conversation so that the main topics I was interested in were covered.

Problems with Statistics

Qualitative research methods were also favoured for this study because of the limitations of quantitative studies of Romani communities. Section 1.1.4 alluded to the discrepancies between the officially recorded population of Roma and the actual numbers of Romani citizens. The collection of data based on ethnicity has been officially prohibited since the early 1990s on the grounds that all citizens should be

treated as equal individuals in all official matters. However, even before that there had been difficulties with data collection methods. Under the communist regime, “Romani” was not considered a valid nationality for the census. Roma had to declare themselves Czech, Slovak or Hungarian and the census taker would make a note, not based on any kind of voluntary declaration, if they thought the person was ‘Gypsy’ (ERRC 1999: 8). This led to ethical as well as factual problems involving being assigned an identity rather than freely choosing one’s own. Today, it is impossible even to establish straightforward facts such as the population of Roma in the Czech Republic. According to the 1991 census when “Romani” was included as a nationality category for the first time, 32,903 people identified themselves as such and ten years later, the 2001 census recorded a Romani population of only 11,716. In spite of this, it is generally accepted that the true figure lies between 250,000 and 300,000 (Liégeois and Gheorghe 1995: 7). A number of reasons have been put forward to explain this discrepancy in the figures. Clark (1998) argues that many Roma were afraid to declare their ethnicity in the census because they feared that this could lead to more harassment by the state. He also argues that memories of the Holocaust and the censuses conducted by the Nazis have left Roma with a deeply ingrained suspicion of any form of official registration of ethnic groups. The fear of such information being abused is well grounded. It is widely known that some Employment Offices marked the files of Romani jobseekers, although no evidence was found to prove that this resulted in Roma not being recommended for certain jobs (*Lidové noviny* 1999). Other reasons to explain why so few Roma declared their ethnicity on the census include misunderstandings about the difference between the categories of nationality and citizenship and also the fact that many Roma did not fill in census forms at all (PER, 2000: 22).

The huge gap between official numbers and these estimates allows for manipulation of numbers by different actors and makes it more difficult to determine the reliability of quantitative studies. Clark (1998: 9) claims that Roma political activists attempt to bolster the figures to boost their political influence while other government departments try to play down the numbers in order to “forget” about a politically weak minority. Given this situation the figures presented by NGOs cannot easily be contested even though they too may be flawed. Ringold (2001: 19) argues that statistical surveys frequently yield contrasting results and impede comparability of data. This is because

some surveys ask respondents to identify their ethnicity while others ask the interviewer to indicate the ethnicity and yet another approach is to determine ethnicity on the basis of the respondent's native language. The question of how best to manage statistical information about Roma will be addressed in Chapter 4; it is sufficient to note here that all statistics related to Roma in CEE must be assessed carefully and critically before being accepted as valid.

1.5.3 Respondents

To learn more about overall policy implementation regarding education, I interviewed officials from the municipal and regional Departments of Education and a representative of the Ministry of Education in Prague, principals of primary schools with a high number of Romani pupils,⁹ school inspectors, education psychologists, teachers and teaching assistants (TAs). As teachers had less time to meet me, many filled out questionnaires instead of participating in interviews. I attended seminars at the local teacher training colleges where I heard the opinions of students who will become the next generation of primary school teachers. These encounters were recorded in my field diary. With regard to employment policy, I interviewed representatives from the Employment Offices in both cities and officials from the municipal and regional Departments of Social Affairs. I also interviewed employers who were involved with the state sponsored schemes to allow jobseekers to gain work experience. To hear the views of local Roma about the policies being implemented to help them, I interviewed Romani TAs, field social assistants (FSAs) and Romani NGO representatives.¹⁰ In České Budějovice the Regional Coordinator for Romani Affairs was Romani, as were the Romani Advisors in Ostrava. They provided interesting insights into the situation regarding the social exclusion of Roma because they could look at the situation both from the viewpoint of a state official and as Roma.

The main technique employed to find participants for my study was snowball sampling (Bryman 2004: 102). The Regional Coordinator for Romani Affairs in České

⁹ For an overview of the schools and their involvement with integration policies, please refer to Appendix 2.

¹⁰ For a full list of respondents, please refer to Appendix 1.

Budějovice and the Romani Advisors in Ostrava were particularly helpful and gave me details of schools with high numbers of Romani pupils and schools where preparatory classes and TAs had been introduced. Respondents also often suggested other people who they thought I would be interested in meeting. In terms of arranging interviews, respondents were generally very interested and accessible. In particular, the officials at the regional and municipal level were very generous with their time. Many respondents stressed how pleased they were that someone had asked their opinion, because they often felt that foreign academics never looked beyond Prague and that, when it came to issues of policy development, the central policy makers did not always take their views into account. Respondents also welcomed the chance to present their view of the situation regarding Romani communities because they believed that NGOs and the international media present a negative and one-sided picture of the Czech situation.

Altogether, I managed to interview almost all of the people I had hoped to meet. Two important cases where key respondents chose not to be involved will be discussed here. In České Budějovice, the principal of the only remedial special school in the city refused to be interviewed or to disclose any details about the school and its Romani pupils. However, the principal of another remedial special school in the South Bohemia Region gave me useful information about how the schools were run and how reforms were progressing. The other key informant who would not be interviewed was the director of the educational psychology unit in Ostrava. Again I was lucky enough to interview the director of another educational psychology unit in the same region (Moravia-Silesia Region), who provided valuable insights into the question of reforming services for children with special educational needs.

Being an Outsider

I spent two months in both Ostrava and České Budějovice, which was not enough time to get involved with any local organisations or to develop deep relationships with any of the respondents in my research. Therefore, my research position remained that of an outsider. I consider this to have been an advantage to my research because it forced me to question every aspect of everyday life in ways which a person who is very familiar with the environment perhaps would not. People were also interested in meeting the

“*Irish woman who spoke Czech*”. Pilkington and Omel’chenko (1997: 11) reported from their research experiences that some people agreed to be interviewed mostly out of curiosity, as they wanted a chance to speak to a foreigner. This was also my experience. On more than one occasion, respondents commented in interviews that they had heard that I was in the city and they wondered if I would contact them. Of course, I cannot be certain of this but I suspect that respondents were more patient about explaining aspects of Czech life or government policy to me than they might have been with a Czech researcher. I also believe they spoke more candidly to me because they felt less inhibited talking to a stranger about the politically divisive question of how best to deal with Roma. Baker and Hinton (1999: 96) have also noted that the researcher’s degree of detachment from local political relations reduced subjectivity in participants’ responses. My ability to conduct interviews in Czech without the aid of a translator was a significant advantage. It allowed me to interview a broad range of people, because I was not limited to only those who could speak English. As a result, I met a wider cross-section of the population and heard a more diverse mix of opinions.

1.5.4 Interviews and Questionnaires

The main method employed for this study was the semi-structured interview. Based on a careful study of press debates, policy documents and legislation I developed a schedule of open questions which allowed me to cover the themes I considered to be important, but which also made it possible for respondents to explain their opinions in detail and to lead the discussion to other areas (Barbour 2000: 80). The main interview schedule was adapted according to the position of the respondent – for example, school principals were asked more specific questions about education policy and officials in the Employment Offices were asked more about unemployment policies.¹¹ Participants were invited to choose the interview location and almost all interviews were carried out at their places of work. Conducting interviews in the workplace had the disadvantage of the interviews sometimes being interrupted by colleagues requiring information or assistance but overall the benefits far outweighed these disadvantages. It allowed me to see how the different institutions – schools, NGOs, public administration – operated,

¹¹ For sample interview schedules please refer to Appendices 4 and 5.

giving me an insight into the working relationships of the respondents with their colleagues and their clients. Respondents also appeared to feel more comfortable in this setting. They could assume the role of expert on the issue, welcoming a young foreign researcher and explaining to her “how things worked” in the Czech Republic. Herzog (2005) has also noted that the choice of interview location allows the respondent a degree of control over the interview process. On average, the interviews lasted between thirty minutes and one hour. All who agreed to be interviewed were extremely helpful and interested in the project and answered my questions fully. No one refused to answer questions or was obstructive during the interview. Overall, I found this to be an extremely useful and effective method of data generation.

Questionnaires were distributed to teachers in the schools I visited.¹² There were fewer questions to be answered but I hoped that teachers would provide detailed responses which could be used to gauge their views on the topics which had already been discussed with the schools’ principals. The results of this method were mixed. Although the questionnaires allowed me to get an idea of the views of far more teachers than I could have ever interviewed, many teachers provided very brief answers or made statements without expanding upon them in the way they could have in an interview setting. This is a danger of the survey method which is well documented in the literature on research techniques (Alreck and Settle 195; Bryman 2004). Nonetheless, given how difficult it would have been to interview all these teachers I believe that even with the limitations discussed above, the questionnaires provided useful information which added depth to the discussion of many aspects of the education of Romani children.

1.5.5 Ethnographic Observation

Living in the cities where I conducted my fieldwork allowed me to observe interactions between Roma and non-Romani residents in everyday situations. I lived with non-Romani Czechs on both occasions and discussions with my hosts and their friends about Roma gave me an added insight into the views of ordinary members of the public. Their comments are not cited in this work as they were made in the course of everyday

¹² Please refer to Appendix 6 for a sample questionnaire.

conversations rather than as part of official interviews. Nonetheless, their views had an influence on my work by adding more depth to my awareness of the concerns of members of the majority society about the challenges of integrating Roma into mainstream society. Direct observation was not initially planned as part of my methodology, however opportunities arose in the course of my fieldwork stay in Ostrava to visit two preparatory classes and to shadow FSAs on their daily rounds. As a means of learning more about how preparatory classes operate and how FSAs perform their duties, these days were extremely helpful. The main benefit was that by observing everything around me I learned more about the context and relationships between teachers and pupils and FSAs and their clients, which I could not find out about through interviews alone (MacDonald 2005). Unlike in an interview, I was expected to talk a lot more about my own views and experiences and the conversation flowed more naturally as a result. Although I could not tape record conversations with the teachers and FSAs in these situations, I recorded as much information as possible in my field diary in order to analyse their comments more carefully later. The main benefit of such observations was to add more colour and depth to my understanding of the day-to-day experiences of the people who work with Ostrava's Romani communities.

The question of whether my presence altered the behaviour of the people I was observing in their daily work must be addressed. It may well be that the social workers and teachers made an effort to be on their 'best behaviour' because they were aware of being observed, a phenomenon which has become known as the Hawthorne effect (Mayo 1933; Shipman 1997: 99). However, as Foddy (1993: 3) argues, in any interview setting the respondent can be truthful or deceitful when describing their work routine or their views on a certain subject. This must be accepted as an inherent danger of the method, of which the researcher must always be aware. As far as I could tell, everyone acted very naturally and the descriptions provided by the city's Romani Advisor and school principals matched well with what I witnessed, which leads me to conclude that people were genuine in their dealings with me.

1.5.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in an iterative manner throughout the research process. Fieldwork notes on the interviews were written up each evening and the questions posed and answers given were reflected upon in order to understand the kind of data being generated. The fieldwork was conducted in two stages and the interviews and questionnaires from České Budějovice were analysed before the trip was made to Ostrava. Comments made by respondents were then referred to in later interviews in order to find out how or why certain differences existed in the approach to and understanding of Romani integration in Ostrava. All interviews were conducted in Czech and given the time constraints on the project it was necessary to pay native Czech speakers to transcribe the 48 taped interviews on my behalf. Although there were some problems with the quality of some transcripts and there are valid arguments to be made on the merits of the researcher doing their own transcription (Tilly 2003), it would have been impossible for me to do that amount of transcription in the Czech language myself.

In terms of analysis, transcripts were broken down into themes and sub-themes and the responses of people in similar occupations across the two cities were compared. The majority of interviews were coded in the original Czech and only the relevant quotations were fully translated for use in the thesis text. Given the sheer volume of data, 75 interviews, 67 questionnaires and my field notes, it quickly became clear that not all respondents would be cited in the thesis text. In choosing quotations, I sought the most representative and added to them those which seemed to take a very different view. I acknowledge that the use of quotations is a personal and subjective issue and another researcher may have considered others to be more appropriate. However, I have done my best to use the data fairly to reflect the information presented to me during the interviews.

1.5.7 Ethical Implications of Conducting Research

Any study examining ethnic minorities needs to approach the subject sensitively and the research for this thesis was no different. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, a significant danger in any study of Roma is the failure to recognise the

diversity within Romani communities and to assume that there is one Romani identity to fit all Roma. Stereotypes commonly held by Czechs that all Roma belong to an underclass of anti-social layabouts and criminals are often referred to within this thesis. It is therefore important to ensure that this stereotype is not further propagated by this thesis. It is possible to criticise certain aspects of the behaviour of some Romani citizens without implying that this is true for all Roma. It is acknowledged within this thesis, from the outset, that while some Roma have successfully integrated into mainstream society, many more Roma need extra support to achieve such integration. Therefore, the discussion of social exclusion of Romani communities focuses on the members of Romani communities who live in the worst housing conditions, who are unemployed and have no educational qualifications and whose income is barely enough to ensure their survival. These are the people the government's social inclusion policy is trying to target which is why their problems are highlighted. However, the reader should not conclude that these people represent all Romani communities or that to be Roma means to be poor, uneducated and involved in criminal activities. Bancroft (2005: 16) warns of the danger of pathologising the Romani identity by reconstructing it as "a socially delinquent sub-culture" and I have done my best to avoid this trap by consistently highlighting the heterogeneity of the Romani minority in the Czech Republic. The arguments of many other scholars about the intransigence of members of both the majority and Romani communities to adapt their behaviour and attitudes are taken into account and this thesis presents the difficulties of integrating Romani communities into mainstream society in a balanced and fair way without attributing blame to only one side.

When considering how best to conduct the research for this thesis I decided to interview practitioners and Romani community representatives who were familiar with the national Romani policies rather than interviewing vulnerable members of socially excluded Romani communities or schoolchildren. My interest, as a researcher, was openly stated because there was little to be gained by acting covertly. During the occasions of observation in preparatory classes and shadowing FSAs, I met children and clients of the social workers. I spoke to them but these individuals are not quoted within the thesis. Given that these were brief casual exchanges, it would have been impossible to gain the level of consent necessary to satisfy the ethical standards applied by the

University of Glasgow. In addition, I have not included any details which could identify the schools visited or the areas where the FSAs brought me.

Before each interview I was careful to explain that the information provided could be published in international or Czech journals at a later date and I gave assurances that all respondents would remain anonymous. Respondents had my contact details and were assured that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Interviews were taped with the permission of the respondents and all participants were offered the opportunity to view the transcripts of the interviews; only one such request was made. The full transcripts have only been seen by myself and the transcribers employed to transcribe the taped interviews. They are kept under lock and key at all times in adherence to the University of Glasgow's ethical code. Throughout the thesis, respondents are referred to by their occupation and when relevant, the city where they work but no other socio-demographic information is provided to give them as much protection as possible. In two specific cases, the occupation of the person could have led to their identification as they are the only individuals holding those roles in the local administration. However, I received these respondents' explicit permission to use their occupation as a descriptor.

In terms of disseminating the findings of my research, some respondents requested a copy of my main conclusions once the thesis was complete. I intend to write a short report in Czech highlighting the most important issues and including my recommendations to improve policy delivery and send this to all the respondents who participated in my study. I particularly hope that the positive results of education programmes which have been successful in Ostrava will provide practitioners in České Budějovice with the motivation to continue to develop similar programmes there. Equally, the positive experiences of Roma in employment training schemes in České Budějovice could be a source of inspiration for employers, social workers and Employment Office officials in Ostrava. Despite my best efforts to preserve the anonymity of respondents, I am aware that people familiar with Romani policy in the Czech Republic, particularly if they are familiar with Ostrava or České Budějovice, could guess the identities of some respondents. I have also had to bear in mind that some of the critical comments made could be taken very seriously by those who are the

focus of the criticism and that this could lead to conflicts within institutions or perhaps to applications for support being viewed unfavourably. The aim of this thesis is to provide an objective analysis of the successes and failings of the government's Romani policy as it is currently conceived. It is not intended to sensationalise problems, but rather to make constructive criticisms, suggesting ways the policy and individual programmes could be reformed and improved. With this aim in mind, I have not cited comments where the criticism appeared to me to be personally motivated rather than an objective appraisal of a situation. I believe to do so would be unfair to the target of the criticism and to the person making the comments who might not have realised the possible implications of such critical remarks being published and perhaps read out of context.

The principal ethical guideline, which governed all aspects of the research process, was to "do no harm". I endeavoured to ensure that respondents felt at ease during interviews and that they fully understood the aims of my research and the ways in which my published findings could have an impact on their lives whether professionally or privately. It is my hope that this research will be taken seriously by policymakers responsible for developing Romani policy and that my findings and recommendations will lead in some small way to improvements in how policy is delivered and as a consequence improve the lives of Roma who were at the centre of this study. I hope that this will be the case, but even if I cannot make such a positive contribution then at the very least I have done my best to ensure that my research will not have negative consequences for any of the respondents who generously shared their time and expertise to help me with this project.

1.6 Overview of Thesis and Research Questions

The main objective of this thesis is to evaluate the policies developed in the period 1997 to 2005 to improve the integration of Romani communities into society. The thesis examines how pro-Romani policies are being implemented in local communities and demonstrates how the legacy of the socialist era, regional economic inequalities since

the transition, the impact of decentralisation of power to regions and municipalities and generations of mutual distrust between Roma and the majority society have been major obstacles to the successful implementation of pro-Romani reforms.

The thesis consists of 10 chapters and is divided into three main parts. Part 1 provides a detailed analysis of the policies of previous regimes towards Romani communities and discusses the development of the current strategy embodied in the 2000 Concept. Part 2 focuses on education policy. Firstly, the main problems, which prevent Romani children from achieving their full potential in the education system, are identified. This is followed by a thorough examination of how the six main education programmes are being implemented in Ostrava and České Budějovice. Finally, the main obstacles which have arisen during the implementation of these reforms are identified and discussed. Part 3 explores the reforms to improve the inclusion of Roma in the labour market and follows the same format as Part 2. The two main questions addressed in this thesis are: (1) how is the Romani integration strategy being implemented and (2) what obstacles exist which may hamper the effectiveness of the reforms? These questions are addressed in Parts 2 and 3 of the thesis. Other important questions such as what motivated the state to focus more on the problem of social exclusion in Romani communities and whether programmes which specifically target Roma can be more effective than ethnoculturally neutral policies are first addressed in Part 1 and returned to in the concluding chapters of Parts 2 and 3.

The preceding literature review raised many important issues which will be returned to throughout the thesis. However, it is important to note that these themes are not intended to be the central focus of the work, rather they are introduced in order to contextualise the problem of social exclusion in Romani communities which the policies under investigation in the thesis aim to address. Press and other media sources are drawn upon as sources of information but this thesis will not attempt to provide a comprehensive analysis of representations of Roma in the media given that it would require another full thesis to do this question justice. This thesis is a study of state policy as embodied in the 2000 Concept and the discussion in Part 1 of how previous regimes dealt with Romani communities is intended to emphasise the difficult nature of

the task faced by officials who must win the trust of Roma who have learned to be suspicious of any attempts by the state to interfere in their lives.

This research contributes to a better understanding of the question of Romani integration in the Czech Republic in a number of ways. From a methodological point of view, the thesis offers a new perspective on the question of Romani integration by presenting the views of the practitioners who are responsible for delivering the policy. Although interviews with representatives from the government ministries involved in policy design and with Roma at whom the policies are targeted would have provided further interesting insights, a deliberate decision was made to focus on the perspective of the practitioners, given that this is an aspect of the policy process which has not yet been fully addressed in the literature. As a case study of how a national policy is being implemented locally, this thesis draws on the theories and frameworks of other policy analysts but does not attempt to develop a new theoretical framework. Nonetheless, it makes a contribution to the study of policy implementation by analysing a policy as it is being implemented. The tensions between the different levels of government resulting from a lack of genuine consultation between the relevant officials, and the problems with allocating financial resources to fund policy programmes contribute to a better understanding of the implications of decentralisation of power for all policy implementation and not only for the integration policy. The examination of how the key employment and education programmes are being implemented in České Budějovice and Ostrava provides new empirical data, which in combination with the detailed analysis of legislation and policy documents allows a clearer picture of the effectiveness of the aims of the 2000 Concept to emerge. This new information makes it possible to suggest ways in which programmes could be reformed and improved to increase their effectiveness, which could be of direct benefit to policy makers and practitioners who have a vested interest in ensuring the success of the policy.

PART 1: SETTING THE SCENE

Based on an extensive review of the existing literature on Romani policy and a detailed analysis of key policy documents, in particular the 1997 Bratinka Report, the 2000 Concept and its subsequent Updates, Part 1 of the thesis discusses the development of Romani policy and sets the scene for the discussion of policy implementation which follows in the other two parts of the thesis. Chapter 2 outlines the history of the development of Romani policy in the Czech Lands from the Middle Ages to the present day and highlights some key trends which analysts suspect might have a negative influence on the current policy programme. Chapter 3 investigates the state's change in attitude towards Romani communities in the latter part of the 1990s and outlines the main factors which prompted the government to take the problems facing Romani communities more seriously. Chapter 4 discusses the key debates within the development of Romani policy, demonstrating how the current policy is based on a very different set of assumptions to those which underlined the communist policy towards Romani communities.

CHAPTER 2: OVERVIEW OF STATE POLICY TOWARDS ROMA

Introduction

The responses of different regimes in the region we know today as the Czech Republic, to the problems posed by the presence of Romani communities have varied throughout history. However, some common features can be detected with regard to how each regime framed their policies and common themes can explain why those policies failed to achieve their aims. This chapter will briefly outline the policy approaches of successive regimes towards Romani communities up to the present day and argue that the experience of the policies of the Hapsburg Empress Maria Theresa and the Czechoslovak communist regime are particularly relevant to any study of the policies being implemented in the Czech Republic in the 21st century. This thesis focuses primarily on contemporary policies implemented in the Czech Republic, but the history of Slovak Roma is also relevant because the majority of Roma now living in the Czech Republic migrated from Slovakia after World War Two. The differences in the economic and social development in the Eastern and Western parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire created different conditions for the treatment of Roma in the Czech Lands and Slovakia. However, both regions were subjected to a uniform policy approach in the post-war period, when the Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSČ) was in power, and this has left a significant legacy for the development of Romani policy in the new democratic Czech Republic. Therefore, before examining the situation in the Czech Republic today, it is important to understand the history of the policies directed towards Roma in both countries.

2.1 Czech Lands and Slovakia before 1918

The history of Roma across Europe is that of a people at the margins of society, generally feared and despised by the local community. This was also the case in the Czech Lands and Slovakia. While Roma appear to have been at least reluctantly tolerated during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the mood soured in the aftermath of the Thirty Years War (1618 – 1648), which had left the region devastated. There was widespread starvation and fear of wandering, pillaging ex-soldiers and bandits. People

grew suspicious of Roma and accused them of spying for foreign enemies, most notably the Turks (Guy 1975: 206; Fraser 1995). Tough new policies were introduced to tackle the problems posed by vagrants and other nomadic groups, usually identified as Roma. In the Czech Lands the authorities decided to rid the region completely of all Roma, threatening any who dared enter the territory with execution (Guy 1975: 207). The treatment of Roma in Slovakia was less harsh. Here, only groups who refused to settle were threatened with execution. According to Guy (1975: 209), the difference in Slovak policy was determined by local taxation policy, whereby Roma were heavily taxed. Any policy of expulsion or extermination would have led to a fall in tax revenue, therefore, the authorities accepted Roma who were prepared to settle and pay taxes. This is an early example of how policy targeting Roma was influenced by other local concerns. It also partly explains why the population of Roma is now so much greater in Slovakia than in the Czech Lands.

This kind of physical persecution ended during the reign of Empress Maria Theresa, who ruled from 1740 to 1780. In what Barany (2002: 94) has described as “a crude attempt at social engineering”, she introduced a series of decrees between 1758 and 1773 with the aim of assimilating all Roma into the majority society by making serfs of them. According to Fraser (1995: 156), the motivation behind this shift in policy was pragmatic. The Hungarian Lands of the Empire (which then included Slovakia) had been left under-populated as a result of the wars with the Turks and she decided that Roma would provide the labour needed by the landowners in the region. Roma would be forced to settle and pay taxes and provide services to a lord. They could not own horses or wagons and could not leave the village without permission (Fraser 1995: 156). Young men over the age of 16 were called up to serve in the army and boys of 12 had to learn a craft. Roma were no longer allowed to wear distinctive clothing or speak their language or act in any way that would set them apart from the rest of the local community (Fraser 1995: 157). The final decree in 1773 went even further. This was an attempt to completely destroy the ethnic identity of Roma. Marriages between Roma were forbidden and children over the age of five were forcibly taken from their families and placed in the care of non-Roma who would be responsible for their upbringing. Even the word “Gypsy” was to be banned and Roma were to be referred to as “New Settlers” or “New Hungarians” (Fraser 1995: 157).

The policies introduced by Maria Theresa were supported and continued by her son Joseph II, who ruled from 1765 to 1790,¹³ but they failed to achieve their aims of assimilating Roma and creating a more homogenous society. Similar policies were introduced in the Czech Lands where they were equally unsuccessful. Some colonies were founded but they did not survive long. However, given that the population of Roma was much smaller because of the brutal policy of expulsion of the previous century, there was less interest in the scheme than was the case in Slovakia (Guy 1975: 207). After the death of Joseph II in 1790, the laws lapsed. In Slovakia, the majority of Roma remained where they had been settled but in the Czech Lands many took to the roads again (Liégeois 1994: 139). Roma were then ignored by the authorities in the region until the late nineteenth century, with the exception of one attempt in 1887 to register nomadic Roma in the Czech Lands (Guy 1975: 207).

The Hapsburg policies failed because the local authorities responsible for implementing the policy did not cooperate with the plans and the central authorities had no effective mechanisms to ensure that the policies were implemented as they had decreed. The difficulty of ensuring that policies are implemented correctly has recurred frequently in the history of Romani policy, as the rest of this chapter will demonstrate. Guy (1975: 209), Fraser (1995: 157) and Barany (2002: 94) are in agreement that the Hapsburg policies came to nothing not only because Romani communities involved were unwilling to cooperate, being understandably reluctant to give up their children or their culture and traditions, but more importantly because the local landowners would not cooperate with the scheme. They did not see how it would be of benefit to them because, as Guy (1975: 210) points out, the initial costs such as new housing, training and regular payments to foster families were to be met by the landowner, while the rewards (increased feudal rent and economic productivity) went directly to the Imperial Treasury in the form of taxes. According to Fraser (1995: 156-9), Empress Maria Theresa was also unable to legislate against the reluctance of local communities to interact with Roma. No one was willing to pay the costs of building the homes of the newly settled Roma, army officers and local craftsmen were not keen on taking on Romani recruits or apprentices and there were very few non-Roma who were willing to

¹³ Joseph II ruled as emperor and co-regent from 1765 until his mother's death in 1780 and then as emperor until his death in 1790.

marry any member of this much reviled community. Guy (1975: 209) also claims that the policy failed because of problems in the way the scheme was designed. The Imperial Council made the local gentry responsible for implementing the policies but had no way of independently assessing the progress being made. He argues that the local landowners deliberately falsified their reports because they knew that it was unlikely that the Imperial Council would ever find out the truth.

The history of Romani policy in the period before the establishment of the First Republic of Czechoslovakia was marked by a variety of different styles. Faced with the task of dealing with communities who refused to abandon their distinctive customs and traditions and were despised by the majority – who were equally unwilling to support the integration process – the authorities tried first to exterminate Roma, then forcibly assimilate them and then finally they decided to ignore them. Some Roma persisted with their nomadic lifestyle in the face of official harassment, but many more were willing to adapt their lifestyles and remain settled in the places where they had been provided with housing. However, local discrimination prevented them from becoming any further integrated into the society. Later, I will argue that this pattern has continued into the policy attempts of the 20th and 21st centuries.

2.2 Czechoslovakia 1918 – 1945

The independent state of Czechoslovakia was proclaimed on 28 October 1918 and was officially recognised by the Paris Peace Conference in January 1919. The territory of the state encompassed the Kingdom of Bohemia along with Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia both of which had previously been part of the Kingdom of Hungary. As a result, the new state became home to many ethnic groups – Czechs, Slovaks, Germans, Poles, Ruthenians, Hungarians and Roma. Roma were officially recognised as a national minority in 1921 and granted the same rights as other national minorities but many of the Hapsburg decrees targeting the nomadic way of life remained in force (Barany 2002: 99). New laws requiring the fingerprinting and registration of nomadic Roma and other itinerants were also introduced in the 1920s. However, the government generally chose to ignore Roma and did little to tackle the root causes of their poverty. According to Guy (1975: 211), this was not because of a deliberate policy of

discrimination, but rather that Roma were living in the poorest, least developed areas of the country, where the living conditions of many other peasants were no better. At times relations grew so fraught between the two communities that pogroms took place. In Podebim, in 1928, Slovaks killed six Roma (including two children) and wounded eighteen others in reprisal for the theft of crops from their fields (Guy 1975: 211). The press also played a part in increasing tensions by publishing sensational stories with little basis in fact. There is no evidence to suggest that the government was deliberately encouraging discrimination against Roma; there was little need to do so due to the fact that these prejudices had been nurtured by the majority community for generations. At the same time, the government did very little to calm tensions and Guy (1975: 212) suggests that certain elements in the government may have welcomed these developments as a means to divert public attention from the deteriorating social and economic conditions. Kostelancik (1989: 308) argues that because the Romani population was much smaller in Bohemia and Moravia than in Slovakia and the government was controlled by Czechs in Prague, there was little interest in the plight of Roma. In spite of this lack of direction from Prague, some individuals in Slovakia developed schemes to improve the well being of the local Roma, such as classes to educate Romani children (Kostelancik 1989: 308).

The next stage in the history of Roma in this region was by far the most traumatic – *the Porrajmos*. The Nazi annexation of Czechoslovakia in 1939 heralded a new attempt to resolve the “Gypsy question”, this time by exterminating them. Here again, the fate of Roma living in the Czech Lands and Slovakia diverged. In the occupied Czech Lands, Roma were rounded up and forced into labour camps. Later they were transported to concentration camps in the Czech Lands and Poland. The figures testify to the success of the Nazi aim of ridding the region of this “anti-social” minority: in 1940, according to the census, there were between 6,500 and 8,000 Roma in the Czech Protectorate, by 1945 only a few hundred had survived (Guy 1975: 212; Fraser 1995: 266 and Nečas 1999: 213). In Slovakia, in contrast, the puppet state established by the Nazis harassed Roma but they were not subjected to systematic annihilation (Bancroft 1999: 5.3). According to Kenrick and Puxon (1972: 138), only the end of the war saved the Slovak Roma from a similar fate. Pressure on Romani communities had been increasing since

1944, with accusations of cannibalism beginning to circulate, something Kenrick and Puxon consider a sure sign that a campaign was being prepared.

2.3 Czechoslovakia 1945 – 1989

The end of the war marked the beginning of a period of major upheaval for all the citizens of Czechoslovakia. Millions of Germans were expelled from the country leaving homes and businesses standing empty (Skalnik Leff 1996: 42). This led to the migration of thousands of Roma from Slovakia to the industrial centres of Northern Bohemia and Northern Moravia seeking work and better living conditions. Like Maria Theresa two hundred years earlier, the new government urgently needed more workers and therefore, encouraged them to come. However, this movement cannot be classified as nomadism. Guy (2001a: 289) describes these Roma as rural to urban migrants and considers this a significant moment in the history of Czechoslovak Roma because “for the first time in history Roma were entering the general labour market on a large scale.” As is so often the case with migrants, they found they were assigned the least desirable work, paid meagre wages and housed in dilapidated old buildings which had been earmarked for demolition (Guy 2001a: 289).

The next phase of Romani policy came once the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) had firmly established its authority. They were part of the governing coalition since the war but in February 1948 they gained full control over the government and the state (Skalnik Leff 1996: 46 – 50). In 1948, one of their first acts with regard to Romani policy was to repeal the national minority status, which had been granted to Roma during the inter-war period (Barany 2002: 115). Party theorists justified this at the time according to the Stalinist theory of the development of nations. They decided that Roma did not meet the conditions necessary to be defined as a national minority – a common territory, a common culture and economic way of life (Ulč 1969: 425). Therefore, they were not entitled to social and cultural institutions such as schooling in their own language, which other national minorities, such as Poles and Hungarians, could claim as a right (Barany 2002: 115). This decision marked the beginning of the assimilationist policy of the KSČ towards Roma.

In the 1950s, pressure began to mount on the authorities to do something to tackle the problems in Romani communities. Poverty persisted and rather than dispersing into the majority society, the practice of bringing their extended family to live with them once the men had found employment led to Roma becoming ever more visible, with concentrated populations in certain parts of the cities (Guy 1975: 214). The KSČ recognised that they would have to take action to address the socio-economic problems of Roma. Originally they had claimed that the problems of Romani communities had been caused by the iniquities of the capitalist system, but when the abolition of the capitalist system failed to resolve the problems, they realised a new approach was necessary (Ulč 1969: 423). Kostelancik (1989: 310) adds, that a further motivation was to remove any embarrassing evidence that the socialist dream was not able to help Roma any more than capitalism had. 1958 therefore, saw the launch of a nationwide campaign to improve the socio-economic conditions of Roma. The aim of the plan was to assimilate Roma into the majority society. This would be achieved through a programme of dispersal and enforced settlement of “nomads” (Guy 1975: 214). Law 74/1958 “on the permanent settlement of nomads” decreed that everyone who still persisted in living a nomadic way of life must settle and find regular employment. Local authorities were charged with helping any “nomads” who wanted to settle in their area to find accommodation and employment. These people had their identity cards stamped and were not allowed to move anywhere else to seek employment, unless the authorities in both areas gave their consent (Guy 1975: 215). The scheme failed because communities refused to allow Roma to move in and instead pushed them on to another municipality until they reached the most isolated settlements in Eastern Slovakia and there was nowhere else to go. Ulč (1969: 427) argues that the only effect of the policy was “that the wandering Gypsy turned into one who was wandered”.

Although the law did not mention Gypsies or Roma, and the majority of Roma had long since abandoned the nomadic way of life, it was understood to be directed at them (Kostelancik 1989: 311). The law had an impact on the approximately 6,000 Vlach Roma who still travelled around, but it had almost no effect on the more than 150,000 Roma living in Slovakia (Guy 2001a: 291). Despite the fact that the majority of Roma settled hundreds of years ago, as a group they were still characterised by the nomadic

way of life chosen by a minority (Kostelancik 1989: 307). A Charter 77¹⁴ report on discrimination against Roma in Czechoslovakia reported that Roma who had permanent residences and employment had their ID cards marked, “simply because they happened to travel somewhere on a train or were at a railway station between February 3 and 6, 1959” (Charter 77 1982: 161). This policy is an excellent example of how misguided the KSČ was when it came to designing policies to solve problems in Romani communities. They did not involve members of Romani communities in the decision-making process and therefore, their plans could not succeed because they fundamentally failed to understand who Roma were or what their problems were.

In 1965, new laws were introduced to try to accelerate the assimilation process. This time the focus of the campaign was the dispersal of Roma living in high concentrations in certain areas. The twin aims of this policy were to attract people away from the squalid shanty towns which could be found on the outskirts of so many towns and villages, by providing better quality housing and also to improve integration by breaking up communities, where too many Roma were living together and perpetuating their “backward culture” (Kostelancik 1989: 313). This scheme envisaged the transfer of controlled numbers of Roma to areas of the country where there were very small Romani populations in order “to spread them as thinly as possible throughout the Republic” (Guy 1975: 219). Slovak authorities recommended that Roma should not exceed 5 percent of the population in any town (Barany 2002: 117). It was also hoped that by managing the migration of Roma from Slovakia to the Czech industrial centres, the authorities could prevent a further concentration of Roma in some of these places. However, the plan was difficult to implement and was not very successful. Between 1966 and 1968, 494 families were officially transferred. In the same period, 1,096 unplanned family migrations took place (Guy 1975: 219). By 1968, the plan was abandoned.

There are a number of reasons for the failure of the dispersal scheme. Ulč (1969: 432) blames a lack of investment for the failure of the policy. Kostelancik (1989: 313) argues that Roma did not want to be uprooted from their homes and moved to unfamiliar places

¹⁴ Charter 77 acted as the main opposition force to the normalisation policies of the KSČ in Czechoslovakia in the 1970s. They criticised the government for failing to respect human rights as outlined in the Constitution and the Helsinki Accords.

where they knew no one and had no family support systems. Often they packed up and returned home to Slovakia not long after being provided with housing. Guy (1975: 220), however, believes that the primary cause of the failure was not the attitude of Roma, who were often pleased to be offered improved housing, even if it was in an area where they did not feel comfortable. He argues that the attitude of the local authorities was the main obstacle, as was the case when the Hapsburgs tried to assimilate Roma. Municipalities were reluctant to accept new Romani inhabitants because they were obliged to accommodate them, even though the local housing demand was already high. Indeed, when the plans were introduced, little attention was paid to the timetables and targets of the national building programme (Guy 1975: 220). The government had little power to force the authorities to implement the plans because the committee established to examine the problems facing Romani communities had no control over the local authorities. Guy (1975: 219) argues that this is also reminiscent of the Hapsburg era when the central authorities had no power to control how policies were implemented locally. According to Ulč (1969: 433), blame for the failure of the policy should be apportioned to all sides. The government was at fault for not planning and funding the scheme correctly, many Roma did not respect the conditions of the agreement and the local authorities were hostile to the whole scheme and did little to encourage new Romani settlers to feel comfortable.

In terms of developing an education policy towards Romani pupils, the main aim of the KSC was to tackle the widespread illiteracy in Romani communities. This formed part of the overall plan to build up an educated and skilled workforce who would be capable of fulfilling the targets of the ambitious industrial and technological advances the Party had planned. Social workers were employed to ensure that Romani children attended school regularly and special preference was given to Romani children for places in state-run kindergartens, which led to significant improvements in pre-school education (Čanek 1999). Illiteracy rates decreased significantly but overall the situation remained worrying as Roma remained the ethnic group with the lowest standard of educational achievement (Barany 2002: 133, Ulč 1988: 318). Although the proportion of Roma finishing elementary school increased, very few went on to secondary education. Many of the reasons why Romani children did not succeed at school have changed little in the last 50 years. These include, the unwelcoming attitudes of schools, being ostracised by

their non-Romani peers and the shortage of Romani teachers or role models in schools. Children were forbidden from speaking in Romani during their lunch breaks (Polechová 2003: 28) and no references were made to Romani history or culture in the curriculum. All these factors combined made school a daunting, alien place for a Romani child.

The first special schools for Romani children were established in 1952. These were not like other minority education institutions primarily because Roma were not considered a 'proper' national minority. These classes were conducted in Czech and the reason for their establishment was to find 'neglected' Romani children and provide them with rudimentary skills and knowledge (Čanek 1999). Although originally planned as a temporary measure to help Romani children catch up with their peers, it gradually became standard practice to place Romani pupils in remedial special schools, despite changes to the law which forbid the placement of Romani children in special schools if they did not have specific learning disabilities (Guy 2001a: 292). The consequences of attending a remedial special school were not as severe in the socialist system, where full employment was guaranteed regardless of level of qualifications. However, the legacy of institutionalising the practice of sending Romani children to remedial special schools would cause real problems for Roma in later years, as will be discussed in Chapter 5.

The KSČ did not come up with specific employment policies to target Romani communities. According to Ulč (1969: 435), it was left to employers and trade unions to hire, train and promote Romani workers. In spite of laws against social parasitism,¹⁵ Ulč (1969: 436) reported that in 1967, 43 percent of Roma of working age were not employed, with many receiving disability benefits. However, by 1981, 75 percent of working age Romani men and women were employed (Kostelancik 1989: 315). Given their low educational levels Roma tended to find work as unskilled labourers in heavy industry. The work was arduous and left many with health problems but it was also reasonably well paid which helped to improve the standards of living for many Romani families, but also reinforced the idea that educational qualifications were of little relevance.

¹⁵ Unemployment was abolished by the communist regime, therefore any able-bodied person who was not in full time employment or study ran the risk of being accused of the criminal offence of social parasitism because they were not making a recognised contribution to society.

Apart from a brief spell around the time of the Prague Spring in 1968, the KSČ refused to tolerate any Romani organisations which might promote the development of a Romani national self-consciousness. As far as the Party policymakers were concerned, the Romani way of life was a relic from the past best forgotten (Guy 1975: 221). They defined Roma as a social rather than an ethnic group and believed that the best way to integrate Roma into society was by pursuing policies which would improve their socio-economic status. Marushiakova and Popov (2001: 44-47) argue that the communist policy was influenced by the historical legacy of how the Hapsburg rulers dealt with Romani communities. The paternalistic approach to Romani policy and the assumption that Roma constituted a social problem which could be resolved through the correct style of social engineering is common to both regimes. Kostelancik (1989: 310) cites a document prepared by the MSLA in 1950 which predicted that by integrating Roma into the regular labour force full social integration would soon be achieved. In his examination of the communist policies towards Roma in Hungary, Stewart (2001) reported a similar attitude: “There was an almost mechanistic logic to their theory as if (Gypsy) x (socialist wage-labour + housing + education) = (Hungarian worker) + (Gypsy folklore)” (Stewart 2001: 83).

The observation that the poverty of Roma was a problem that needed to be tackled was indeed correct. However, by denying Roma a separate ethnic identity and using dismissive tones to describe it as “a mixture of undesirable remnants of previous social orders including such elements as nomadism, tribalism, animism and blood feuds” (Guy 1975:221), the prejudices of the wider society were left unchallenged and discrimination was allowed to persist. The media also played its part by highlighting the problems of criminality and anti-social behaviour in some Romani communities (Ulč 1969: 424). Roma were indeed disproportionately represented in prisons and according to Ulč (1969: 429) were ten times more likely than non-Romani citizens to be responsible for certain crimes – particularly theft and social parasitism. However, by consistently highlighting these negative aspects of Romani behaviour, the stereotype of the thieving, lazy and irresponsible “Gypsy” held by the majority of society was reinforced further. Discrimination came in many forms, the most obvious examples being the denial of access to certain bars and restaurants, the disproportionate numbers of Romani children who were diagnosed with learning difficulties and placed in remedial special schools

and the controversial policy which offered women large sums of money to encourage them to be sterilised. By focusing on the social problems and poverty in Romani communities, their standard of living was raised considerably over the course of 40 years but it never reached the standard of the majority (Ulč 1988: 319). In spite of these advances, Guy (2001b: 11) argues that the price to be paid for full citizenship was the abandonment of their Romani identity which caused significant psychological damage by strengthening feelings of inferiority and self-hatred. This was made worse by the fact that, despite sacrificing their political rights in return for improved socio-economic status Roma never reached an equal status with the rest of society in social, economic or political terms.

Although some older Roma look back at the communist period with nostalgia, remembering the security offered by a generous social welfare system and guaranteed employment for all who sought it, Barany (2002: 117) characterises the policy of the KSC towards Roma as consistent coercion. He cites the enforced settlement and dispersal policies, the ban on the use of Romani language at school, the controversial sterilisation policy and the ban on Romani organisations as examples of an oppressive policy aimed at the total assimilation of Romani citizens. Guy (2001a: 292-293) argues that despite the advances made in socio-economic terms, Roma remained at the bottom of the social scale. In the labour force, they were a useful source of unskilled labour and the discrimination in the education systems made it difficult for them to find employment in more technically demanding areas. Kostelancik (1989: 321) goes further and claims that the economy's need for cheap unskilled labour meant that regardless of the ideological goals of the Party, it was in the state's interest to leave Romani communities as they were: "with little education or hope."

2.4 Czechoslovakia 1989 – 1992

The collapse of the socialist system in 1989 and the ensuing social and economic changes caused a great deal of hardship for Roma in Czechoslovakia. Unemployment in Romani communities increased dramatically as they (the unskilled workers) were the first to lose their jobs when the massive loss-making industries were restructured or closed down completely (Guy 2001a: 296; Barany 2002: 172 – 176). Their personal

security was also threatened as racially motivated attacks increased and the racist views of extreme right-wing parties and ordinary members of the public were broadcast in the media (Stewart 1997: 2; Barany 2002: 195 – 196). However, despite this worsening of conditions for Roma, the authorities did little to help them. One significant change to Romani policy came in 1991, when the democratically elected Czechoslovak government recognised Roma as a national minority again, and granted them all the rights associated with national minority status. However, this change in status was of little practical use to Roma who were more concerned with their financial worries and fears for their physical safety. In the 1991 Czechoslovak national census only 112,000 people identified themselves as belonging to the Romani national minority, despite the fact that government and NGO estimates of the population ranged between 600,000 and 800,000 (Liégeois and Gheorghe 1995: 7; Barany 2002: 126). Many analysts, including Sobotka (2001), and Clark (1998) suspect that Roma chose not to identify themselves officially as such because they feared that this would have negative consequences for them and their families. Given the confusing and frightening situation they found themselves in at the beginning of the transition period, such fears can be understood.

Between 1990 and 1992, the federal Czechoslovak government formulated some policies to tackle Romani issues. ‘Roundtables’ which included Romani MPs (11 were elected to the Federal Parliament and to the Czech and Slovak National Assemblies in the first free elections) drafted a proposal which cumulated in the adoption of Federal Resolution 619/1991 on “Principles of the Government of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic on Policy towards Romani Minority” (Sobotka 2001: 2). The Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of the Federal Republic were charged with developing the key programmes identified by the Resolution: institutions to address the “problems of Romani minority”, education towards tolerance and human rights and the education of Romani children (Sobotka 2001: 2). Vermeersch (2004: 13) argues that this resolution signalled a shift from the ideology of socialist policies towards Roma because although it still sought to improve their socio-economic conditions it was not supposed to lead to assimilation. At the level of the national assemblies, the Czech government adopted resolution 463/1991 “Regarding the Proposal of the Principles of the Policy of the Government of the Czech Republic towards the Social Advancement of Romani Population” which commissioned the

MSLA to draft concrete policies. However, according to Sobotka (2001: 2) the disintegration of the Czechoslovak state led to some of the tasks outlined in Resolution 463/91 being cancelled.

2.5 Czech Republic 1993 – 2005

Sobotka (2001: 2) argues that immediately after the break-up of Czechoslovakia the Czech authorities had very little interest in pursuing policies to assist Roma. The ‘civic principle’ that every individual has equal rights and no one from any ethnic group should be treated differently to any other citizen – was given precedence.¹⁶ Attempts to initiate policy were ignored and responsibility for the issue was gradually transferred away from the Ministries to Advisory bodies such as the Council for Nationalities.¹⁷ It was not until 1997 that the state began to pay attention to the problems facing Czech Roma and develop policies to support better social integration.

One key policy in the early 1990s which was not presented as a policy targeting Roma, but which had significant consequences for Romani minority, was the Czech citizenship law, introduced after the break-up of Czechoslovakia. The procedures to attain Czech citizenship were complicated and led to a situation whereby many Roma living in the Czech Republic were denied citizenship and thus deprived of important civil rights. Under the Constitution Act of 1969, citizens of Czechoslovakia had another legal identity (*národnost*) in addition to their federal citizenship (*občanství*), as a national of either the Czech or Slovak Republic according to their place of birth. This ‘national’ citizenship was considered to have no real significance until 1993 when it became the basis for the new Czech citizenship law. Slovak ‘nationals’ and their children had to re-apply for Czech citizenship regardless of how long they had been living in the territory of the Czech Republic (Šiklová and Miklušáková 1998; O’Nions 1999). To be entitled to citizenship they had to be officially resident in the Czech Republic for at least two years and could not have had any criminal convictions for five years (Guy 2001a: 297).

¹⁶ More detailed discussion of the civic principle follows in Chapter 3.

¹⁷ The Council for National Minorities is an advisory board which advises the government on matters of national minority policy. It includes representatives from the different government ministries and representatives from 12 legally recognised national minorities, including Roma (Act on the Rights of Members of National Minorities 2001).

Applicants were also required to have mastered the Czech language (O’Nions 1999: 4iiic). Although this law applied to all Slovak citizens resident in the Czech Republic, Roma were affected in particular and it has been viewed by some analysts as an attempt by the government to resolve the “Roma problem” for once and for all by expelling as many as possible from the country (Human Rights Watch 1996; O’Nions 1999; Guy 2001a: 298-299).

There are a number of reasons why this policy was considered to be a deliberate attempt to deny Roma citizenship. Firstly, the majority of Roma settled in the Czech Republic had moved there (some voluntarily, some under duress) from Slovakia after World War Two. Therefore, almost all had to re-apply for citizenship. As noted in section 2.3, many Romani had criminal records albeit for minor crimes such as petty theft. Therefore, they were not entitled to Czech citizenship on those grounds (O’Nions 1999 4iiib). For others, the problem was trying to prove their residency. Many Roma moved from Slovakia to big Czech cities without official permission and therefore, their residency was never authorised. Others lived in sub-standard accommodation which the municipal authorities did not consider permanent, therefore, they could not prove permanent residency (O’Nions 1999: 4iiia, Guy 2001a: 297). The law was criticised by NGOs and international organisations including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Council of Europe. This led to some minor amendments in 1996 including reducing the requirement of a clean criminal record to three years but this was not enough to satisfy international critics (O’Nions 1999: 5i). In 1999, the law was amended again and is now “based on the premise that those who were permanent residents in the country in 1993 have the right to citizenship” (Barany 2002: 311).

In 1997, for reasons which will be fully addressed in Chapter 3, the government finally began to look seriously at the problems in Romani communities. In January of that year, Pavel Bratinka, Minister without Portfolio and President of the Council for National Minorities, commissioned the Report “*on the situation of the Romani community in the Czech Republic and on the present situation in the Romani community*” (hereafter the Bratinka Report). It was approved by Resolution 686/1997 on 29 October 1997, days before the collapse of Klaus’ ODS government (Government Resolution 1997a). Based on the experiences of state and local government officials and NGO representatives who

worked with Czech Roma, the Bratinka Report described the problems facing Romani communities, commenting on the socio-economic problems and discussing the issue of discrimination against Roma in Czech society. Importantly, it was highly critical of the attitude of the government towards Romani policy and acknowledged that the criticisms of international institutions regarding the failure of the Czech government to address the problems of Romani communities were justified. It identified education and employment in Romani communities and combating discrimination and intolerance as the key problems which had to be addressed (Government of the Czech Republic 1997: III (I)ii). Guy (2001a: 299) describes the Bratinka Report as: “a landmark in official Czech assessment of the situation of its Roma minority”.

The Interministerial Commission for Roma Community Affairs was established by Government Resolution 581 on 17 September 1997 (Government Resolution 1997b). It was intended to improve the representation of Roma at the governmental level. Originally, the Commission was made up of twelve deputy ministers, six representatives from Roma communities and an executive deputy chairman (Government Resolution 2002: 2.2.1). In 1998, the number of Romani representatives was increased to twelve and in 2000, the numbers of staff in the office of the Commission was increased from two to six permanent employees (Government Resolution 2002: 2.2.3). Following Government Resolution 14/2001, the Commission was transformed into a permanent advisory body now called the Council of the Government of the Czech Republic for Roma Community Affairs, hereafter the Council for Romani Affairs (Government Resolution 2001). A cabinet member still chairs the council, the Commissioner for Human Rights is the First Deputy Chairman and one of the Romani representatives is the Second Deputy Chairman. There are now 14 members to represent state administration – these are mostly deputy ministers – and 14 representatives from Romani communities, who are now appointed on a regional basis to ensure fair representation of Roma across the country (Council for Romani Affairs 2003: 2.2.3).

In 2004 Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Justice, Pavel Němec, replaced Petr Mareš, who had been Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Minorities as the chair of the Council. According to the Permanent Secretary of the Office of the Council, Czeslaw Walek, the fact that the chairman had such an important cabinet post was a

significant advantage because he had a higher profile and could push certain measures through in the government (email correspondence with Czeslaw Walek, 31/10/05). Following the appointment of a new government, Džamila Stehlíková was appointed chairperson of the Council on 9 January 2007. Within the cabinet she is a Minister without Portfolio, but with responsibility for minorities and human rights. The fact that a Minister with a lower profile than the Minister for Justice is now responsible for Romani affairs may have consequences, but it is too soon to tell.

The Council for Romani Affairs is responsible for collecting information about Roma and making policy proposals to the government to improve Romani integration. It is also responsible for providing support to other ministries in relation to the tasks assigned to them in the various resolutions concerning Romani communities (Council for Romani Affairs 2005c). The Council is an advisory body of the government and has no power to force ministries or municipalities to implement policy. It does not have its own budget but it administers two programmes which fund initiatives to support Romani communities, one for NGOs and one for municipalities (email correspondence with Czeslaw Walek, 31/10/05). There have been complaints that the status of the Council as an advisory body means it cannot be as effective as it should be and it cannot actually improve the administration and implementation of Romani policy. One of Romani Advisors interviewed was a member of the Council. She confirmed that this was a genuine problem:

The council is only an advisory organ. So of course we comment on the Concept for Romani integration but if you ask any mayor, they don't know that the Concept even exists because they aren't interested enough to look for it or read it, even when we say it's on the internet. (Romani Advisor).

Problems arose in the 1990s between the different levels of government with regard to the implementation of Romani policy. The central government develops policy (through the Council for Romani Affairs who provides proposals to the Ministries), but the measures have to be implemented by administrators in the regions and municipalities. Sometimes conflicts of interests arise because the local administration does not consider the problems of Romani communities in their area to be a priority and chooses not to finance the programmes. This issue will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

Conflicts have also arisen where municipal councils have taken decisions regarding their local Romani community, of which the central government did not approve. The controversial wall built in Ústí nad Labem in 1999 is a good example of such a situation. In that well publicised case, the council of the sub-municipality Ústí nad Labem-Neštěmice decided to build a wall between a street inhabited mostly by Roma and the next street where mostly non-Roma lived. Their intention was to provide the non-Romani citizens with some respite from the noise and unsightly heaps of rubbish which tended to pile up in that street, but in the face of international media attention, and accusations of apartheid, the government insisted they take it back down. The municipality reluctantly removed the wall after an agreement was reached that the central government would pay compensation to help families troubled by their neighbours to move away (Roček 1999). Later the Constitutional Court ruled that the government had actually behaved illegally because it had no right to dictate how the municipality should behave in that instance (*Lidové noviny* 2000).

One positive development to improve relations between Romani communities and the state was the appointment of Romani Advisors to the district authorities in accordance with the recommendations of the Bratinka Report. By 1 January 1999, all 81 districts had appointed a Romani Advisor, although only half of the Advisors were actually Roma (Council for Romani Affairs 2003: 2.5.1). The role of the Romani Advisor was intended to be more than simply to act as a social worker. According to the 2000 Concept, their main task was to develop and encourage Romani integration (Government of the Czech Republic 2000: 3.1.2). In areas with a larger population of Roma the 2000 Concept recommended that Romani Assistants be employed to help the Advisor manage all their duties (Government of the Czech Republic 2000: 3.1.3). This recommendation has been accepted by some municipalities. In Ostrava two Romani Advisors are employed in the main municipal Department of Social Affairs and the sub-municipalities with large numbers of Romani inhabitants employ additional Romani Assistants. The Advisor and Assistants are very active and have developed an excellent relationship with both the municipal council and the local NGOs. Ostrava is an example of how the employment of Romani Advisors can bring tangible benefits to Romani communities and to state officials.

The decentralisation reforms in 2000, which led to the abolition of districts and the establishment of 14 larger regions,¹⁸ led to many Romani Advisors being transferred to municipal authorities but this led to problems whereby other municipalities lost out on the services of the Advisor. In many cases the municipalities gave Romani Advisors other responsibilities in addition to their intended role, or worse, gave an existing municipal employee the formal role of Romani Advisor in addition to their other responsibilities (Council for Romani Affairs 2003 2.5.2). This was the case in České Budějovice where a Romani Advisor was not employed until 2005. However, as appointing a Romani Advisor is not prescribed by law, municipal authorities cannot be forced to employ Romani Advisors (Council for Romani Affairs 2005b: 2.7). Attempts have been made to amend the Law on National Minorities to ensure that all municipalities do appoint a Romani Advisor; but thus far it has not been possible to find an appropriate way to formulate such an amendment (Council for Romani Affairs 2005b: 2.7).

With the establishment of regions came the new position of Coordinator of Roma Advisors at Higher Self-Governing Units (hereafter Regional Coordinator for Romani Affairs). The role of the Regional Coordinator was to coordinate the activities of Advisors and Assistants working in the region and also to act as a link between the central authorities, especially the Council for Romani Affairs, and the local authorities (Council for Romani Affairs 2005b: 2.6). The 2005 Updated Concept reports some problems with the appointment of Regional Coordinators which still need to be resolved. One concern is the placement of Regional Coordinators for Romani Affairs within the regional administration. The 2005 Updated Concept notes:

Some work at the Department of Social Affairs and Health Care, others at the Culture and Heritage Department, the Department of Security and Minority Issues, the Department of Prevention or Humanitarian Issues and some of them are even directly subordinated to the Regional Commissioner's office (Council for Romani Affairs 2005b: 2.6).

My own research also reflects these findings. The Regional Coordinators for Romani Affairs in the two regions under investigation in this study were placed in two different departments – the Department of Social Affairs and the Department of Culture and

¹⁸ Act on the Regions – Regional establishment (129/2000)

Heritage. The 2005 Updated Concept recommends that all Regional Coordinators for Romani Affairs should be placed within the Office of the Regional Commissioner (Council for Romani Affairs 2005b: 2.6). The other problem raised by the 2005 Updated Concept is that the regional authorities view Regional Coordinators as social workers, whereas in fact they could also be involved in consultations with the regional authority, providing guidance to Advisors, organising seminars and other information activities. In České Budějovice, where there was no Romani Advisor, the Regional Coordinator was expected to take care of issues which would normally be the responsibility of the Romani Advisor. Therefore, he had less time for his role as Coordinator of regional activities.

The main achievement of the Council for Roma Affairs has been the development of the “Concept of Government Policy Towards Members of Romani Community Designed to Facilitate their Social Integration” (hereafter “the 2000 Concept”). Approved on 14 June 2000 by Resolution 599/00, the 2000 Concept sets out strategies and tasks to be implemented by different Ministries and sets as its goal, the integration of Romani communities within twenty years. Since 2000 the Commission has regularly published updates informing the government of the progress being made by the Ministries involved and it has also amended and updated the Concept itself. The 2000 Concept document will be examined in more detail in the following two chapters and the implementation of its recommendations is the main focus of this thesis.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the different attempts made by the state to address the question of how to deal with the presence of Roma in its territory. Throughout history, Roma have caused problems for the authorities because of their refusal to conform to the norms of the wider society. They have been treated with disdain and fear in equal measure for hundreds of years. Rulers trying to consolidate their power viewed Roma as a threat because they could not be assured of their loyalty. Before 1989 the only solutions attempted by the authorities to these problems were extermination or assimilation. Until the late 1990s, no significant attempt was made to ask Roma how they would like to see their problems solved. They were not offered the opportunity to

live as an ethnic minority enjoying equal civil rights with respect for their own culture. From the perspective of the Czech authorities, Roma were always viewed as a “problem” that had to be “solved”. Indeed, the idea that the majority society should adapt to better accommodate and include Roma was never taken into serious consideration. For example, during the dispersal campaign of the late 1960s, little was done to prepare communities for the arrival of the new Romani settlers. Their unwelcoming attitudes were generally left unchecked. The new policies introduced in the late 1990s mark a significant shift in government policy towards Romani communities. They are based on notions of integration, inclusion and respect for minority cultures. They seek to involve Roma in the decision-making process and increase the participation of Roma in politics generally.

However, despite these positive aims, many analysts worry that the legacy of previous attempts to resolve the “Romani problem” will influence the new policies and limit their chances of success. Marushiakova and Popov (2001: 44-47) argue that the policies of the socialist regime were heavily influenced by historical traditions and characterised by a paternalistic attitude. As in Hapsburg times, the authorities opted for an assimilationist policy and made their decisions without consulting with Roma, believing that they knew what would be in their best interests. They fear that the legacy of previous experiences is too ingrained to change in any significant way, arguing that while the language used to describe the issues may change, the ideas remain the same. In his in-depth analysis of Czech government policies towards Roma, Guy (1975 and 2001a) similarly highlights a pattern since Hapsburg times, whereby policies developed by the central authorities fail because of a lack of cooperation from the local authorities who are responsible for their implementation. He questions whether this pattern will continue into the 21st century. Finally, Kostelancik (1989: 310) identified an assumption which was built into the communist authorities understanding of the integration/assimilation process. This was the belief that by providing Roma with employment and a decent standard of living they would “learn” to behave like the rest of society.

This thesis will address these concerns, firstly by investigating why the authorities have decided to approach the question of managing majority – Romani relations in a new way and examining the key debates, which emerged during policy development to

demonstrate how the new approach differs from that of previous regimes. It will then offer an in-depth analysis of the reform programme in the spheres of education and employment and referring to the predictions of these scholars, it will discuss the problems that have arisen during the implementation of the policy. The following chapter examines the different internal and external factors which prompted the Czech government to take the concerns of Romani communities more seriously.

CHAPTER 3: IMPETUS FOR REFORM

Introduction

In the five and a half years between November 1991 and January 1997 the Czech government passed 12 resolutions concerning Romani communities and in the following six years, between January 1997 and March 2003, 86 resolutions were passed (Council for Romani Affairs 2005a). How can this enormous increase in momentum be explained? The publication of the Bratinka Report towards the end of 1997 was certainly a turning point but there is consensus among observers of the situation that the commissioning of this report was in itself the result of international criticism regarding the social exclusion of Roma from NGOs and influential international organisations such as the EU, the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the UNHCR (Guy 2001a: 301; Sobotka 2001a: 3; Barany 2002: 267-273). This chapter discusses the different internal and external factors which were influential in motivating the government to take the problems of Romani communities seriously and to develop policies to resolve these problems. In particular, the roles played by asylum seekers, the EU, Romani NGOs and politicians and domestic public opinion are examined. This chapter demonstrates that the main pressure to initiate reform came from external sources rather than pressure from voters. This is significant because it has implications for how regional and local authorities regard the reforms and whether they decide to prioritise the implementation of pro-Romani policies.

3.1 Asylum Seekers

The key development in the mid-1990s, which caught the attention of the international media and pushed the Roma of CEE and particularly the Czech Republic much higher up the political agenda, was the dramatic rise in the numbers of Roma seeking asylum in Western states. As grounds for asylum, they cited fear of physical attacks by skinheads and the general failure of the authorities to protect them from discrimination. In the Czech Republic, Romani asylum seekers were encouraged by documentaries broadcast on television, particularly on the commercial channel *Nova*, which showed

Romani families happily settled in Western countries. It is difficult to establish exactly how many Roma travelled abroad to claim asylum as most countries record claims based on the nationality of the individual rather than their ethnicity but Guy (2004: 190) estimates that about 1,500 Roma applied for asylum in the UK in 1997, accounting for about 4 per cent of all asylum seekers that year. Uherek (2004: 87) reports that in 1996 about 150 Roma sought asylum in Canada, but the following year this increased to 1,500 Roma, prompting the Canadian authorities to re-introduce visas for all Czech citizens. Klímová (2004: 16) cites the reports of EU governments estimating that from 1997 to 2000 between 85 and 99 percent of asylum claims made by Czech citizens were made by Roma. The tactic of applying for asylum has been analysed in depth by many scholars (See Klímová 2004 for a review of existing literature) and the reasons why Roma chose the asylum process as a means to migrate to the West will not be discussed here. Instead, the focus will be on the impact this “wave” of asylum seekers from the Czech Republic had on the Czech government and how it acted as a motivational factor in the acceleration of the development of pro-Romani policies.

The initial response of Western governments to the arrival of Romani asylum seekers was negative and the vast majority of claims were rejected. As Fawn (2001: 1194) has observed, the Czech Republic was internationally regarded as a liberal and tolerant nation and the economic situation at the time was still considered favourable; therefore, the claims of Romani asylum seekers were not deemed credible. Most Western media portrayed the Roma as ‘bogus’ asylum seekers and ‘economic migrants’ who were motivated only by the generosity of Western social welfare systems (See Guy 2004: 190 – 191 for a press review). Winterbourne (1999) argues that the reason Romani asylum claims were not tolerated was because the authorities feared that if one member of an ethnic group was granted refugee status on the grounds of discrimination or persecution, it would set a precedent and open the ‘floodgates’ prompting many more members of that group to make similar claims. Instead, the Western governments insisted that the responsibility of dealing with these problems lay with the claimants’ country of origin (Castle-Kaňerová 2000 cited by Klímová 2004: 27). Nonetheless, Matras (2000: 47) argues that the asylum seekers forced the international community to pay more attention to their plight which led to a more sensitive understanding of the socio-economic and human rights situation in their countries of origin. This in turn led to more pressure

being exerted on the governments in the countries of origin to take action to stem the flow of would-be refugees.

This international pressure had a positive effect on the attitude of the Czech government. Vermeersch (2004: 13) argues that Viktor Dobal, the head of Pavel Bratinka's office, used the controversy of the Romani asylum seekers to raise the profile of the Bratinka Report which was commissioned and approved by the ODS government in 1997, shortly before its fall from power. From 1998 the new ČSSD minority government continued to take the issue of Romani integration seriously and using the proposals of the Bratinka Report as a starting point, it tried to find new ways to resolve the problems. The continuity of policy pursued by the two main political parties, who generally take very different stances on the main electoral issues, highlights that the international pressure was taken very seriously and that regardless of the ideology of the parties there was no alternative but to finally tackle the problems in Romani communities. In 2000, a representative of the government acknowledged that the imposition of visas on all Czech citizens travelling to Canada was a key factor in mobilising the government to tackle the problems facing Roma (Kryštof 2000 cited by Klímová 2004: 33).

3.2 Influence of the EU

Vermeersch (2004: 8) argues that the plight of Romani communities in the candidate countries was not a high priority for the European Commission when it outlined the Copenhagen Criteria for EU membership in 1993, because unlike certain national minorities with territorial claims, "they were not perceived as a potential threat to European stability." This changed over the course of the 1990s as NGOs did more to highlight the problems facing Roma and as the numbers of asylum seekers arriving in EU member states grew. Based on the evidence of the Regular Reports published annually by the Commission between 1997 and 2002, it is clear that the treatment of Roma became a higher priority for the Commission over time. The first commentary published by the European Commission, assessing the readiness of the Czech Republic for EU membership indicated that the Czech Republic fulfilled the Copenhagen Criteria regarding treatment of minorities. However, the report also devoted three paragraphs to

discrimination against Roma, noting the inadequacy of police protection from attacks by skinheads, discrimination in the spheres of housing and employment and the unfair terms of the citizenship law (European Commission 1997: 16). The 1998 Regular Report again confirmed that the overall treatment of minorities was satisfactory. It singled out the situation of Czech Romani communities, commenting on positive developments such as the publication of the Bratinka Report and the establishment of the Commission for Romani Affairs but it also criticised the widespread discrimination in society, citing problems in access to employment, housing and education. The continuing racially-motivated violence, the negative portrayal of Roma in the media, the discriminatory attitudes of local officials and the arrival of asylum seekers in EU states were noted as examples of problems which the government needed to address (European Commission 1998: 10 - 11). Each successive report is slightly longer, providing more detail on key problems facing Roma including the controversy over the wall in Ústí nad Labem in 1999 (European Commission 1999: 16) and the ERRC court case citing discrimination in the education system in 2000 (European Commission 2000: 26). The general conclusion of each report was that the Copenhagen Criteria had been fulfilled but in spite of this, the Commission wished for more to be done to improve the situation in Romani communities before EU membership was finalised.

Czech and EU officials regularly stated publicly that the social exclusion of Roma was an important issue in the accession negotiations. In 1998, Rals Dreyer, acting head of the EU mission in the Czech Republic announced: “Romani rights have become one of the most important issues of EU accession negotiations” (Barany 2002: 27). The following year President Václav Havel claimed that the ability of Czechs and Roma to coexist had a direct influence on the reputation of the country in Europe. If toleration could not be achieved then the state could “forget about integrating into Europe and into the European Community” (O’Nions 1999: 7). Later that year, on a state visit to Latvia in November 1999, Prime Minister Miloš Zeman admitted that the way the Czech government handled Romani policy could influence the state’s accession to the EU (*Lidové noviny* 1999). The Bratinka Report and the 2000 Concept both refer to the criticism from international institutions and the 2005 updated version of the 2000 Concept (hereafter the 2005 Updated Concept) specifically links membership of the EU with its development of Romani policy:

In connection with the entry of the Czech Republic into the EU, the government has undertaken to make use of all new and available means to help the social inclusion of members of Romani communities (Council for Romani Affairs 2005b: 1.12).

An official interviewed at the MoE in Prague confirmed that the Ministry had felt under pressure to fulfil the EU requirements:

I don't know [how much influence pressure from Brussels had on the development of Romani policy] because when I arrived the pressure was already very considerable from what I could see. It's a very complex situation and it's not very pleasant when someone keeps pushing you to change things but I think that pressure from outside [the Czech Republic] is extremely important, if any changes are to be adopted (Official at MoE, Prague).

In the course of my fieldwork, I asked officials at the regional and municipal level how they would assess the extent to which pressure from the European Commission influenced the development of policy towards Romani communities. Interestingly, opinions differed in the two cities I visited. In České Budějovice where pro-Romani policies were not high on the agenda and where few reforms had been successfully implemented, the officials reported that they did not feel as if criticism from Brussels had any impact on their approach to policies for the local Romani community. A senior member of the municipal council claimed:

It didn't have any influence because we were dealing with these problems without Brussels. It's true that thanks to Brussels there are more possibilities now how to deal with it, but we've been resolving these problems for many years. It had no influence on whether or not we would join the EU (České Budějovice Municipal Councillor).

They were also quite defensive about what they perceived as unfair criticism from the EU, as they believed that the situation of Roma was not much better in the existing member states. A senior official in the regional education department said:

It is true that while Minister Zeman¹⁹ was Minister for Education, EU organs examined the Czech special education system in quite a

¹⁹ Eduard Zeman was Minister for Education from July 1998 to July 2002.

significant way and we often received warnings that we discriminated against children. I would like to point out that some countries in Western and South-Western Europe create reservations for Romani citizens where they camp. The children can't read or write, which doesn't happen in the Czech Republic. It would be worth remembering the Czech proverb "put your own house in order first". So I don't think that the Czech school system was influenced by the EU in any significant way (South Bohemia Regional Education Department, Senior Official).

Officials in Ostrava, where the local government had been much more proactive when it came to implementing policies and developing new initiatives to support Roma, viewed the influence of the EU differently. Although some officials complained that they only received criticism from Brussels and no concrete suggestions about how to tackle the problems, because they believed that no EU state had found a satisfactory solution to the problem of social exclusion of Romani communities, other officials believed that the pressure exerted on the government during the accession negotiations had led to some positive developments. A senior official in the Moravia-Silesia regional education department in Ostrava thought that the reform process had been accelerated because of EU pressure:

I think for us in education it was accelerated or the emphasis on that was increased, that fewer children should end up in special schools and more than that, that they should be integrated, so the process was accelerated, the problems were emphasised. I think it would have happened without Brussels, but more slowly, I think this speeded it up (Moravia-Silesia Regional Education Department Senior Official).

On the other hand, a senior official in Ostrava's municipal department of Social Affairs thought that the interference from Brussels and even from the government was unnecessary, as a lot was already being done in Ostrava to support local Romani communities, without any prompting from the government. However she recognised that at the national level the pressure from Brussels led to the development of a more uniform strategy:

When I take the level of the government, they had to conform to some things which had to be fulfilled so that we could join and so we could have a clear path to the EU at all. So yes, they established lots of documents and lots of measures on that level. I am a person with much grassroots experience here in Ostrava and to me, government attitudes seem as though these people [in the government] are reinventing the

wheel. [...] But yes it had an influence, on those basic documents, in the basic measures which we had to conform to. The effort was really there and something was done for that. There are the big programmes which are led by the government and the individual ministries, they support activities to include and integrate (Ostrava Municipal Social Affairs Department, Senior Official).

It is clear from the statements of the officials in these two cities, that their opinion of EU pressure (or the lack thereof) matched their general level of enthusiasm for the whole project of developing policies to support Romani communities. However, it also reflects the power struggles taking place between the different tiers of government and administration. These officials believed that pressure was being exerted on the central government to implement changes but they did not feel much pressure from Brussels at the local level. In České Budějovice, the problems of local Roma were not a priority and the municipal authorities were resisting pressure from the central government to devote more attention to the issue. Therefore, they also dismissed the criticism coming from Brussels. In Ostrava, where the social exclusion of Romani communities across the city were too great to ignore, primarily because the population of Roma was so large, they were already trying to find ways to tackle the problems. Therefore, the officials welcomed the input of EU institutions which pushed the central government to invest more in pro-Romani programmes because they hoped it would assist them in implementing their policies.

Scholars agree that the extent of the influence exerted by the EU on the development of Romani policy should not be overstated and the findings of my research reflect this. Vermeersch (2004: 14) cites the example of the Act On the Rights of Members of National Minorities, passed in 2001. The Copenhagen Criteria did not require the implementation of such a law but the government decided to introduce it. On the other hand, the Regular Reports repeatedly highlight the need for a comprehensive anti-discrimination law but this legislation has still not been passed. Anti-discrimination provisions remain as sub-clauses in other parts of legislation, a problem which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 9. The main reason why the EU could not be more influential stems from the double standards which existed between what was expected of states applying to join the EU compared to what was expected of the existing members. Ram (2003) argues that the anti-Romani prejudices which existed in member

states weakened the authority of the Commission when it demanded more rights for minorities in applicant states. The checkpoints established by British officials at Prague's Ruzyně airport to prevent Romani asylum seekers from boarding flights to Britain is a classic example of this problem. Riedel (2001: 1266) noted a growing frustration within applicant states as they saw the EU "moving the goalposts" in terms of what was expected to win membership status. This led to increasing cynicism and the belief that the acceding states would never enter the EU because they could never fulfil all the demands placed upon them. Guglielmo (2004: 42) predicted that once membership was concluded, the rights of minorities such as Roma would be forgotten completely, because minority protection mechanisms are weaker in member countries than those demanded of candidate countries. In spite of these criticisms however, it must be acknowledged that the EU has played an important role by focusing the Czech government's attention on the plight of Roma. Furthermore, the EU itself invested a great deal of money into projects to help Romani communities in the Czech Republic. Between 1993 and 2001 the EU donated €8,127,600 through PHARE funded programmes for Roma in the Czech Republic to support education and training, anti-discrimination programmes, Romani publications and other cultural projects (DG Enlargement Information Unit, 2003: 21).

3.3 Non-Governmental Organisations

As observed in Section 2.3, Charter 77 was concerned with the problems facing Romani communities from the early 1980s but interest from international NGOs grew enormously in the 1990s. In 1992, Human Rights Watch published a detailed report on the discrimination suffered by Roma in Czechoslovakia in almost every sphere of life – in education, housing, employment, health, access to public services and in their dealings with the police. They highlighted the problems of segregation in the education system and the controversial practice of sterilising Romani women in an attempt to limit the size of Romani families (Human Rights Watch 1992). Discrimination against Roma was a common theme in many international NGO reports (See Project on Ethnic Relations (PER) 1992; Human Rights Watch 1996; Amnesty International 1996; and the many publications of the OSI and the ERRC). The citizenship law discussed in Section 2.5 was also criticised by NGOs and by other international bodies such as the Council

of Europe, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and the UNHCR. This pressure from NGOs was important mainly as a source of information for the European Commission which was now paying more attention to the problems of Romani communities.

One good example of how NGO pressure led to a reform of Romani policy is the campaign of the ERRC highlighting racial segregation in schools. They claimed that Romani children were disproportionately represented in remedial special schools, because the assessment procedures were institutionally racist. They first filed a case in the Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic on behalf of a group of children from Ostrava on 15 June 1999 but this was unsuccessful, so on 18 April 2000 the case was brought to the ECHR in Strasbourg. On 7 February 2006 the Second Section of the Court finally ruled against the claimants explaining that although it had been demonstrated that Romani children were in a disadvantageous position, there was no evidence that the state had deliberately discriminated against them. The ERRC is now seeking an appeal in the ECHR's Grand Chamber (ERRC 2006). This is an extremely controversial case in the Czech Republic, arousing strong feelings on both sides of the debate. However, many respondents noted that regardless of the rights and wrongs of the matter (the case will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5) the action had served to speed up the reform of the education system, which included the abolition of these remedial special schools altogether. One of the education psychologists I interviewed about the case was unhappy with the way the evidence was gathered and felt that the officials in Ostrava had not done anything wrong but she agreed that the court case had led to the reform process being accelerated and that it brought the issue out into the open:

It forced everyone to talk about discrimination and accept that things needed to be changed. It would have happened anyway, but more slowly. This was a catalyst for the process (Educational Psychologist 2).

Local NGOs have also influenced the government by demonstrating how their initiatives can help to improve the integration of Romani communities. Some grassroots initiatives which sought to address particular local problems were later adopted by the government and used as the basis for the new national Romani policy. For example, two

key education programmes – the employment of Romani TAs and the establishment of preparatory classes for Romani children – were originally sponsored by local charities and later adopted by the MoE as a national policy. NGOs and church organisations run community centres which offer services to the whole community including youth clubs and play groups for mothers and young children. The Přemysl Pitter Church School in Ostrava was opened by a religious charity organisation with the aim of providing local Romani children with a school that would meet their educational needs and prevent them from ending up in remedial special schools. This was the first school to employ Romani TAs and its curriculum emphasises Romani traditions and culture. It now receives state funding. Another famous example from Ostrava was the development of new homes for 30 Romani and non-Romani families who were made homeless after the floods in 1997 (*Radio Prague* 2002b). With Church and state funding the “Coexistence Village” was established and is home to 10 Romani families, 10 non-Romani families and 10 mixed families. The “village” has been a major success, particularly because of its emphasis on encouraging Romani and non-Romani families to live together. However, the project was extremely expensive and it would be prohibitively costly to replicate the scheme many other areas.

NGOs can receive funding for their projects from the municipal authorities, the Council for Romani Affairs or the European Commission, and the more successful NGOs have become trusted spokespeople for their Romani communities. In this way, they can better communicate their needs to the authorities. Some scholars have questioned whether the activities of NGOs do more harm than good because by only ever highlighting the problems facing Roma they inadvertently reinforce the stereotype of Roma as a helpless “underclass” (Vermeersch 2005: 454; Pognány 2006: 16). However, this is not always the case because NGOs which give Roma the support and training they need to become effective advocates for their own community challenge this stereotype and empower Romani communities to find their own solutions and to be taken seriously by the authorities.

Both international and local NGOs have influenced the government in a variety of ways. International NGOs, with their large budgets, have raised the profile of Romani communities in the media and their reports were taken seriously by international

organisations such as the European Commission – evidence for this can be found in the annual Regular Reports published by the Commission which often cited NGOs as the source of their information on the situation in Czech Romani communities. Therefore, international NGOs indirectly motivated successive governments to take the question of Romani social exclusion seriously. Local grassroots initiatives were also influential. They demonstrated to local and national authorities that practical solutions could be found to tackle social exclusion and as a consequence they were taken seriously as partners in the integration project.

3.4 Romani Politicians and Activists

Members of Romani communities also played a part in influencing government policy. However, their role has been limited to an advisory capacity. In the early 1990s, Romani politicians and activists influenced the development of policy mainly through round-table discussions with the national government. As discussed in Section 2.4, between 1990 and 1992 such discussions led to a number of resolutions being passed by the government but after the division of Czechoslovakia in 1992 Romani policy plans were treated as a lower priority (Sobotka, 2001: 6). Since the establishment of the Council for Romani Affairs in 1997, Romani activists have been able to use this as an instrument to make their views heard. However, it can be argued that pressure from external sources such as the Council of Europe and EU, was more influential over its establishment than internal pressure from Romani activists. Regardless of the reasons behind the establishment of the Council, the significant increase in government resolutions after 1997 highlighted at the beginning of this chapter can be attributed to the activities of the Council.

14 Roma are nominated to sit on the Council; they are nominated by local NGOs and appointed by the regional authorities. Although participation in the Council has allowed these Romani representatives to develop their political skills, there has been some controversy over whether this is a suitable model of political representation of Romani communities (*Radio Prague* 2002a). While it is important that Roma are involved in the policymaking process, these Romani representatives are not elected members of parliament and problems can arise when their democratic mandate to represent Romani

communities is questioned. Vermeersch (2001: 17) claims that this has led to a division among Romani activists between those who are recognised by the authorities as “official” representatives and those who are not. Mirga and Gheorghe (1997) have also identified a split which has emerged between the Romani leaders who gained influence through the traditional power structures of extended family networks and the newly emerging younger Romani elite who were educated in mainstream institutions. These younger, better-educated Roma tend to be consulted more regularly by officials because their academic credentials are more respected by the authorities than the experience which older leaders have gained through traditional networks. Furthermore, Vermeersch (2001: 17) argues, that allowing Roma to participate in a body which has no real political power obscures the fact that the Roma lack real political representation and eases pressure on the main political parties to do more to include Roma in mainstream politics.

Indeed the representation of Roma in the Chamber of Deputies is a significant problem in the Czech Republic. While Roma can influence policy through the Council for Romani Affairs or as grassroots activists in NGOs, they have had little opportunity to influence the political process through the National Parliament. In the first free elections in 1990 a Romani political party, the Romani Civic Initiative (ROI), fielded candidates but although the party failed to win any seats, 11 people who identified themselves as Roma won seats in the Federal Parliament and in the Czech and Slovak National Councils as members of mainstream parties (Vermeersch, 2001: 4) The ROI put candidates forward in each subsequent election until 2002 but failed to ever win any parliamentary seats. In 1992 one Romani candidate, Ladislav Body, was elected to the Chamber of Deputies as a member of the Communist Party (KSČM). In 1996 no Roma were elected to parliament but in 1998 one Romani candidate was elected – Monika Horáková, a member of the Freedom Union (US). In the 2002 elections no Romani candidates were elected, this was also the last election contested by the ROI. In 2006, no Romani party contested the election and no Romani candidates were elected. This lack of Romani influence within the government or the opposition does nothing to help alleviate any institutionalised racism which may exist.

There are a number of reasons why so few Roma have managed to be elected to parliament. The main problem for Romani political parties is the 5 per cent threshold of votes which a party must overcome in order to sit in the Chamber of Deputies. According to the best estimates of the size of the Romani minority they make up only about 3 percent of the population of the Czech Republic. Thus, even if internal divisions could be overcome and every single Rom in the country were to vote for one Romani party they still could not win seats in parliament (Vermeersch, 2001: 6). A further problem is that mainstream parties are reluctant to include Romani candidates in their party lists, or else they position them so far down the list that they have little chance of being elected. Barany (2002: 233) suggests this is because winning Romani votes is not a priority for the mainstream parties because the population is small and participation in elections is generally low. He also claims that mainstream parties fear they would alienate non-Romani voters if they put Romani candidates on their party lists. Vermeersch (2001: 6) notes similar findings, citing the negative attitude towards Roma as the main obstacle to their electoral success. As a result, many Romani activists have decided that they can have more influence by working through NGOs and other advocacy groups (Vermeersch, 2001: 6; Sobotka, 2001: 8). These problems have been recognised by NGOs and one Prague based organisation *Athinganoi* plans to run courses teaching members of local Romani communities about the political system, giving them the skills and support they would need to run in municipal elections, where they hope that Roma would have a better chance of winning seats (*Radio Prague* 2006c).

Apart from the aforementioned problems which limit the participation of Roma in mainstream politics, some Romani organisations have had problems presenting themselves as professional organisations, which has made it difficult for them to communicate their demands to the government and to be taken seriously (Říčan 1998: 49). As observed in the introduction to this thesis, Romani communities in the Czech Republic are very diverse and this has led to many small parties and NGOs being formed with different political ideologies and ambitions. Many of these organisations have not been very successful because their members do not have much political experience. This was something I experienced during my research. I would contact organisations whose details I found on the internet or through other organisations and

discover that they were no longer operating. There have also been problems where the members of some organisations have abused their position, claiming grants and then dissolving the organisation and taking the profits with them (Pečínka 2002: 3). This has led to cynicism on the part of the majority society and the term *ethnobusiness* is being used more frequently to describe projects which appear to be more concerned about winning grants than actually implanting programmes which will be of tangible benefit to Romani communities. However, the high turnover of organisations is not always the result of dishonesty on the part of the founding members. Many Roma who set up such organisations and parties lack the expertise to organise their accounts properly and are forced to close down. Romani advisors explained to me that until more Roma received proper training in how to manage their activities and accounts, this would continue to be a problem. In Ostrava the most successful organisations had a mixture of Romani and non-Romani staff on their management board to ensure that the managers had the technical skills and the respect of the local community necessary to successfully represent and assist local Roma.

In the 1990s Roma were recognised as a national minority with rights for the first time since the inter-war period. However, they still had difficulty finding ways to get involved in the political process. The Council for Romani Affairs remains the most significant way for Roma to influence the development of policy and given that the electoral system is unlikely to change to allow for better representation of minority groups, NGOs are still proving to be a more effective means to lobby the authorities to accelerate the implementation of pro-Romani programmes.

3.5 Public Opinion

According to Pečínka (2004: 1), the efforts undertaken in the late 1990s to address the problems of Romani communities were the result of pressure from “all-powerful human rights organisations and European institutions” rather than from mainstream political parties at home. This was because there was little demand from voters to develop pro-Romani policies. Surveys show again and again the animosity felt by many ordinary Czechs towards the Roma (US Department of State 1999; Fawn 2001: 1196; CCVM 2003; CCVM 2006). My own research uncovered similar opinions. Many people

believe that Roma abuse the social welfare support offered to them by the state. It is true that a large proportion of Roma are unemployed and Romani families tend to be larger than non-Romani families so Roma tend to get more social welfare benefits than non-Roma. People complain that Roma choose not to work because they prefer to live off the taxes paid by hardworking Czechs. The situation is more complex than this and will be discussed in detail in Part 3 of the thesis. Nonetheless, these attitudes make it difficult for the government to convince voters that policies to help the Roma are worth investing in. Kovats (2001: 197) argues that people will support pro-Romani policies only if they are reassured that this will not deprive them of resources:

Without establishing sufficient confidence that the Roma issue can be addressed to the benefit of society as a whole, it is unrealistic to expect politicians to take the risk of courting unpopularity (and to undermine their own bases of support) by challenging deeply entrenched attitudes (Kovats 2001: 197).

Research by Sirovátka (2002: 13) revealed that a majority of Czechs supported the principle that Roma should have the right to participate in politics and to have their own cultural identity. They were happy to allow Romani representatives on local councils and to have Romani TAs employed in schools. However, they did not accept that they would have to do more themselves to support the integration of Roma into society. 60 percent of non-Roma surveyed believed that the state already did enough and 20 percent felt that the state did too much. Another poll conducted in 2006 supported Sirovátka's findings. It revealed that 75 percent of Czechs believe that that the state does not have to do any more to support the Roma (STEM 2006).

The local officials I interviewed were civil servants rather than directly elected politicians and were not dependent on local voters for their positions. Therefore, they could look at the question of Romani policy more objectively but they were still aware of the need to maintain support within the majority population for integration policies. They resented what they perceived as interference from international NGOs and media who portrayed them as discriminating against Roma without, they believed, fully understanding the local circumstances in which policy decisions were made and they referred to the need for Roma to appreciate that they had responsibilities as citizens as well as rights. Many were critical of what they considered to be an overly generous

social welfare system which they thought too many Romani families benefited from. They believed that people were generally supportive of the integration project but that the anti-social behaviour of elements of the Romani communities would not be tolerated. One regional official described the situation thus:

Certainly I won't try to say that there are no xenophobic tendencies. The Romani community is not popular and it is really hard to live with some of them and of course actions provoke reactions. Sometimes it's very difficult but I think that all citizens are aware that segregation will not resolve anything, that the only way is through integration, to support their inclusion. The Romani community will have to accept the values of the majority. I'm thinking of the rhythm of life, the values of the way of life. I don't think they should assimilate, certainly not. They have their own characteristics which they should maintain, it's a question of multiculturalism but we all have to realise that it won't work otherwise (Moravia-Silesia Regional Education Department Senior Official).

It is fair to say that international pressure was a greater motivating factor in forcing the government to pay more attention to the problems facing Romani communities than domestic pressure from voters. As a result, it is very important for the government to convince the general public that these reforms are necessary. Looking back at the past attempts by the authorities to resolve the problems in Romani communities it is clear that a major reason why they failed was because they did not have the support of the whole population. In order to succeed this time it is important that they manage to convince the general public of the value of these policies.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the key factors which prompted the government to take the issue of Romani integration seriously in the late 1990s. It identified the influence of external factors such as the pressure from the international community to stem the flow of asylum seekers and the negotiations to gain membership of the EU and internal factors such as pressure from NGOs and Romani activists. However, it noted that there was little demand from voters to do any more to help Romani communities. On the contrary, while the majority population are supportive of integration policies as a general principle, they are reluctant to invest more money into policies supporting

Romani communities. This chapter also noted that the European Commission could have been more effective as an advocate for reform if the existing EU member states had been willing to implement similar reforms to aid the integration of their ethnic and national minorities. Nonetheless, Romani activists and local NGOs played a significant role in pushing the problems faced by Czech Roma higher up the political agenda. By demonstrating that there are Roma who are capable of representing the interests of Romani communities and that solutions exist to resolve many of the problems of discrimination and exclusion, which affect so many Czech Roma, they offered the government models of policies which could be developed and rolled out across the country. However, convincing the majority population that these policies are necessary and an appropriate way to spend state funds remains a challenge. If the policy is perceived as something imposed on local communities by remote institutions such as the EU who do not properly understand local concerns then it will not succeed. This problem must be addressed both by politicians and Romani communities, because without the support of the majority and their willingness to include Romani communities fairly into mainstream society, these policies will not achieve their aims. The following chapter examines the key areas of debate which have emerged during the development of Romani policy and the assumptions upon which the new state policies towards Romani communities are based. It is important to identify the rationale behind the policies in order to explain clearly to voters what the aims of the policy are and how it will be of benefit to the whole of Czech society.

CHAPTER 4: KEY DEBATES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PRO-ROMANI POLICY

Introduction

This chapter investigates the key ideological positions and areas of debate around the development of Romani policy in the Czech Republic. The main aims of the policy developed by the KSČ towards Romani communities were to improve the socio-economic position of Roma and to assimilate them into mainstream society. Romani culture was regarded as backward and the underlying assumption of the policy was that by improving the living standards of Roma, their old customs and practices would be forgotten. Since the collapse of the communist regime the assimilationist approach has been largely rejected. However, a common understanding of how an integrated multicultural society should develop has not yet been fully achieved. There is much debate over the question of whether it is better to support Roma through specific programmes that target them as a group, or through ethnoculturally neutral programmes which focus on particular social problems. A further issue is whether funding should be directed towards cultural projects which develop a positive image of the Romani identity, or those which address the socio-economic deprivation crippling Romani communities. This chapter explores these debates and shows how the main policy documents which form the basis of Romani policy – the 1997 Bratinka Report, the 2000 Concept and its subsequent Updates – have approached these questions. This will be followed by a discussion of the ideological perspectives of the main political parties and how these can influence the further development of Romani policy.

4.1 Individual or Group Rights – The Application of the Civic Principle

There are two main competing views in current political theory regarding how best to protect the rights of members of ethnocultural, linguistic or religious minorities in democratic societies. These are classified by Kymlicka and Opalski (2001: 1) as “orthodox liberalism” and “liberal pluralism”. “Orthodox liberalism” has been the prevailing political consensus since the end of World War Two and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, holding that the best way to ensure the fair treatment of minorities was to accord all citizens the same human rights and thereby

indirectly protect the rights of minority groups by offering them protection against discrimination as individuals. The debate shifted in the 1990s and the “liberal pluralist” position emerged. These theorists argued that the ethnocultural neutrality of the orthodox liberal position was a myth and that sometimes minority groups needed extra rights or differential treatment in order to overcome certain disadvantages and become equal to citizens belonging to the majority society (Kymlicka 1995: 126; Kymlicka 2001: 16; Parekh: 2006: 242). Kymlicka and Norman (2000: 4) argue that “the defenders of minority rights have successfully made their case” in terms of theory but in practice debates about policy development persist. This section focuses on how the question of individual and group rights has been addressed in the case of Czech Roma.

When examining the ideological basis of state policy towards Roma in the Czech Republic, the key concept is the ‘civic principle’ (*občanský princip*). This was the basis for the “orthodox-liberal” position adopted by the government immediately after the collapse of the communist regime. In short, the civic principle means that although the state recognises national minorities and provides them with certain cultural rights such as schooling in their own language, in most spheres of life and particularly before the law, a person’s status as an individual citizen takes precedence over their minority status. In essence, ethnic identity is considered to be a private matter of little relevance to the state (Vermeersch 2004: 12). Sobotka (2001: 1) argues that in the early 1990s the authorities used the civic principle to justify their inaction when it came to developing Romani policy. As has already been noted in Section 1.5.2, only a tiny percentage of the members of Romani communities identified themselves as Romani in the 1991 national census. Politicians then argued that as each individual was free to determine his or her own nationality it would be wrong to develop policies directed towards people identified by the authorities as Roma, if they did not identify themselves as such.

The previous chapter explained how domestic pressure from Romani activists and external pressure from international organisations which were increasingly worried about the issue of minority rights – particularly as a result of the conflicts in the Balkan states – prompted the government to reassess its position on the treatment of Romani communities. Minority rights in the form of schooling in the Romani language or the promotion of cultural activities were available to Roma but as argued in Section 1.1.2,

these rights have proved to be of little use in the face of the serious problems of social exclusion and economic deprivation in Romani communities. While some activists and scholars consider affirmative action campaigns a necessity in order to allow Roma to reach equal status with the majority, others fear that allocating extra resources to Roma in communities where non-Roma also suffer from social deprivation would exacerbate the situation by breaking down solidarity between the two communities (Kovats 2003). The question of how to develop affirmative action policies without causing tension between those who benefit from them and those who feel excluded is a vexed issue which has not been resolved in any society. Nonetheless, Říčan (1998) argues that the majority Czech society has to accept the necessity of these programmes as there does not appear to be any other way to improve the co-existence of both communities, given the failure of previous exclusion and assimilation policies. Indeed, as Section 3.5 discussed, officials I interviewed thought that the majority population would support these programmes if they could be convinced that supporting Romani communities, whether by helping them to get better qualifications or to find employment, would be of benefit to the whole society.

The 1997 Bratinka Report was the first major acknowledgement that the civic principle approach was failing Romani communities and that the specific problems of Romani communities needed to be addressed by specially designed programmes targeted directly at them, in addition to the general support provided to vulnerable members of society. Protection against discrimination in the labour force, in education and in access to public services was the main priority. The report recommended the employment of Romani Advisors to aid communication between local authorities and Romani communities, the development of new learning aids and programmes to address the specific needs of Romani pupils and the creation of incentives to encourage employers to hire more Roma (Government of the Czech Republic 1997 I: III).

However, despite the apparent approval of policies which specifically target Roma in the 1997 Bratinka Report, a shift back towards the civic principle position on policy development can be detected in the 2000 Concept. Although there is a discussion of how to protect the minority rights of Roma as a group, there is more emphasis on providing help to individuals. The 2000 Concept outlines how the government

envisages the principles of affirmative or equalising action (*vyrovnávací akce*)²⁰ would help to bring about the social integration of Roma by the year 2020 but it explicitly rejects the use of quotas determining the numbers of Roma in jobs, study courses or political positions as a means to improve integration (Government of the Czech Republic 2000: 4.2). While the 2000 Concept recognises that Roma suffer discrimination in their everyday lives, it still prefers to tackle the problem in ways that do not draw attention to the *ethnic* nature of the discrimination. For example, preparatory classes should be available to all children who come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, although NGOs established the classes originally because they felt that Romani children were being placed in special schools as a result of discrimination on the basis of their ethnicity. Equally, the policies being developed in the sphere of employment, are designed to help people “who are difficult to place in the labour market” and not only Roma, although again, there is evidence to suggest that Roma have even more difficulty finding employment because of discriminatory hiring practices. However, this civic principle approach is balanced by measures which specifically target Roma, such as scholarships for Romani pupils who wish to go on to secondary school, or programmes to encourage more Roma to join the police force. In later Updates to the 2000 Concept there is a change of position on the issue of affirmative action policies. Discrimination against Roma is recognised as a serious barrier to their successful integration and more specific support for Roma is recommended:

“Not even thorough protection against discrimination (itself a long-term process) is enough to eliminate the long-term deprivation formed over generations. The social decline of the Roma communities can only be halted with affirmative action” (Council for Romani Affairs 2003: 4.1).

The main focus of this thesis is on the efforts made by the Ministries of Education and of Labour and Social Affairs to aid the integration of Romani communities and as will be seen both Ministries have developed a range of policies combining programmes

²⁰ Official English translations of the 2000 Concept translate ‘vyrovnávací akce’ as ‘affirmative’ action although a better translation of the term would be ‘equalising’ action or equal opportunities. The 2005 Update stresses that the concept is wider than the American concept of positive action, including targeted support and broader education and social programmes which support all groups from social exclusion (Council for Romani Affairs 2005b: 14n).

specifically targeting Roma and programmes which have a more general approach. The effectiveness of the different policy approaches will be discussed in later chapters.

While it may be possible for the different Ministries to use a combination of policy approaches to support Romani integration, the persistence of the civic principle “ideology” has far-reaching practical implications for the development of Romani policy in general. One of these is whether it is acceptable to record data about individuals on the basis of their ethnicity. The question of how to establish the exact population of Roma in the Czech Republic and how to collect data about Romani communities has not yet been resolved satisfactorily. Although there is a category on the national census for the Romani nationality, it is widely believed that government agencies and private enterprises are not permitted to collect and store data on the basis of ethnicity. However, according to the 2003 Updated Concept, the rules have been misinterpreted by officials, leading to problems in gathering information about Romani communities. According to the legal interpretation provided by the 2003 Updated Concept, there is a difference between collecting data at the individual level and at the “collective level of non-individualised data-processing in statistics” (Council for Romani Affairs 2003: 4.3)

A survey of public officials conducted as part of the 1997 Bratinka Report demonstrated that opinion was divided between those who would prefer to be allowed to keep a record of which of their clients were Roma and those who believed to do so, when the client had not officially declared him or herself as such in the census would be an act of discrimination (Government of the Czech Republic 1997 III (II): 2.4). In general, the officials and NGO workers who dealt with Romani communities were in favour of collecting more data, albeit in a sensitive way. They argue that without such records it is impossible to identify how many Roma are in need of government help or to assess which programmes are most effective. There is also a fear that if a more hard-line government wanted to cancel support to Romani communities, they could justify this on the basis of the census figures. In the 2001 census only 11,716 people declared themselves as belonging to the Romani nationality, leading to fears among Romani activists that the funding for Romani programmes would be cut (*Radio Prague* 2001).

The argument of one Regional Coordinator For Romani Affairs echoed the views of many:

I, as a state official, think that it is necessary to find out about the current status of Romani communities in this country. Mainly because when we need to push something through we are hampered. When we go to negotiate and say “There are so and so many Roma here,” the other officials who are higher up say to us, “Don’t lie! According to the census there are only so many. You have all you need for the small number of people who have registered.” And when I say, “But the actual number is much higher by our estimates,” they say, “Well we can only go by the official numbers” (South Bohemia Regional Coordinator for Romani Affairs).

The 2005 Updated Concept describes this issue as a methodological rather than a legal problem and expresses the hope that the issue might be clarified by the European Commission, which is currently grappling with similar questions (European Commission 2004; Council for Romani Affairs 2005b: 4.4). In the meantime, a compromise solution has been developed by the Council for Romani Affairs. From 2006, the Council will gather together information about Roma from different sources including sociological surveys and the evaluation reports of grant schemes conducted by Ministries. The information will be anonymous and although this will still not be an absolutely complete database, it is hoped that it will be a useful tool to help the Council understand the needs of Romani communities and to identify which policies are most effective (*Radio Prague* 2006a). However, Roma have genuine fears about how such data would be collected and used. As discussed in Section 1.5.2, some Roma choose not to register on the national census because they are worried that it might be used to discriminate against them in some way at a later stage. It remains to be seen whether the Council for Romani Affairs can win the trust of Romani communities and develop an effective way to collect statistical data about them.

While the Council for Romani Affairs and the Ministries of Education and of Labour and Social Affairs try to balance ethnoculturally neutral policies with programmes which specifically target Roma, the Czech authorities and indeed Czech society as a whole still tend to regard the civic principle as a fair way to treat minorities. The tensions between the two perspectives are evident in the discussion of affirmative action policies in the 2000 Concept and its Updates. The lack of census data makes it harder to

identify Romani communities and this leads to difficulties when designing and implementing policies which specifically target Roma. This problem will be addressed in greater detail in Chapter 10.

4.2 Assimilation or Integration?

Another important international debate with regard to the treatment of minorities is the question of whether to pursue assimilationist or integrationist policies. By assimilationist, it is meant that the ethnic minority is supposed to adapt to the values and customs of the majority and gradually disappear as a distinct community. Such an approach is no longer deemed appropriate given moral concerns about the need to respect different cultures and also because historical experience demonstrates that assimilationist policies have rarely been successful (Parekh 2006: 197). Integrationist approaches allow minorities to preserve their cultural differences, while at the same time creating the necessary conditions for these groups to participate in all social activities without restriction. Section 2.3 demonstrated how the communist policy aimed to fully assimilate Roma into mainstream society, assuming that Roma would be grateful of the opportunity to become 'modern' and 'civilised'. Therefore, an important difference between the communist policy towards Roma and the current government policy is the rejection of forced assimilation.

The 2000 Concept recognises that the previous policies of forced assimilation failed and defines its aim of integration as:

the full inclusion of the Romani minority into society while preserving the majority of the cultural differences, which characterise Roma and which they themselves wish to preserve, as long as these characteristics are not in conflict with the laws of the state (Government of the Czech Republic 2000: 1.5).

As discussed in Chapter 2, policy towards Roma has historically been dominated by the desire to see Roma completely assimilated into the wider society. Therefore, the commitment of the 2000 Concept to show respect for the Romani culture and to promote social integration must be welcomed. Despite this commitment however, there is some evidence in the wording of the 2000 Concept to suggest that the idea of

assimilation has not been completely abandoned. While forcible assimilation is rejected, voluntary assimilation is described in the document's introduction as a possible *solution* to the problems of some individuals, although it is observed that if Romani communities were to be completely assimilated this would be a cultural loss for the whole society (Government of the Czech Republic 2000: 1.2). Later, it is confirmed that the government would support anyone who voluntarily chose to assimilate (Government of the Czech Republic 2000: 1.9). However, in the 2002 Updated Concept, the discussion of assimilation has changed its emphasis. The statement that assimilation is a strategy which may be chosen by any individual but must not be forced upon them remains, but the disapproval of such a strategy is made more explicit. Again, it is noted that if all Roma chose assimilation as a solution this would be a cultural loss for society as a whole, but in addition to this, the document states that if Roma chose to assimilate *en masse* it would lead to suspicion that "it has been caused by the majority society's unwillingness or inability to accept Roma as long as they maintain their cultural identity" (Government Resolution 2002: 1.7). The subsequent Updates to the 2000 Concept maintain this view on the question of assimilation (Council for Romani Affairs 2003: 1.9; Council for Romani Affairs 2005b: 1.8). The change of opinion in the 2002 Update to the 2000 Concept indicates that the state wishes to avoid attracting any further criticism from human rights NGOs and other international organisations who are highly critical of any suggested toleration of an assimilationist approach and also that the development of policy is a reflective and on-going process.

Despite the official rejection of assimilation as a policy strategy, among the general population and even among some Roma, assimilation is still viewed as acceptable. Sirovátka (2002: 12) reports that 79 percent of non-Roma and 52 percent of Roma surveyed as part of his research agreed with the statement: "Romanies should adapt to the majority society." He argues that the acceptance by Roma of the principle of imposed assimilation is evident from the use of the Czech language in the majority of Romani households, the positive attitude of Roma towards mixed marriage and the decision of many Roma not to register themselves as Romani in the national census (Sirovátka, 2002: 13). However as we have seen in Section 1.5.2, there are other explanations for these decisions such as a widespread fear of discrimination as a consequence of registering as Romani.

The 2000 Concept makes clear that if Roma are to successfully integrate into society, institutional structures and wider social attitudes will have to change and become more inclusive. The policy is based on showing respect for minority cultures and refusing to tolerate any forms of discrimination. To make Czech society more inclusive, the 2000 Concept identifies a number of key goals. These include ensuring the physical safety of Romani communities, eliminating every form of discrimination from society and any obstacles which prevent Romani communities being included in society, improving their social conditions by tackling unemployment, housing and health problems, increasing the participation of Roma in the decision-making process with regard to policies which concern them, improving their democratic representation and promoting their culture (Government of the Czech Republic 2000: 1.7).

The 2000 Concept focuses on changes to legislation and to institutional structures which in their current form, pose obstacles to the inclusion of Roma into society. It supports the employment of more Romani TAs in schools and of more Romani Advisors in the public administration system to improve communication between these institutions and Romani communities (Government of the Czech Republic 2000: 4.14). It also recognises the need to give teachers, police officers, judges and other public officials more training to improve their awareness of the problems of racism and to promote the development of a more tolerant multicultural society (Government of the Czech Republic 2000: 7.1; 8.1; 8.8). The 2000 Concept proposes that current legislation be carefully examined to identify how more protection could be offered to Roma and other vulnerable groups to protect them from discrimination (Government of the Czech Republic 2000: 2). It also proposes that anti-racism campaigns run by the government be continued and expanded as it will be necessary to run these kinds of campaigns for many years in order to change entrenched social attitudes (Government of the Czech Republic 2000: 8.11 - 8.12).

It is interesting to note that despite the 2000 Concept's commitment to social inclusion and its recognition of the need to adapt the majority society to be more open-minded and tolerant of Roma and other minorities, assimilationist tendencies and prejudicial attitudes can be detected. In the chapter of the 2000 Concept on affirmative action all

the measures listed are aimed at helping Roma to change, by giving them more education and training, and helping them to find or build better housing. The stated aim of affirmative action is to allow Roma to be independent and no longer reliant on social welfare, assuming that Roma choose to remain unemployed because of the generous social welfare benefits available to them (Government of the Czech Republic 2000: 4.30). There is no discussion about the problem of discrimination against Roma who are refused employment on the basis of their ethnicity; in fact a five-page discussion of affirmative action does not mention discrimination once. However, in later Updates to the 2000 Concept the position on affirmative action has been re-stated and the issue of discrimination is taken into account (Council for Romani Affairs 2003: 4.1). The manner in which the Updates to the 2000 Concept reformulate different concepts and policies demonstrates how different ideological positions with regard to policy development are still being debated and challenged.

In general, the 2000 Concept and all the subsequent Updates to the Concept are based on the premise that a lot needs to be done by the majority society to assist the social inclusion of Romani communities. In particular the discriminatory prejudices held by the majority must be addressed. Nonetheless, as has already been highlighted in Section 3.5, surveys reveal that the majority population is not ready to adapt their behaviour or attitudes and that the prevailing opinion of many Czechs is that Roma must be willing to conform to their social norms if they want to be accepted. Sirovátka's research (2002: 12) demonstrates that there is real divergence in the opinions of Roma and non-Roma on this issue. When asked if "the majority should do more for Romanies" only 12.5 percent of non-Romani respondents surveyed agreed with the statement whereas 67 percent of Romani respondents agreed with the statement. My research uncovered similar views. Many people referred to the need for Roma to adapt their behaviour and respect the norms of the majority society but there was little support for the idea that the majority would adapt by reassessing their attitudes and behaviour to create a more inclusive society where Roma could fit in more easily.

One of the issues raised in the discussion of communist policy towards Roma in Section 2.3 was the assumption that if Roma were given the support necessary to raise their standard of living they would eventually reject other aspects of their 'degenerate'

culture and evolve into 'civilised' socialist workers. It is worth asking whether such an attitude persists today. On paper at least, the government is happy for Roma to retain as much of their culture and heritage as they choose but in the 2000 Concept's definition of integration it states that cultural differences may only be maintained, "as long as these characteristics *are not in conflict with the laws of the state*" (Government of the Czech Republic 2000: 1.5 – emphasis added). This language prompts a suspicion that the government still considers crime and anti-social behaviour to be characteristics of Romani culture. The same is true of the majority of non-Roma. They consider it fair to say that Roma can keep their language, their music and their strong family bonds but they must not disturb their neighbours with loud parties at night or get involved in criminal activities. The problem with this attitude is that it reveals the persistent anti-Romani prejudices in society where all Roma bear collective guilt for the problems caused by some members of their community. These prejudices must be tackled if meaningful inclusion is ever to be achieved. As long as integration is framed as encouraging Roma to act in a more *civilised* fashion, the Romani identity will never win the respect it is entitled to in a multicultural society.

In spite of the existing reluctance of the majority of society to adapt and create the conditions for a more inclusive form of society, Czech scholars agree that the multicultural model is the only effective way to allow Romani and non-Romani communities to co-exist in the long term. Sobotka (2003) argues that although Czech society is officially willing to respect the cultures of other ethnic groups they have not tried to find a way to adapt the concept of the Czech nation to include a diverse range of identities. Navrátil *et al.* (2003: 34) argue that the exclusion of Roma has negative implications for the whole of society because it has led to a breakdown of solidarity within communities. Therefore, the majority must recognise that it is in their interests to adapt and include Romani communities into wider society. Říčan (1998) puts the case for multiculturalism most bluntly. He argues that Romani communities are a part of Czech society and there is good reason to suspect that many Roma will never change or adapt in the ways that the non-Romani majority wishes. Equally, they are not all going to emigrate. According to Říčan (1998: 10), the majority society has to come to terms with these facts and find new ways to manage relations between the two communities. The 2000 Concept recognises that the task it is faced with is not easy and admits that it

will take at least 20 years to integrate Romani communities properly into society (Government of the Czech Republic 2000: 4.14). Nonetheless, the acceptance that integrating Roma is a two-way process is an important step forward. Critics of the 2000 Concept argue that it does not provide enough concrete guidance on how to achieve the changes necessary and that the Council for Romani Affairs lacks the authority to ensure that the policies are implemented (Sobotka, 2001a: 5; Open Society 2002: 183). The difficulties of implementing the policies will be discussed in detail in this thesis, particularly in Chapters 6 and 9.

4.3 A Social or an Ethnic Issue?

A third important debate with regard to how best to improve the integration of Roma is over the question of whether more support should be given to the development of the cultural identity of Roma or to tackling the serious socio-economic problems in many Romani communities. Chapter 2 discussed how Roma were not recognised as a national minority in the communist period and had no rights as such. The focus on raising the socio-economic status of Romani communities led to improvements in their literacy and employment levels but they still did not reach the same standard as the majority society. Guy (2001b: 11) has argued that the result of the policy of denying Roma their cultural identity was to leave them with a feeling of low self worth. This may explain the public denial of some Roma of their ethnic identity and their attempts to assimilate into the majority society. Immediately after the fall of communism, the first step taken in terms of a new style of Romani policy was to recognise Roma as a national minority and allow them to express their ethnic identity as they chose. However, despite this new freedom to promote and develop their culture, it soon became clear that the transition was having a disproportionately negative effect on Romani communities and aggravating existing socio-economic problems (Barany 2002; Pognány 2006).

The 2000 Concept welcomes the efforts of Romani activists to reassert their Romani identity, claiming that “the more that Roma feel like Roma the more they will become liberated and responsible citizens” (Government of the Czech Republic 2000: 1.3). This echoes the view of Mirga and Gheorghe (1997) reported in Section 1.1.2, that the main objective of the efforts to promote an ethnic consciousness among Roma was to

increase the levels of dignity and respect afforded to the group. However the promotion of a Romani ethnic identity has been problematic. Pognány (2006: 16) observes that many Roma are not interested in reclaiming a cultural heritage which has long been associated with “acute poverty, insecurity and social exclusion”. Indeed many consider poverty and social exclusion to be the main facets of the Romani identity. Opinion polls citing Roma as one of the least popular choices of neighbours rank them alongside drug addicts and chronic alcoholics, rather than with members of other ethnic or national minorities such as Jews or members of the Vietnamese minority, illustrating that Czechs take issue with the anti-social behaviour which they believe characterises Romani communities rather than their ethnicity (CVVM 2003; 2005). Guy (2001b: 23) also argues that developing the ethnic status of Roma without improving their socio-economic status, and in particular finding employment for Roma, will not significantly improve the image of their community in the eyes of the majority because they will only respect Roma who appear to be working and actively trying to improve their social status. He calls for more long-term investment in programmes to tackle unemployment and spatial segregation in order to rescue Roma from becoming “an unskilled, uneducated and unemployed lumpenproletariat” (Guy 2001b: 23).

Section 2.3 argued that the communist policy of focusing on improving the living conditions of Roma was ineffective because the problem of discrimination was not properly dealt with. This issue must be also addressed in the current context. The defence of many employers who do not hire Roma is that they do not do so because the applicants did not have the right qualifications or skills to do the job properly, not because employers are racist. Teachers claim that Romani children are disproportionately represented in remedial special schools because the poverty and deprivation in their homes meant they were not properly stimulated and prepared for beginning school and not because the testing procedures are biased in favour of children from the majority community. However, evidence of discrimination cannot always be excused by blaming the socio-economic circumstances of those affected. Discrimination also affects middle class, educated, professional Roma. One example of this is the case of Monika Horáková, who despite being a Member of Parliament was refused entry into a nightclub because the bouncers identified her as Romani (*Lidové noviny* 1998). Therefore, resolving the poverty which afflicts many Romani communities is not

sufficient on its own, anti-discrimination legislation and awareness campaigns are also necessary tools in the effort to resolve the problems facing Romani communities.

It can be difficult to separate cases where the ethnicity (or to put the case more bluntly – the skin colour) or the low social status of Roma has been the main cause of their marginality.²¹ Therefore, the framework of social exclusion which allows the issue to be perceived as a myriad of mutually-reinforcing problems may be the most useful way to describe the predicament of many Romani communities. This thesis examines the problems of Romani communities in terms of social exclusion and inclusion, employing the definition offered by Madanipour *et al.*:

Social exclusion is defined as a multi-dimensional process, in which various forms of exclusion are combined: participation in decision making and political processes, access to employment and material resources, and integration into common cultural processes (Madanipour *et al.* 2000: 22).

This is a useful definition for the case of Czech Roma. Emphasis is placed on the fact that social exclusion is a process, not a state. It is multidimensional because some Roma may find themselves excluded from the sphere of political decision-making or from cultural spheres of social life, on the basis of their ethnicity, despite having sufficient material resources to participate. Social exclusion is also a cumulative process because children growing up in socially excluded families lack the resources to overcome the barriers to inclusion and thus they remain in the same circumstances as their parents. Many members of Romani communities suffer from social exclusion in all its forms – political, economic, cultural, and spatial – and this thesis argues that discrimination and deprivation are both factors which significantly contribute to the problem.

The 2000 Concept takes these debates into account by recognising that it is necessary to improve the dreadful conditions many Roma are living in, but also that more needs to be done to tackle racial discrimination and encourage more Roma to take pride in their ethnic identity and to participate in public life (Government of the Czech Republic 2000: 1.7). The updated versions of the Concept provide a more detailed discussion of

²¹ Many thanks to Jan Čulík for helping me to explore and understand the complexities of this question.

how Romani policy needs to take into account the problems faced by Roma in terms of their human rights, their rights as a national minority and their socio-economic rights. The Updates also place more emphasis on the socio-economic aspects of exclusion than the original 2000 Concept (Government Resolution 2002: 1.4). The 2002 Update also reformulates the main goal of the government: “Integrating members of Romani communities into Czech society and *preventing their further social exclusion* is a pressing task that must be reflected in government policy” (Government Resolution 2002: 1.5 - emphasis added). Statements such as these indicate that on paper at least, the government has found a balance between addressing the different kinds of problems which hinder the full social integration of Roma. The rest of this thesis, particularly Chapters 7 and 10 examine how the theory has fared in practice.

4.4 Policies of the Main Political Parties

The Bratinka Report was commissioned in 1997 by the ODS-led government and was approved just days before that government collapsed. From 1998 to 2005 the Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) was the main party in government, and as such it has had the most influence on Romani policy. Thus, it is important to ask, how much of the development of Romani policy is determined by the social democratic ideology of the main government party. Given the low levels of income of so many Roma, the social welfare policies of the ČSSD have probably been kinder to them than if the liberal ODS Party had remained in power.²² Successive governments have chosen to keep increasing social welfare payments to ensure that the poorest members of society can have a minimum standard of living, while also increasing the minimum wage, in the hope that this will encourage some people to work rather than rely only on social welfare benefits (*Právo* 2005, *Hospodářské noviny* 2005). Changes are being planned however, to reform the system. A new social welfare law came into force in 2006, which will lead to a decrease in social welfare payments for people who cannot demonstrate that they are actively seeking work (*Právo* 2005). The consequences of social welfare reform will be discussed in Chapter 9.

²² However, it must be acknowledged that even when the ODS was in power (1992 - 1998) the government chose to follow a more gradualist approach to economic reform than its neighbours in CEE.

In terms of specific policies towards Roma there does not appear to be much variation in the approach of the main political parties, despite the differences in their general ideology. According to Pečínka's 2004 review of the published programmes of the main parties, regardless of whether the parties were left or right-wing in terms of their ideology, they tended to develop similar policies when it came to Romani issues and these were based on the civic principle (Pečínka, 2004: 1). In the lead up to the 2002 general election, Sdružení Dženo, a Romani NGO, contacted all the major political parties to question them on their policies towards Romani communities (Sdružení Dženo, 2002). Their responses revealed that the civic principle is still the preferred way of dealing with the issue. All the parties referred to Roma as one of many disadvantaged groups living in the Czech Republic, all of whom deserved better treatment. Three of the main parties in the Czech Republic, ČSSD (who won 30 percent of votes in the 2002 elections),²³ *Koalice* KDU-ČSL/US-DEU (14 percent) and KSČM (18 percent) stated that they did not specifically discuss Roma in their manifesto but they expressed views similar to that of Vladimír Špidla of ČSSD, who was prime minister between July 2002 and November 2004:

We have an item that concerns minorities, but it is not aimed at any one specific minority. Our aim is to equal out opportunities. We need to realise that there are also minorities residing in our country other than the Romani minority, and these are not only ethnic minorities but also minorities of people with, for example, physical handicaps (Sdružení Dženo 2002).

The response of the ODS, the second largest party in parliament with 24 percent of the vote, was the most resolute in its support for the civic principle:

ODS is a civic democratic party, which places the equality of the citizens of the Czech Republic before the Law in the first place. Therefore, no questions aimed at special programmes for any minority will be found in our programme. ... No one can see from our lists who is or isn't a Romani citizen. We're convinced that this is the right approach – we're not in favour of the so-called positive discrimination. The programme of ODS is aimed at all citizens regardless of their nationality, race, gender or religion (Sdružení Dženo 2002).

²³ Details of all election results (1992 – 2006) can be found in Appendix 7.

My own research revealed similar findings. Regional elections took place in November 2004, which led to the ODS becoming the leading party in many regions. Officials were asked whether they thought that this would have any impact on the implementation of Romani policy. They did not think this was likely because they believed there was cross-party agreement on how to tackle the problems in Romani communities:

The problems we deal with are not resolved by one party on its own. We don't have different opinions. We resolve the problems together because they are the problems of people here in this town.

Are there no ideological differences between the parties?

No, not at all. I have to say, that in respect to those political parties, regarding this [the Romani] issue, no political ideologies exist. (České Budějovice Municipal Councillor)

Not everyone who was interviewed was confident about this consensus, however. One of the Romani advisors interviewed in Ostrava the following spring expressed her fear that the policy towards Roma could be easily changed or cancelled if the ODS returned to government:

It could happen that they would only need the Council for National Minorities and they would not want the Council for Romani Affairs. That could easily happen and moreover the ODS has a policy of zero tolerance. They say, "no programmes for Roma, it has to be the same for everyone." That could happen (Ostrava Municipal Romani Advisor 2).²⁴

Despite these fears, it is important to note that on the whole, politicians have not tried to use Roma as scapegoats to win political points during elections campaigns, as has been the case in Slovakia for example (Guy 2001a: 299). The extreme right-wing nationalist Republican Party, whose leader Miroslav Sládek regularly criticised Roma in the press and in his political speeches, won enough votes to sit in parliament in the 1992 and 1996 elections. However, since then the party has failed to overcome the 5 percent threshold. The party did not contest the 2006 elections but other extremist right-wing

²⁴ The complicated stalemate which arose after the June 2006 national elections resulted in an ODS minority government being in power for a brief period from 4 September to 3 October 2006. During that time the cabinet did not cancel or amend any of the main Romani policies but they did vote to reduce the number of administrative staff in the Council for Romani Affairs (*Lidové noviny* 2006). The ODS minority government failed to win a vote of confidence in October 2006 but on 19 January 2007 a coalition government of ODS, KDU-CSL and the Green Party was finally approved by Parliament. It remains to be seen how this will affect the development and implementation of Romani policy.

parties which did enter the elections failed to win even 1 percent of the overall vote (CSO 2006b). This is a positive sign demonstrating that the Czech electorate rejects extreme anti-democratic parties and that Romani policy is not in danger of being distorted in parliament by racist politicians. However, it is important not to become too complacent about this issue. When Jiří Čunek was mayor of the city of Vsetín, he raised his national political profile through his hardline stance on Romani rent defaulters. He was elected to the senate in October 2006, became leader of KDU-ČSL in November 2006 (*Radio Prague* 2006d). In January 2007 he was appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Local Development. His behaviour and attitudes have divided public opinion, and it could certainly be argued that his stance against Roma did his political career little harm, but he could still not be described as a radical right-wing politician in the mould of Miroslav Sládek.

Conclusion

Comparing the 2000 Concept to the policies of the Communist regime we can see that although debates persist about how best to tackle the problems facing Romani communities, the current discussion of integration and inclusion has moved a long way from the Communist assimilationist policies discussed in Chapter 2. However, the influence of the civic principle in terms of developing ethnoculturally neutral policies is still a factor which must be acknowledged. The debates about how best to collect detailed statistical information about the Romani population and the extent to which their ethnicity or their socio-economic problems are the root of Romani social exclusion continue. However, through the policy statements of the 2000 Concept and its Updates, the Council for Romani Affairs is trying to find a balance which will be achievable and acceptable to all sides. The changes in emphasis and approach when discussing questions such as affirmative action, or integration and assimilation in the Updates to the 2000 Concept indicate that the development of these policies is a self-reflective process allowing flexibility in the overall policy approach. The main political parties have not tried to use the question of Romani integration as a campaigning issue. Whether this is because of genuine cross-party consensus on how to deal with the issue or because the parties are afraid of alienating non-Romani voters by appearing to be too sympathetic to Romani communities is not clear.

PART 1: SUMMARY

Part 1 of this thesis provided detailed background information about Czech policy towards Roma. Chapter 2 presented a chronological account of the attempts of successive regimes to deal with the presence of Romani communities in their territory. It highlighted recurring problems in the implementation of these policies, in particular the difficulty of getting local authorities to implement policies developed by the national government and tackling resistance from the majority population, who were not willing to adapt and include Romani communities into mainstream society. Chapter 2 also outlined the main developments in Romani policy in the 1990s, highlighting a significant change in how the authorities approached the question of Romani integration. A more detailed investigation of education and employment policy follows in the next two parts of the thesis.

Chapters 3 and 4 examined the new Romani policy as it is conceived in the 2000 Concept and its subsequent Updates. Chapter 3 looked in particular at the factors which motivated the Czech government to take the problem of exclusion of Romani communities more seriously. It argued that although the role played by Romani activists and domestic NGOs was significant, external pressure from the EU and other international organisations was the primary factor which motivated the government to deal with the social integration of Romani communities. There was little demand from the majority society for such policies. Therefore, political parties did not see the development of Romani policy as a vote winning election issue. However, the sense that Romani policy was imposed on the state by foreign interest groups rather than being a domestic priority leads to problems. Local authorities are resentful of being told how to manage their communities by people who have no experience with their particular situation and as the pressure to introduce integration policies did not come from voters, they now have to be convinced that policies to support Romani communities are worth investing in.

Chapter 4 examined main ideological debates surrounding the development of the new Romani policy and identified key differences between the policies of the Communist regime and the new policies. The rejection of assimilationist policies and the

recognition that the civic principle may have to be relaxed to allow Roma to catch up with the standards of living of mainstream society are clearly expressed in the 2000 Concept and its Updates. However, the majority society has still not fully accepted that the integration of Romani communities will require them to change their attitudes and to be more accommodating towards their Romani neighbours. Equally, the preference for the civic principle lingers in the manifestoes of the mainstream political parties. The Ministries of Education and of Labour and Social Affairs have decided to combine ethnoculturally neutral and Romani-specific programmes as they attempt to tackle the social exclusion of Romani communities and the rest of this thesis will investigate the effectiveness of this approach and whether it will be possible to transfer the good intentions of the 2000 Concept into reality.

PART 2: EDUCATION POLICY

In the 1990s, the Czech education system was the target of sustained criticism from NGOs and international organisations. There were accusations that the system was institutionally racist because disproportionate numbers of Romani children were educated in remedial special schools and the mainstream curriculum did not include references to Romani traditions and culture. After the collapse of communism, the education system was in need of a complete overhaul to remove ideological propaganda from textbooks and to allow pupils to think more critically about problems, rather than simply learning 'correct' answers by rote. This, in addition to the pressures of international criticism, prompted the government and MoE to introduce a series of reforms which should also be of benefit to Romani pupils. Based on government policy documents and interviews with principals, state officials responsible for educational matters, social workers and Romani activists and a survey of the views of primary school teachers, Part 2 of the thesis examines the programmes which have been developed to improve the support available to Romani pupils in the education system.

Chapter 5 looks at the issues which have contributed to the low levels of educational achievement of Romani pupils, highlighting in particular the impact of social exclusion, discrimination and low levels of motivation from within Romani communities. Chapter 6 outlines the policy now adopted by the MoE to tackle these problems and describes how the six key programmes which form the core of the pro-Romani education policy are being implemented in České Budějovice and Ostrava. Finally, Chapter 7 investigates problems which have arisen during the implementation process and identifies key issues which must be addressed if these reforms are to be successful.

CHAPTER 5: BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

Introduction

Roma have been traditionally characterised as illiterate and placing little value on education (Fonseca 1995: 89). One of the main targets of the Communist policy was to improve education standards among Roma but their policy had mixed success. Whereas in 1950 the vast majority of Roma in Czechoslovakia were illiterate (Čanek 1998), by 1980 illiteracy among Roma had fallen to 10 percent (Barany 2002: 134), but the other indicators of educational attainment show that they still lagged far behind the majority society.²⁵ As has already been discussed, data on the basis of ethnicity is no longer officially collected but according to the last available statistical data from 1990, less than 10 percent of Roma successfully completed secondary school and 0.3 percent graduated from universities (Czech Helsinki Committee 1999: 79). It is estimated that between 75 and 85 percent of Romani children do not finish their education in the mainstream school system (New School Foundation 1997). Most drop out or are transferred to the parallel special school system for children with disabilities.²⁶ The most recent official statistics detailing the ethnicity of children attending remedial special schools also date from 1990 when 12,444 Romani children were registered at remedial special schools compared to 15,207 attending a mainstream school (Čanek 1998). This meant that 45 percent of Romani children were attending remedial special schools, an impossibly high proportion implying that almost half of Romani children had specific learning difficulties. In stark contrast, about 3.2 percent of non-Romani children were attending a remedial special school in the same year (Gjuričová 1991 cited in ERRC 1999: 22). These statistics are now 15 years old but NGOs claim that the situation has not improved since the collapse of the Communist regime. In its 2001 Regular Report, the European Commission estimated that 70 percent of pupils in remedial special schools came from Romani communities (European Commission 2001: 25). The ERRC claims that a Romani child is approximately fifteen times more likely to attend a remedial special school than a non-Romani child (ERRC 1999: 22). These figures are backed up by research undertaken by Save the Children, a British NGO (Save the Children 2001: 34).

²⁵ According to the Central Statistics Office, in 1920 97 percent of the Czech population could read and write and today there is officially no illiteracy (CSO 2004).

²⁶ For a diagram outlining the structure of the Czech education system please refer to Appendix 3.

In addition to the problem of disproportionate numbers of Romani pupils attending remedial special schools, is the wider problem of early drop out rates of Romani pupils in mainstream schools. Until the introduction of the 2004 Education Act, school attendance was compulsory until the age of fifteen²⁷. However, most non-Romani students finished secondary school in order to improve their career prospects. In contrast to this, the majority of young Roma have traditionally left school at the earliest opportunity, regardless of whether or not they had any qualifications. Some left without even finishing primary school because if a pupil repeated more than one school grade they would turn fifteen and no longer be required to attend school although they had not finished their primary education. This is confirmed by the statistics from the Czech Helsinki Committee reported above and also by anecdotal evidence provided by respondents in České Budějovice and Ostrava. In the communist period, the regime's full employment policy meant that even people with few qualifications would find employment but this is no longer the case and the failure of many Romani families to recognise the value of completing secondary school has resulted in disproportionately high unemployment in their community – 70 percent compared to a national average of 8 percent.

There is plenty of evidence to demonstrate that the Romani experience of education is characterised by “low rates of school attendance and high dropout rates” (Gheorghe and Mirga 1997). The more important question, which must be raised, is why. Kňážíková and Zabrša (2004: 13) identify two main schools of thought. The first is the theory that Romani children are raised within a different value system and therefore, they have difficulty adapting to the structure and rules of the mainstream education system. The second theory is that poverty and social exclusion limit the chances of success in education for many Romani children. Another possibility often raised by Romani activists and NGOs is that the education system itself is to blame because it is institutionally racist. Teachers and principals I interviewed generally blamed Romani parents for failing to respect the importance of education and not providing their children with the motivation to learn. Other officials and NGO representatives blamed the socio-economic conditions in which most Romani children are forced to live,

²⁷ From January 2005 it is compulsory for pupils to remain in school until they complete their primary school education or until they are 17.

arguing that poor standards of accommodation and nutrition were an obstacle to the children's success at school. These three factors, the poverty and social exclusion of many Romani families, the question of discrimination in the education system and the difficulty of convincing parents of the value of education will be examined in detail in this chapter.

5.1 Poverty and Social Exclusion

It is well established in the literature that poverty and low social class can have a negative influence on educational attainment.²⁸ The relationship between poverty in Romani communities and low educational attainment has also been demonstrated in a number of recent studies (UNDP 2002; Ringold 2002; Ringold *et al.* 2005). In her 2000 study of the impact of transition on Romani families in CEE, Ringold highlights the ways poverty can act as an obstacle to education:

Financial and opportunity costs, imperfect information about the benefits of education, limited choice and poor quality of educational services, substandard housing conditions at home that impede learning and studying, and poor health status (Ringold 2000: 25).

Although families do not pay directly for their children's education, inflation and the withdrawal of many state subsidies have led to new financial burdens being placed on parents. The cost of textbooks, school meals and 'voluntary' contributions for extra-curricular activities are new expenses that families have to meet in order for their children to be educated. Opportunity costs have also risen because with the rise in unemployment, family incomes are falling and children may be required to help support the family by working either in the home or in the informal sector. There are no accurate statistics available on this phenomenon but there are many reports of Romani children dropping out of school early to help support their families. Girls stay at home to look after younger siblings and boys are expected to do unregistered casual work to generate extra income (Barany 2002: 165 and Ringold 2000: 25). Of course, the cost of education has increased for all families but as Romani communities suffer

²⁸ For a review of the literature see Hill and Cole 2001; Bartlett *et al.* 2001: 166 – 211.

disproportionately from unemployment, these costs have become an even greater burden for them (UNDP 2002: 54).

The impact of poverty is wider than the financial costs of education. Poverty is commonly linked to poor nutrition and substandard housing which in turn lead to poor health and decreased school attendance rates. Nutrition can have an even more immediate impact on educational attainment. Children who come to school hungry cannot concentrate and cannot possibly fulfil their potential (UNDP 2002: 53). In addition to this, the principals of a number of schools complained to me that Romani children do not have a balanced diet and instead only eat junk food. Their observations have been confirmed by studies conducted in the Czech Republic which demonstrate that Romani children eat excessive amounts of snack foods containing fat and sugar and do not consume enough fresh fruit and vegetables and they are therefore lacking in essential vitamins and minerals (ECOHOST 2000: 42). Poor diet is linked directly to poverty, insofar as parents cannot afford to buy fresh meat, fruit and vegetables. However low levels of awareness about what constitutes a healthy diet are also apparent among Romani families (Ringold 2005: 52). The principal of one school in Ostrava worried that children did not eat properly at home. He said he wished they would eat in the school canteen (where meals are very cheap), as then he could be sure that they had one warm, healthy meal each day. School dinners are often cheaper than buying junk food from a nearby shop but the lack of awareness among parents about the importance of healthy eating is linked to their own low education levels. This demonstrates how Roma can get trapped in a vicious circle as a result of generations of low educational attainment.

Substandard housing is another important factor in explaining the low attainment levels of Romani pupils. One Romani Advisor believed that improving housing was the key to solving most of the problems within Romani communities. She put it like this:

I think housing links everything, employment, education, everything. When a family lives in a hostel and they've lived there for a while, then they move out because they can't afford it and they move in with their family on the other side of Ostrava. Then it impacts on the children's school attendance and they start missing school. Their school might be in P district but now they live in Z district and it is cold and nasty outside.

They don't have money for the bus and so on, so they don't go to school. [...] Or maybe those Roma live in flats which are hygienically unfit for habitation. There is mould and mildew or lots of people live in one small flat. There is polluted air, or if there is gas heating, the air is dry. Everything is linked to that. So the children are ill more often and then understandably their school attendance worsens, which in turn means that their level of education drops and they don't continue to secondary school (Ostrava Municipal Romani Advisor 2).

In the course of my second fieldwork trip I visited a part of Ostrava where many Romani families lived in old miners' houses which had been built at the turn of the twentieth century. These houses had no central heating or hot running water and the toilets were outside in the yard. The children who live here often miss school due to illness. I was told about one boy with asthma who was due to finish primary school that summer but could not continue to secondary school because he did not have an adequate standard of education, as a result of being absent so often. His family had been on a waiting list for a better home for many years but given the shortage of social housing in Ostrava, there was little hope that they would be able to move. His parents were very upset that her son's chances of getting a good education and a career had been ruined by a physical condition which would have had less impact, had the family lived in a better standard of housing.

Spatial exclusion is another facet of social exclusion which is becoming an increasingly serious problem for Romani communities. In both Ostrava and České Budějovice the deregulation in the housing market and the closure of large enterprises had led to spatial segregation as non-Romani families moved away from less desirable neighbourhoods and more Romani families moved in. As a result, schools in the areas where Romani communities live have a higher proportion of Romani pupils because they are obliged to accept all the children in their catchment area. This problem was much more extreme in Ostrava, where in some schools 70 to 90 percent of pupils were Roma. In České Budějovice the principal of the school with the highest proportion of Romani pupils (about 10 percent) was extremely worried that if the proportion increased any further non-Romani parents would withdraw their children from the school because the school would get a reputation as a 'Romani school.' There is a commonly held view among parents (Romani and non-Romani) that if there are too many Romani pupils in a school the academic standards will drop. Another aspect of this problem, highlighted by NGOs,

is that teachers with good qualifications and more employment options do not choose to work in schools with a high proportion of Romani pupils, as these schools are perceived as being more demanding. As a result Romani pupils are taught by teachers who cannot find employment in 'better' schools and as a result, they receive a sub-standard education (Proactive Information Services Inc. 2003: 26).

In Ostrava the principals of the schools with large numbers of Romani pupils denied this. They assured me that the pupils received the same high quality education they would expect in any Czech school but they also admitted that perceptions of the school's overall standard were lower. The schools still sent as many pupils as possible to secondary school but the majority of pupils went to vocational secondary schools rather than more academically orientated grammar schools and few students actually completed their secondary studies. In the principals' view, the teachers working in these schools were very special because they made a conscious decision to work with Romani pupils and were more committed to ensuring the pupils' success. However the responses to my questionnaire of teachers' views did not always reflect this. Their impatience and frustration with the challenges of teaching Romani children often came through. Also despite what the principals said, teaching positions are not very easy to find in the Czech Republic, especially now with falling pupil numbers as a result of demographic changes. Therefore, it is not a case of teachers choosing where they would like to work. Many have to take whatever position is available. This issue will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

The final aspect of socio-cultural exclusion which must be highlighted is the use of the Czech language in the mainstream education system. Chapter 2 explained how the communist regime did as much as it could to stamp out use of the Romani language, the result of which is that today the majority of Roma speak Czech rather than Romani. Only one of the TAs interviewed could speak Romani. The others reported that their parents or grandparents spoke Romani but their parents had made a conscious effort to speak Czech to them at home so they would cope better at school. Research into the way Roma use the Czech language has revealed that many speak a Romani 'ethnolect' of Czech, marked by literal translations into Czech of characteristic Romani constructions which are judged to be 'wrong' in Czech schools (Save the Children

2001: 47; ERRC 1999: 64). Most Roma learned Czech by listening to their neighbours and work colleagues speak rather than at school and they often make grammatical mistakes when they speak. Therefore, although they believe they are helping their children by speaking to them in Czech, in many cases children grow up learning a mixture of incorrect Czech and Romani (Šotolová 2001:27). The fact that these children begin their education understanding less Czech than their non-Romani peers is often cited as a reason why so many Romani children are relegated to remedial special schools (ERRC 1999: 62). However, the theory that Romani pupils speak an ethnolect of Czech is not yet universally accepted. One principal insisted that all the children in his school spoke Czech normally and there was no difference between how Romani and non-Romani children spoke. He claimed they spoke excellent Czech because it was their mother tongue. In spite of this, teachers in both cities noted in the questionnaire that Romani children had problems with Czech; in particular they stated that Romani children have a very limited vocabulary.

There is insufficient language preparation in the family, their vocabulary is limited and when they begin school they don't speak any language well enough to be taught properly (Teacher C School 3).

Other principals also recognised that Romani pupils mispronounced words which led to problems with writing and spelling or they had a limited vocabulary. However, according to one principal their limited vocabulary was not such a serious problem because complex abstract topics were rarely discussed and the vocabulary they had was sufficient for everyday teaching:

Most have a basic vocabulary but in this school we don't have the kind of children who we could philosophise with so it's sufficient for them (Principal 11).

The Romani language was often characterised by the Communist Party as a language that would only “slow down the process of re-education of Roma” (ERRC 1999: 63). The Czech education system continues to favour a unified approach using only the Czech language and seeing the use of Romani as a handicap which must be overcome. A clear example of this attitude is the official description of the preparatory classes funded by the government to help children from ‘linguistically and socio-culturally

disadvantaged backgrounds' (*žáci z jazykově a sociokulturně znevýhodněného prostředí*) to prepare for mainstream primary school. Scholars and activists who wish to see more teaching available in the Romani language argue that it would be better for Romani children to learn Romani first correctly and then to learn Czech as a second language, and some schools I visited did have Romani and Czech signs and labels on the classroom walls. However, the policy of stamping out the Romani language has unfortunately been very successful and given that the majority of young Roma no longer speak the language at all, a revival will be very difficult to achieve.

5.2 Discrimination

As discussed in Section 2.3, the communist regime sought to assimilate Roma into the majority society and used schools as an important mechanism to achieve their goal. Some NGOs, most notably the ERRC, claim that the legacy of communist policy has created an education system which is institutionally racist because there are structures in place which consistently discriminate against Romani pupils. They complain that Romani pupils are not made to feel welcome in mainstream schools and teachers do not deal with bullying by non-Romani pupils properly. The fact that very few Roma work in schools as teachers and the exclusion of Romani culture and heritage from the curriculum adds to Romani pupils' feeling of alienation from the education process.²⁹ The 1997 Bratinka Report noted a phenomenon among teachers who attempted to "paint Romani children white" instead of valuing their identity. It observes: "For a Romani child, starting school in a standard elementary school tends to be a shock which only confirms the impossibility of dignified integration into society" (Government of the Czech Republic 1997: III, 4.1.2). As noted in the previous section, the spatial segregation of Romani from non-Romani communities is causing segregation in some mainstream schools too. As the proportion of Romani pupils increases so too does the reluctance of non-Romani parents to send their children to the school. Parents assume that a higher number of Romani pupils in a class will lead to a lowering of the standard of teaching for the whole class. Some parents worry that their child will be bullied if there are only very few non-Romani children in the school. In some parts of Ostrava

²⁹ For more details on all of these problems see: ERRC 1999: 84 – 111; Save the Children 2001: 44 – 45; Balabánová 2002: 1.3 and Polechová 2003: 28.

two schools share the same catchment area and a situation has developed where one school is seen as the “Roma” school and one as the “white” school. Romani activists complain that when Romani parents try to enrol their child in the “white” school they are told the class is full and that they will have to enrol in the other school. Whether this segregation is deliberate or the unfortunate result of the liberalisation of the housing market, it is a significant problem which national and local authorities must take seriously. However, the main concern regarding discrimination in the Czech education system is the disproportionately high number of Romani children being educated in remedial special schools.

There are three kinds of special schools; each equipped to deal with children with different special needs³⁰. Children with physical disabilities, behavioural problems and long-term health problems attend “special primary or secondary schools”, (*Speciální základní školy* and *Speciální střední školy*) where they follow the same curriculum as children in mainstream primary and secondary schools. Therefore, these children may continue to higher education should they so wish (Education Act 1996: 28.4). Children with moderate learning difficulties were placed in remedial special schools (*Zvláštní školy*)³¹. These are the schools where many Romani children were placed. Children who have learning difficulties which are too severe to allow them to cope in a remedial special school attend an auxiliary school (*Pomocná škola*) (Education Act 1996: 28.1). As noted in Section 2.3, the practice of sending Romani pupils to remedial special schools began in 1952 (Čanek 1999: 3). Although these schools were originally intended as a temporary measure to teach basic skills to children who were not ready for mainstream education, it soon became common practice for whole families of Romani children to attend remedial special schools (Guy 2001: 292). This procedure was criticised in the Charter 77 report published in the late 1970s (Charter 77 1982: 165) and has been the target of sustained criticism from NGOs in the 1990s.

Remedial special schools were intended for children with specific learning difficulties and the curriculum for these schools had lower expectations of what pupils could

³⁰ The special school system is in the process of being reformed. The discussion here relates to the situation up to December 2004. Reform of the system will be discussed in Chapter 6.

³¹ In Czech the words *Speciální* and *Zvláštní* both mean ‘special’ therefore in order to avoid confusion in this dissertation I will refer to *Zvláštní školy* as remedial special schools.

achieve. Before 2000, a pupil who completed their primary education in a remedial special school could not enter a mainstream secondary school, as their standard of education was insufficient. Instead, they were limited to attending either a technical training centre or a practical school (*odborné učiliště* and *praktická škola*). These secondary schools also belonged to the special school system and were specifically aimed at children from remedial special schools, providing them with rudimentary training in low-skilled professions (Education Act 1996: 32). The new Education Act, which came into force in January 2005, abolished remedial special schools and replaced them with “mainstream schools with special educational programmes.” The impact of this change in the law will be discussed in the next chapter.

The activities of the ERRC to highlight this problem were outlined in Section 3.3. After first losing their case claiming discrimination in Ostrava’s schools in the Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic in 1999, they lodged a case against the Czech government with the ECHR in Strasbourg on 18 April 2000. The case was outlined as follows:

For decades, despite ample evidence of racial impact, Czech officials have knowingly perpetuated a system, which routinely brands disproportionate numbers of Romani children as mentally retarded. As a result, tens of thousands of Roma have been deprived from an early age of equal education opportunities essential to future life success (ERRC 2000).

The ERRC case was based on their research into the disproportionately high numbers of Romani pupils being placed in remedial special schools. They argued that the only way to explain why a Romani child was fifteen times more likely to be placed in a remedial special school than a non-Romani child was because the assessment procedures were structurally racist. According to Article 7 of the 1997 Special Schools Bylaw, placement of a child in a special school depended on the decision of the director of the destination special school, the consent of the child’s legal guardian and the opinion of an educational psychologist (Special Schools Bylaw 1997: 7). Generally, a child could begin immediately in a remedial special school or could be transferred there at any point during their time in primary school. However, the ERRC claimed that transfers happened without adherence to the correct procedures. They asserted that some educational psychologists did not spend as long as they should have assessing the

children, because they had made up their minds in advance that they should go to a remedial special school (ERRC 1999: 58). In some cases children were allegedly placed in remedial special schools without ever having been assessed (ERRC 1999: 51).

The ERRC's research found signs of institutional discrimination in the assessment procedures even if individual educational psychologists were not deliberately discriminating against Romani children. Section 1.2 of the literature review highlighted the ways in which an education system can unconsciously perpetuate racist values and the 1999 Macpherson Report on the inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence provided a very useful definition of institutional racism which can inform analysis of the problems in the Czech education system particularly regarding the assessment of children from minority ethnic backgrounds:

Institutional racism is ... the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people (Macpherson 1999: 321).

Examples of these attitudes and behaviours can certainly be found in the Czech assessment procedures. The government has defended the system of placing children in remedial special schools by claiming that all children undergo the same standard testing procedure, therefore, it must be deemed fair. However, the biggest problem with the assessment procedure is the very thing that the government used to defend it – the fact that the tests are exactly the same for all children. IQ testing, the basis for decision-making in the Czech Republic, is no longer deemed a fair way to determine the abilities of children. There is widespread recognition of the limitations of IQ testing and the ways in which tests tend to favour white, middle-class males as a result of cultural bias inadvertently built into the design of the tests (Gipps and Murphy 1994: 71). The first source of bias comes from using language terms and testing knowledge familiar to the dominant culture in a society but not necessarily known by members of ethnic minorities. The second problem is that when such tests are developed they are trialled on large populations to determine levels of performance. The average score is taken to

be the 'normal score' and used to standardise all scores for a particular age. This leads to problems of sampling. If disadvantaged groups who are likely to score lower on the test are not included in the original sample, then the average will be higher and when members of these groups take the test later their score will be underestimated (Gipps and Murphy 1994: 73).³²

I interviewed two educational psychologists and the principals of three remedial special schools. They assured me that the assessment and placement procedures had always been fair and even if the procedures had not been carried out to the letter of the law, they always had the child's best interests at heart. They absolutely rejected the accusation that the assessment procedures were racist. In Ostrava, the city where the ERRC did their research, principals claimed that the NGO had spent the summer giving the children who are part of the lawsuit extra tuition to prove that they had the ability to cope in a mainstream school. However, as soon as the extra tuition stopped the children were unable to manage in the mainstream schools as had been predicted by the remedial special school principals. On the other hand, representatives of NGOs agreed that the ERRC had identified a serious problem which had to be addressed urgently. The people interviewed – on both sides of the debate – had very strong opinions and I did not hear many objective versions of the story. In February 2006 the ECHR ruled against the claimants because deliberate discrimination had not been proven and they are now appealing the decision in the ECHR's Grand Chamber. However, as Chapter 3 discussed, despite the fact that the case was lost, neutral observers recognise that it has had a positive impact. Remedial special schools were officially abolished in 2005 and the procedures for putting children in classes or schools with special learning programmes have been tightened up significantly. The reform of the special education system will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

5.3 Role of Parents

The principals of the remedial special schools insisted that children had not been placed in their schools because they were racially discriminated against, but because they had

³² See Neisser *et al.* 1996 for a comprehensive overview of the issues and debates in the field of IQ testing.

genuine learning difficulties as a result of coming from homes where there was no stimulation to develop their minds. Parents' low education levels are a significant factor in their children's poor performance at school. They cannot, for example, help their children with homework, something which Czech teachers expect. Given their own bad experiences at school they may be reluctant to participate in school related activities. It has also been suggested that there are cultural aspects to parents' lack of encouragement for their children's education. Many Roma feel protective of their children and are reluctant to send them out of their community because they fear assimilation and the influence *gadje* (non-Roma) will have on their children. Gheorghe and Mirga (1997) claim that some traditional families believe that education will lead to eradication of the Romani identity; they are therefore strongly opposed to educating their children. Teachers also raised this problem in the questionnaires. Many blamed the lack of support from their community and the problem of mocking young people who wanted to stay at school as problems which hampered the educational success of pupils.

In the controversy over remedial special schools, claims emerged that Romani parents had requested that their children be placed in these schools. Some even enrolled their children in the local remedial special school directly without ever seeing an educational psychologist. Special schools were attractive to Romani parents because of short-term economic advantages such as the free school meals, transportation and sometimes room and board provided. NGOs claimed that parents were often inadequately informed of the consequences of being taught according to the remedial special school curriculum and thought that their children were benefiting from the experience (Save the Children 2001: 42). According to the ERRC's report in 1999, none of the parents they spoke to during their research had the consequences of placing their children in remedial special schools explained to them in detail. Some did not realise that these were schools for children with learning disabilities. They were also unaware that by attending such a school their child's career prospects would be severely limited (ERRC 1999: 46). However, principals and social workers reported that awareness of these issues was now high in Romani communities, but for some parents it did not make much difference. One principal of a remedial special school said:

I have often been in the situation where I have had to convince parents to send their child to the mainstream school but they want to put the child

in the remedial special school straight away. I don't agree with that, for a small child who has not had the chance to develop, I find that cruel. But there are parents who want their child to go to the remedial special school, they say: "we went here and we want our child to go to school here too" (Principal 8).

Many Romani parents attended these schools themselves but as discussed earlier, under the communist regime educational qualifications did not correlate to earning power or employment chances in the same way as they do in today's economy and many parents have failed to realise this. Parents were also concerned that in mainstream schools their children would be bullied by non-Romani children and discriminated against by teachers. Therefore, they preferred to send them to a remedial special school, where the high numbers of Romani pupils ensure that their children will feel safer (Ringold 2000: 35).

To a large extent parents are blamed by teachers for the poor educational achievements of Romani pupils. The first question on the survey of teachers' views was "what are the main problems for Roma in the education system?"³³ 33 of the 67 teachers who responded, wrote that parents were not interested in education and it was not a priority for them. Teachers stated that parents did not fulfil their obligations because they did not ensure that children did their homework and were prepared for school (17 responses), children were often absent from school (14 responses), parents would not spend money on things the children needed for school (3 responses) and they did not provide a stimulating family environment to encourage their children to learn (6 responses). Some teachers blamed this on Romani parents' own low standard of education, which meant they were not able to help their children with their lessons (12 responses). 8 teachers also noted that cooperation between parents and schools was not good, but they did not say who they thought was to blame for this.

The lack of a stimulating home environment is a problem for school-age children who need help with their homework but it is a far more serious problem for children before they begin school. Teachers and TAs reported that children from particularly disadvantaged families commonly begin school without ever having held a pencil or crayon in their hand, knowing no nursery rhymes and having learned none of the social

³³ Please refer to Appendix 6 to see the questionnaire.

skills they will need to cope in a mainstream classroom. According to the TAs, these were the factors which caused so many Romani children to be placed in remedial special schools. One Romani TA put it to me thus:

Children end up in special schools because their intellectual development is stunted. They aren't stupid, but the mind needs to be fed and exercised just like the body, otherwise it will stagnate (TA 8).

Studies reveal that Romani parents' views about raising their children differ significantly from that of non-Romani parents. Children are raised to be independent and self-reliant from an early age and are involved in family decision-making processes. Children grow up quickly in Romani families and because of the lack of financial resources and the different values in these families they do not spend much time playing with toys, colouring in or being read to, as would be the case in non-Romani households (Balabánová 2002). However these 'games' played in non-Romani families are also a means to learn the skills which children must master before beginning school. Therefore, communication with parents of pre-school children is very important in order to show them how to help their children to learn the skills required for school success. The preparatory classes, which the government began integrating into the education system in 1997, are a means to overcome some of these problems. Their impact will be discussed in the next chapter.

The curriculum in Czech schools is very demanding and is based on the assumption that children will do a lot of preparation at home and get support from their parents as well as from their teachers. This view is reflected in these teachers' responses. Given that education levels have been low for generations, Romani children will remain at a disadvantage unless they can find other means of support for their learning. This problem was being addressed in both Ostrava and České Budějovice by schools and NGOs running homework clubs and offering private tuition. However, in order to persuade children to take advantage of these opportunities, they have to be convinced of the importance of learning and the value of educational qualifications. Teachers, principals, TAs and social workers identified motivating children to learn as the key to improving children's educational attainment. Many respondents commented that children lost interest in education as they grew older because they had no positive role

models and saw no prospects for employment, even if they had some qualifications. They could see that their parents did not work and they thought they would never work either. Principal 7 believed that many of his pupils' parents had never worked in their lives. The principal of remedial special school 2 found that children learned bad habits when their parents were unemployed:

Another problem is that in Ostrava there is high unemployment and the children and their parents do not have these work habits, such as getting up in the morning and going to work or school. Unfortunately the children see from their parents' idle way of life that there are social welfare benefits and you can live quite well on those benefits and no one is forced to study to have a better chance [in life] (Principal 8).

Many principals and TAs complained that it was extremely difficult to motivate children when their parents showed no interest in their education. They talked about parents who did not bring their children to school on time, or who did not care if their children were absent for long periods with no explanation. However, my research showed that differences are emerging between Romani families. Some of the TAs said that they could see a shift in attitudes among some parents, who now accepted that education was important if their children were to have a chance of improving their lives. However, there were still many who had no interest in educating themselves or their children. One assistant complained that there was a belief among some Roma that life on social welfare was good and only stupid people worked. Another observed that some would try and do what was asked of them for a couple of weeks but they soon slipped back into their old habits. TA 7 stressed that there was a big difference between the socially disadvantaged Roma and the Romani middle class who take education seriously. She suggested opening boarding schools for socially disadvantaged Romani children and allow them home only at the weekends. This could give them the space and support they needed to learn but she realised that this would be a very expensive solution which no one would be willing to pay for.

As is the case with many other aspects life in Romani communities, when it comes to attitudes regarding education there is much diversity. The old stereotype of the illiterate Rom is no longer universally true. In the course of my research I met Roma who were actively involved in helping their communities and they were proud to tell me of their

educational achievements and those of their children. I interviewed Roma who were already studying at university or who were planning to begin their studies the following year. An educated Romani elite exists in the Czech Republic which is slowly expanding and although for many educators the task appears to be insurmountable, there are tiny signs that education is slowly becoming a higher priority for Romani families. It is important, however, that these successful Roma do not lose contact with their community, so that they can become positive role models for young people, demonstrating that it is possible to get qualifications and that doing so will improve their quality of life and that of their family.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the key barriers which prevent Romani children from achieving their full potential in the Czech education system. Poverty and social exclusion cause problems for children because living in sub-standard, overcrowded accommodation leads to health problems and absence from school. Poor diet also contributes to children's health problems and prevents them from being able to concentrate properly at school. Social exclusion in the forms of spatial and socio-cultural exclusion also leads to problems at school. Some schools have become segregated as a result of the changing ethnic profile of neighbourhoods and the lack of interaction between Romani and non-Romani children means that children have fewer opportunities to hear Czech spoken correctly outside the classroom. The use of an ethnolect combining aspects of both Czech and Romani in many Romani homes also limits children's understanding of the language of tuition and makes it harder for Romani pupils to keep up with their non-Romani peers at school. Discrimination in the education system is another problem which Romani children have to overcome. The curriculum is gradually making space to include Romani culture but the legacy of excluding all references to Romani communities and their culture has taken its toll. Roma who had bad experiences at school as children, whether as a result of bullying or their own sense of failure because they could not keep up with rest of their classmates, are reluctant to engage with teachers or take part in school activities. The need to improve relations with parents is of vital importance if children are to succeed at school.

However, more will also have to be done to adapt schools to make them appear more welcoming to Romani pupils. Some Romani parents will not be able to do more to help their children with their homework. Many have much greater priorities such as paying for their family's next meal or finding better housing. Therefore, schools will have to assume extra responsibilities to support Romani pupils and help them to overcome the obstacles which prevent them from achieving good qualifications and improving their career chances in later life. The next chapter examines a range of programmes adopted by the MoE to support Romani school children and describes how these programmes are being implemented in Ostrava and České Budějovice.

CHAPTER 6: IMPLEMENTING EDUCATION REFORMS

Introduction

After the fall of the communist regime the entire education system was in need of major reform. However, policies to support Romani pupils were treated as a separate issue. Based on the policy proposals outlined in the 1997 Bratinka Report, the 2000 Concept and its subsequent Updates and the MoE's 2001 "Strategy to improve the education of Romani children," and the information provided by respondents during the field research in Ostrava and České Budějovice, this chapter briefly outlines the general education reforms underway before focusing on the implementation of six key programmes. A wide variety of programmes have been developed to support Romani pupils but these particular programmes have been chosen because they receive the most discussion in the official documentation published by the MoE and the Council for Romani Affairs and also because they were identified as most important by the participants in my fieldwork interviews. These six programmes, which together make up the core of the government's Romani education policy, are: (1) preparatory classes; (2) the employment of TAs who come from Romani communities; (3) reform of the special school system; (4) reform of the curriculum in teacher training colleges and in schools to incorporate the principles of multicultural education and to heighten awareness about issues concerning the education of Romani children; (5) financial support for Romani pupils who go on to secondary school and (6) penalties – in the form of withholding social welfare payments – for the parents of truants. This chapter outlines the rationale behind each programme and looks in detail at how pro-Romani education policy is being implemented in České Budějovice and Ostrava.

6.1 General Education Reform

Reform of the Czech education system was not only necessary in terms of improving the situation for Romani children; the entire system needed to be overhauled. The first task was to remove all the communist ideology and propaganda from pupils' textbooks. The curriculum had to be changed fundamentally in terms of how subjects were taught, placing more emphasis on developing critical and analytical thinking skills. This led to

general reform of the education system which culminated in the introduction of the Education Act (2004). Under the 2004 Education Act schools have more autonomy from the central authorities. They can develop individual learning plans for pupils and develop a particular learning ethos for their school, as long as the core elements of the curriculum are still taught. The aim of the 2004 Education Act is to allow schools to design programmes which meet the specific needs of their pupils but the reforms have been criticised because they could lead to inequalities between schools and regions, depending on how well financed the schools are and how much training teachers have been given to enable them to use the new teaching methods being promoted (Čapová, 2003; Asiedu 2005). The 2004 Education Act came into force in January 2005 but would not impact on schools until September 2005. Therefore, it was not yet possible to assess its impact when the research for this thesis was conducted. In terms of Romani policy, the new Education Act does not specifically deal with the problems facing Romani children. However, it includes some provisions for children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, increases the age of compulsory education from 15 to 17 and abolishes remedial special schools. These measures will have more of an impact on Romani pupils than on pupils from the majority society but the way that these issues are presented as affecting the whole of society is another example of how the civic principle influences government policy.

6.2 Reforms to Support Romani Pupils

In addition to the 2004 Education Act, the MoE has come up with a strategy to deal specifically with the problems facing Romani pupils which were identified in the previous chapter. The 2001 “Strategy to improve the education of Romani children” (hereafter the 2001 Strategy) identifies four key tasks:

- To support Roma at every stage of education and after they leave school to improve their chances of finding employment
- By improving the education of Roma, to improve their employability and thereby their social standing
- To help the development of Romani culture and traditions
- To support the gradual directing of society in the Czech Republic towards an ethnically diverse and civically united society (MoE 2001: 2).

The policies recommended by the 2001 Strategy are not all new. There is broad agreement among NGOs, the Council for Romani Affairs and the MoE on the key initiatives which need to be implemented. The proposals adopted by the government following the publication of the 1997 Bratinka Report are still considered to be the key to tackling the obstacles facing Romani pupils in the education system. These included supporting the establishment of preparatory classes, training and employing more Romani TAs, providing teachers with information about multiculturalism and promoting tolerance in schools, reducing class sizes and reforming the assessment procedures for admission to remedial special schools (Government of the Czech Republic 1997: I, 1). In addition to acting on these instructions, the MoE developed its own initiatives including providing financial support to Romani pupils attending secondary schools, cooperating with NGOs to provide more after-school activities for young people and offering school leavers more opportunities for lifelong training (MoE 2001: 9 – 14).

This chapter identifies the six key programmes in the reform package and describes how they are being implemented in České Budějovice and Ostrava. However, before examining individual policies it is important to understand the general aims of education policy regarding Romani pupils. The Council for Romani Affairs and the MoE focus on the important role education plays in integrating Roma into society, both by equipping them with the skills they need to be successful in the labour market and by promoting a culture of tolerance in the majority society through multicultural education. Many of the proposed measures (reducing class sizes, promoting multiculturalism, employing Romani assistants) involve adapting schools in order to better meet the needs of Romani pupils. However, other measures are designed to help Romani pupils to cope better in the education system as it now operates. One example of this is the decision to widen the network of preparatory classes, which are designed to teach children the skills they will need in order to succeed in a mainstream school. If an inclusive education policy is one which adapts the education system in order to allow Romani pupils to succeed rather than expecting only the Romani pupils to adapt, then the policy can be described as taking a dual approach. The education system will be reformed to become more responsive to the needs of Romani pupils but Romani pupils are also expected to

modify some forms of their behaviour in order to succeed within the mainstream system.

Another important issue with regard to how policy is conceptualised is the question of whether special policies should exist to help Romani pupils or whether it is better to have ethnoculturally neutral policies. As discussed in Section 4.1, until recently, general government policy has been influenced by the concept of the civic principle which prefers to treat people on an individual rather than a group basis. In line with this, some of the education policies, especially the preparatory classes, are designed to support children from disadvantaged family backgrounds rather than being specifically aimed at Romani children. An official at the MoE explained that the reason for this was that not all Romani children needed support to prepare themselves for primary school:

Romani children who have a good social background and whose family are relatively well integrated into the life of Czech society do not have any specific difficulties at school. On the other hand, children – Romani or non-Romani – whose families have a low social status have problems (MoE official, Prague).

Nonetheless, the MoE has prepared some programmes which specifically support Romani children. These include the employment of TAs who themselves belong to Romani communities, the offer of financial support for Romani pupils who go to secondary school and the inclusion of lessons about Romani culture in the curriculum. This is considered necessary in order to support the integration of Romani pupils into mainstream society:

Many of the things that we do are needed in general [such as] programmes against poverty. Such supportive mechanisms do not need to be just for Roma. This is what the education ministry policy leads to and that is fine. Apart from that I think that it is good to have specific programmes for Roma. Such programmes build their integrity and their own attitudes, [make them realise] what they really want (MoE official, Prague).

Therefore, in terms of education policy it is considered acceptable to have programmes which target support at Romani communities but which do not involve quotas for admission into certain types of schools or training courses. This style of policy is what

the 2000 Concept and its subsequent Updates refer to as equalising action (Government of the Czech Republic 2000: 4.2). The rest of this chapter now looks at each of the six key programmes in detail.

6.3 Preparatory Classes

6.3.1 Background to the Programme

In the debate over the fairness of the assessment procedures for placing children in remedial special schools discussed in Section 5.2, the main defence of the practitioners involved was that Romani children are not properly stimulated and encouraged by their family before they begin school. Therefore, they lag behind their non-Romani peers from the beginning. All the teachers and principals interviewed raised this issue. In the survey of primary teachers' views, 17 of the 67 respondents noted that children were not properly prepared before they come to school. TAs and principals reported instances of families with no books in their homes, or of children who begin school without ever having held a pencil or crayon in their hand. Children who have no experience with the basic tools used in the school environment are at an automatic disadvantage compared to children who have grown up looking at books and drawing pictures at home. Their fine motor skills have not been developed so they will need much longer to learn the tasks the teachers are trying to teach. The principal of one school spoke of one particular case that stood out for her:

We had a little boy here, he was six and when he went to enrol that was the first time he ever held a crayon in his hand. A child like that has no chance. He must begin learning to read in December and he doesn't even know how to hold a pencil (Principal 11).

It is standard practice in the Czech Republic to send children to nursery school for two to three years before they begin primary school. In the communist era this was promoted to allow mothers to return to work but it has evolved into a key stage in the education system. Primary school teachers assume that children will have already learned certain skills at nursery school and plan their lessons accordingly. Before 1989 it was also common for Romani children to attend nursery school but with the steep rise

in unemployment in Romani communities and the introduction of small charges to pay for nursery school attendance, many Romani families stopped enrolling their children, preferring to keep them at home until they were obliged to attend primary school. Preparatory classes, which are run within primary schools, are envisaged as a means to change this trend.

The first preparatory class was established in Ostrava in 1993, followed by a second in 1995. The project spread to Ústí nad Labem and the 1997 Bratinka Report urged that the MoE get involved and support the establishment of more classes throughout the country (Government of the Czech Republic 1997 I 1.a). In the school year 1997/98, 47 preparatory classes were established with 638 pupils enrolled. In 2003/04, there were 137 classes based in 108 schools teaching 1,824 pupils. That year the MoE spent 41,200,000 Kč (€1.4 million) on the programme (Council for Romani Affairs 2004: 5). In the school year 2004/05 there were 126 preparatory classes with 1779 registered pupils (Council for Romani Affairs 2005: 18ff).³⁴ The legal procedures for establishing a preparatory class are set out in the 2004 Education Act:

A municipality, a union of municipalities or a region may, with the prior consent of the Regional Authority, establish preparatory classes of basic schools to be attended by children, during the last year prior to their commencement of compulsory school attendance, who are socially disadvantaged and where there is a presumption that their inclusion in such a preparatory class may balance out their development. A preparatory class may be established if there are at least seven children (Education Act 2004: 47.1).

The key difference between preparatory classes and ordinary nursery schools is that the preparatory classes are run within primary schools, giving children a chance to get used to the environment and to learn the appropriate forms of behaviour. Nursery schools tend to be less formal than preparatory classes and focus more on playing than learning. The other significant difference as far as parents are concerned, is that unlike nursery schools, there is no fee charged for attending a preparatory class. Children have to bring a small snack to eat at the mid-morning break but they go home for their lunch and so parents do not have to bear any extra financial burden in order to send their child to the

³⁴ This is the first year that there was a decrease in the numbers of classes, it is necessary to wait another year or two to see if this is a trend.

class. The aims of the preparatory classes are to teach children the skills they will need in order to cope in their first year at a mainstream school such as how to use pencils and crayons to draw and write, how to recognise numbers and how to count. They also learn simple songs, poems and dances and are taught how to behave appropriately in the classroom. Some children who come from particularly disadvantaged homes have to learn basic hygiene practices too.

It is important to note that the classes are not considered to be a support only for Romani children. Officially the classes are described as “preparatory classes for children from a socio-culturally disadvantaging background” (Council for Romani Affairs 2005b: 18). This is because the MoE recognises that there are also non-Romani families who find themselves unable to prepare their children for mainstream education in the ways that schools expect. Principals and teachers in preparatory classes confirmed that although the majority of children belonged to Romani communities, non-Romani children with similar problems also attended the classes.

The MoE commissioned research to ascertain how effective the preparatory classes are in terms of ensuring that Romani children can manage in mainstream primary schools and has published positive findings. It reported that pupils who complete the preparatory class do better in mainstream primary school. However, this is qualified by noting that the continued success of pupils in primary school depends on the quality of the teaching in the preparatory class (Council for Romani Affairs 2004: 16). The study found that children who attended the preparatory class had a better attitude towards school and that throughout their school career, they were absent about half as much as the children who had not attended the class (Council for Romani Affairs 2004: 16). These positive findings were reflected in the interviews conducted with teaching staff at schools in Ostrava where the preparatory classes are well established in a number of schools.

6.3.2 Experience in Ostrava

Five schools in Ostrava run preparatory classes. As noted above, the very first preparatory classes in the country were established in Ostrava so the city has lots of

experience with the programme. The principals I interviewed were very satisfied with the impact the preparatory classes had on the children. They believed that it was absolutely crucial that children got this extra support before beginning school otherwise they would not be able to cope with the demands of the mainstream primary curriculum. They still had problems with attendance, however. The principals reported that on average about half of all the children registered attend every day. Unfortunately, attendance is not compulsory as it is in primary school so teachers cannot do much more than ask parents to bring their children more often. Some children miss school because of illnesses resulting from their poor living conditions. Others do not attend because their parents do not get up early in the morning and they are too young to make the journey on their own. Nonetheless, principals and teachers were convinced that the classes were worthwhile and they hoped that when one child attended and showed signs of improvement that would encourage parents to send younger siblings when the time came.

I was invited to visit two preparatory classes during the course of my research. At the first school I spent a morning observing how the children played and learned and I spent a lot of time talking to the teachers about their work. The class follows a daily routine, which, by the time of my visit in April, the children were well used to. This is part of the training to help them get accustomed to how they will be expected to behave in primary school. For the first hour they were allowed to choose their own activity – they could play with the toys or draw pictures. After that they had a break, which the teachers consider to be another important learning activity. They had to sit quietly at their tables while they ate, then put the food wrappers in the bin and wash their hands. Immediately after the break they spent an hour learning how to write. This involved practicing how to hold their pencil correctly and then tracing over a shape, and then drawing the shape on their own. They also had to draw the shape in different colours as instructed by the teacher. On the day of my visit, the teachers decided to include me in the final lesson. I told them a little bit about myself and then we played a game where they asked me how to say Czech words in English and then they repeated the words after me. When I visited the second class they were almost finished for the day but they performed a little show of some songs and dances they had learned and then the teacher showed me some of their work in their exercise books. I visited both classes in April,

and the children in both schools struck me as being very happy and eager to learn. The teachers commented that if I had visited in September the picture would have been very different:

In September when they begin school, the first three months are the hardest, until they learn to listen, and they learn to respect others and the teachers. After those three months it's much easier to manage (TA 12).

It is important to note that there is no set curriculum for preparatory class teachers to follow and the progress the class makes depends both on the aptitude of the particular group of pupils and the guidance of their teacher. In the second school I noticed that the children were already able to write words and letters, whereas in the first school they were still learning how to trace shapes. This reflects the findings of the Council for Romani Affairs 2004 report which noted that given the lack of teaching guidelines for the preparatory class, the standards achieved by pupils in the classes varied widely (Council for Romani Affairs 2004: 16). Other scholars have also called on the MoE to change the curriculum in teacher training colleges to provide specific training on how to plan lessons for preparatory classes because certain specific skills and methods are used in the preparatory class which are not used in the mainstream primary classes (Kňážíková and Zábřa, 2004: 21).

The principals of the schools I visited were satisfied with the work being done with the children in the preparatory classes but despite their positive experiences, the preparatory class is not guaranteed to succeed and there have been instances where the classes were discontinued. According to Principal 7, for a preparatory class to be a success a lot depended on the personality of the teacher because the children would only cooperate if they and their families could trust the teacher:

The teacher has to be interested and when the children see it's true they are doing something for me then they will come and the parents will too when they see that (Principal 7).

6.3.3 Experience in České Budějovice

Overall, the preparatory class programme in Ostrava can be described a success. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for České Budějovice. Despite their success in other parts of the country, there were no preparatory classes available in České Budějovice when this research was conducted. They had been run at two centres in the past but had been discontinued. It is true that České Budějovice has a smaller population of Roma than Ostrava, both in terms of real numbers and as a proportion of the population. Nonetheless, there is an identifiable Romani community and they live in relatively concentrated areas in certain parts of the city. In the course of my research, officials and representatives of Romani communities were asked about the lack of preparatory classes. Although opinions differed over who was at fault, the main reason I could identify was that the municipal authorities decided to stop funding the programme because there was not sufficient interest from Romani parents and not enough children were enrolling and attending the classes regularly. The decision was taken to use the financial resources for other projects which the authorities deemed more worthy of investment. I identified a lot of bad feeling between the authorities and the Romani representatives on this issue. A more detailed discussion of the problems will be provided in Chapter 7.

6.4 Teaching Assistants

6.4.1 Background to the Programme

Another problem facing Romani pupils in mainstream education is their sense of alienation from an institution where they encounter no adult members of their own community. The widespread low levels of educational attainment in Romani communities also leave children without any positive role models to whom they can look for encouragement and support when they find life at school challenging. Schools have found it difficult to communicate with Romani parents and to convince them of the importance of education. Teachers have experienced problems trying to communicate with children because of misunderstandings in the way language is used or because they

are not familiar with Romani traditions and ways of thinking about problems. Efforts are now being made to tackle these problems and one possible solution is believed to be the employment of teaching assistants (TAs) who either belong to Romani communities or who can gain the trust of the local community. These TAs work alongside teachers acting as a 'cultural bridge' between the Romani pupils and their non-Romani teachers. They also act as a link between the school and the local Romani community promoting educational values, motivating the children to remain at school and encouraging their parents to get more involved with school activities.

The first Romani TAs were employed in the Přemysl Pitter School, in Ostrava in 1993. The aim was to improve the quality of education offered to the children by allowing non-Romani teachers to work with Romani TAs in the classroom. The 1997 Bratinka Report recognised the achievements of this school and noted that the employment of TAs had been very effective (Government of the Czech Republic 1997: 4.3.1) but its authors were not yet ready to completely endorse the employment of TAs because of reservations about the quality of their training. Taking these concerns into account, the government resolution which accepted the Bratinka Report, instructed the MoE to "determine the qualifications required for the position of Romani pedagogical assistant" and to " earmark funds totalling 2,268,000 Kč (€70,000) for the wages of at least 20 pedagogical assistants" (Government of the Czech Republic 1997: III, 1a). Between 1 September 1997 and 30 June 2000 the Ministry employed TAs on a trial basis. The trial was considered a success (Council for Romani Affairs 2005b: 6.6) and according to the representative interviewed at the MoE, there were 350 TAs working in Czech schools in 2004.

According to the requirements established by the MoE, applicants for the position of TA must be over 18 years of age, have completed primary school, have a clean criminal record and meet the general recruitment requirements which apply to all school employees (Nová Škola 2005a). Training programmes for TAs were offered by NGOs until the MoE adopted the scheme. Originally, the training consisted of 72 training hours focusing on the basics of education theory, child psychology, maths and the Czech language (Nová Škola 2005b). However, the training course has become more intensive and now trainees have to complete 180 hours of training before they can

qualify (Nová Škola 2005c). In addition to this training, TAs are encouraged to further their education in other ways. The 2005 Update to the Concept notes that an increasing number of TAs are completing their secondary and higher education or have expressed an interest in doing so (Council for Romani Affairs 2005b: 6.8). Many of the TAs I met had completed their secondary school studies and two were actively pursuing further study. One man was studying to be a teacher by means of a distance course and one woman was planning to leave her job next year to begin studying law. She had attended secondary school part time while she worked as a TA and was full of praise for the school and the local authorities who supported her.

6.4.2 Experience in Ostrava

14 schools in Ostrava employed TAs in April 2005. Most schools had one or two assistants – usually one worked in the preparatory class and another in the school – but two schools I visited had more TAs. One school had three and the other school had ten, seven of whom were Romani. In these cases, the school paid the wages of the extra assistants through private fundraising initiatives. All of the principals were full of praise for the work done by the TAs and they believed that it was important to employ Roma in these positions. Deputy Principal 1 described it thus:

The Romani assistants are respected by the children. The children like them and appreciate them and if there is a disagreement between the non-Romani teachers and the children, the assistant is a good go-between. I think for that reason the Romani assistant is a big advantage (Deputy Principal 1).

However, the principals felt it was not enough to simply hire any Romani person for the job. Not every candidate is a success and one principal reported that they had to dismiss one of their assistants the previous year because he was not doing his job properly. Two of the principals said they preferred to employ Roma who had completed their secondary education even though the actual requirement for the job is to have completed the primary stage of education.

The assistant can be a person with primary education but I prefer when they have the *Maturita*³⁵ because that shows Roma all that a person can achieve, that if they do something for it themselves then they have a chance (Principal 11).

Teachers responding to the questionnaire in Ostrava, who had experience working with TAs, were overwhelmingly positive in their assessments. Of the 25 who stated that they had worked with a TA, only 6 reported negative experiences. Most felt it was an advantage to have a TA in the school, one noted that without the TAs the situation in the school would be much worse. They praised the way the TAs acted as mediators between the school and the community and welcomed them in their classrooms to allow children to receive more individual attention. A few respondents reported negative experiences. Some did not like sharing their classroom with a TA and one teacher noted that she had witnessed inappropriate behaviour but that this was an exceptional case.³⁶ Teacher 1 told me that when the teaching staff at her school were first told of the plan to employ Roma as TAs, there was a great deal of opposition. They did not think it was necessary and the money could be spent on more useful projects. She felt that there was also opposition because the teachers had their own prejudices about Roma and could not see how the scheme would possibly work. However, after working with a TA for a few years she has changed her mind. She said that now she much prefers working as a team and did not think she would be able to cope if she had to work on her own again. She was very honest in her appraisal of how her own attitudes had been transformed by the experience.

6.4.3 Experience in České Budějovice

Only one school in České Budějovice employed a Romani TA, the other schools employed non-Romani TAs. Therefore, the responses to my questionnaire were very different to those provided by the teachers in Ostrava (where only two respondents said they had never worked with a Romani TA). Most teachers in České Budějovice had no personal experience on which to base their responses, though one or two noted that they

³⁵ This is the final exam sat by students before leaving secondary school.

³⁶ Unfortunately this teacher did not explain what the inappropriate behaviour was and did not provide any contact details so I was unable to find out any more information. This is one of the drawbacks of using anonymous surveys as a means of finding out information.

had heard about the school with the TA. Altogether 25 teachers in České Budějovice stated that they had no experience working with Romani TAs. Nonetheless a majority (16) would be interested in working with a TA. 9 respondents thought it would be a waste of time. The views of these teachers are reminiscent of how Teacher 1 described the situation in her school when the TAs were first introduced. Even if the teachers were reluctant in the beginning they might grow to appreciate the work done by the TA but in any case the teachers do not make that decision. The principal and the municipal council must decide that it is necessary and then justify the expense.

As noted above, schools in České Budějovice tend to employ non-Romani TAs rather than members of Romani communities and in November 2004 only one Romani woman was employed as a TA in the whole city. Nevertheless, the principal of the school she worked in believed that it was better to employ someone from a Romani community in this position:

I believe that a Romani TA for Romani pupils is the best there can be... That's why I'm pleased that there is a Romani woman here, who has qualifications and can be a kind of role model. [She's] not just an enemy who does things differently, has a different skin colour, a different mentality. Therefore, it's good that she's a Romani woman (Principal 5).

However, the principals of the other schools I visited were unconvinced. One principal felt she could not justify the expense of hiring a TA. Principal 3 said that he had bad experiences with Romani TAs in the past and would be reluctant to hire one again. Therefore, he preferred to employ non-Romani assistants.

I have experience with Romani assistants from the last place where I worked. They often supported the claims of Roma that we were treating them badly. They wanted excessive advantages, which we could not give them. We cannot give them everything for free. There are some things that everyone must pay for themselves. And the assistants were always defending them even when they were in the wrong (Principal 3).

Principal 2 had attempted to hire Roma for the position of TA but the local Employment Office and the Regional Coordinator for Romani Affairs could not find any Roma interested in doing the work, who could fulfil the basic Ministry requirements. There had been a non-Romani TA in School 4 who specifically dealt with Romani pupils but

due to falling numbers of pupils, there were cutbacks among the teaching staff and they could no longer employ her.

The schools which had non-Romani TAs insisted that although a member of a Romani community might have some additional advantages over a non-Romani assistant, they were happy with the work being done by the non-Romani TAs. I asked one of the non-Romani TAs how she viewed the situation. She did not think it made much difference if the TA was Romani or not as long as he or she gave the children the support they needed:

No it's not a factor as far as the children are concerned. ... It doesn't matter whether I am Romani or not. I don't think it's important. I don't know how parents see it, maybe they would prefer a Romani person but I'm sure that from the viewpoint of cooperation with the children, there is no problem (TA 1).

6.4.4 Views of Teaching Assistants

It is important to note that Romani TAs do not come from the same kinds of homes as the pupils who most need their help. The main difference is that they have education and employment and they are socially and economically more secure than the Romani families who are the primary focus of government policy. Altogether I interviewed ten TAs who were members of Romani communities, three men and seven women. They ranged in age from early twenties to mid-forties. Six of the TAs had the *Maturita*, i.e. they had completed secondary school, the others had completed primary school and subsequently educated themselves in other ways. One was hoping to go on to university and one was already doing a correspondence course at a university in a different city.

I asked them why they, unlike so many Roma, had been motivated to finish their education and get qualifications. They all attributed this encouragement from their parents. Three TAs spoke of how they had been very unhappy at school because all their friends were in the local remedial special school and they were the only Roma there, but their parents insisted that they remain at school and not let the bullies or loneliness upset them. A common theme was that their parents had instilled a strong work ethic in their

children. In many ways however, these families, who put such a strong emphasis on education were more distanced from the traditional Romani culture. TA 10 commented that his family spoke Czech at home to help him cope better at school. Two more admitted that they could not speak Romani at all. TA 4 was from a mixed family; only her mother was Romani. Another noted that her father came from a children's home so her family did not have a strong bond with other Roma and had never lived in a predominantly Romani neighbourhood. She was also married to a non-Romani man. Only the eldest man who had many years of experience as a Romani activist, but no secondary school education, claimed to speak fluent Romani. He was very keen to promote the culture as much as possible. The others expressed a wish to see Romani children become more interested in their own traditions and culture but were not as ardent in their support. This may be evidence to show how the previous policy of assimilation had been succeeding. Families who had weaker ties to Romani communities were more successful in the education system. All these TAs, except the very youngest, began their education before the fall of the communist regime.

In spite of this perhaps weaker link to the main Romani communities, all the TAs were very proud of their Romani ethnicity and were happy to declare themselves as such on the census. They regretted not speaking better Romani but did not think they were in any way inferior to other Roma. They pointed out that the vast majority of Roma no longer speak Romani. A few TAs commented that there were cultural differences between how wealthier and poorer Roma live and that the problems Romani children had at school were more pronounced in children from socially deprived backgrounds. TA 12 in particular was very clear that she wanted to show the world that there was more to Romani communities than just the very poor people who formed much of the stereotype.

The TAs believed they had an important job to do. Each TA stressed the importance of their role as an intermediary between parents and the school. Two commented that parents felt more comfortable when they knew a Romani TA was in the school. They also both noted that parents accepted criticism from them better than from non-Romani teachers. When I asked if they thought it was important for TAs to be recruited from Romani communities they agreed. TA 11 claimed to be very aware of his responsibility

to be a role model for the children to show that they could make something of their lives if they wanted to. Five TAs said that they felt closer to the children because they belonged to the same community. They understood the children better and the children trusted them more. TA 3 told me one of the most important things she does is challenge the prejudices the non-Romani children in the class have learned at home.

Parents tell them how dreadful the Roma are and when I say I am a Romani woman they don't believe me. They say: "but you can't be you're really nice" (TA 3).

In spite of the positive aspects of their work the assistants are aware that there are still many problems for them to overcome. The situation in some families left them feeling very frustrated at times. Sometimes they felt that some of the expectations of what they could achieve as a link between Romani parents and the school were unrealistic. If parents had a negative attitude towards education then they could not do very much to change their minds either. TA 2 spoke of the frustration she sometimes experienced:

The only thing about my work which bothers me at present is that the cooperation with some parents is not as good as I, or the other teachers, would hope it to be. They don't accept the recommendations from the school or from me. I can't convince them of the importance or the benefits of learning (TA 2).

6.5 Fines to Combat Truancy

6.5.1 Background to the Policy

Truancy among Romani pupils is a widespread problem. Many principals complained that Romani pupils regularly missed school and this contributed to their difficulties in coping with the curriculum. The teachers who filled in questionnaires also highlighted this as a problem. 14 teachers out of 67 cited truancy as one of the main reasons why Romani children had problems at school. One frustrated principal put it very bluntly:

The main problem is attendance. If we manage to get the parents to send their children to school we can deal with all the rest. If the child isn't here and we can't work with them, then it's hard to do anything! (Principal 4).

Truancy is not a recent problem but until a change in legislation in 2003 the most schools could do was send social workers out to visit families to challenge them about their child's absence. Since 2003 there has been a change in how truancy is tackled. Now the emphasis is on withholding social welfare benefits to punish the parents of truants. An amendment to the Law on Social Neediness declares that a parent who does not fulfil their duties as a legal guardian, with regard to ensuring that their child attends school as prescribed by law, will not be considered to be entitled to social assistance (Act on Social Neediness Amendment 2003 I.5). If a child misses more than ten hours of school without a good reason – usually a letter from the parents or doctor is necessary – the school can request that some of the children's allowance payment is withheld from parents. In practice, this means that the parents are given coupons to buy food and clothing instead of cash, in an effort to control how parents spend the money. The policy is based on the principle that if all other attempts to convince certain recalcitrant parents to send their children to school have failed, the threat of financial hardship is the only way to motivate them. The change in the law does not refer specifically to Romani pupils but it is recognised as targeting them because Romani families are widely regarded as not valuing the importance of education or regular attendance and the majority of Romani families are in receipt of social welfare benefits. In the spectrum of policies to support Romani education this new regulation stands out because unlike other initiatives which are based on finding ways to accommodate Romani pupils and make school a more welcoming institution, this is a policy which uses the stick rather than the carrot.

Truancy or absenteeism from school is a complicated issue. There are many reasons why children miss school, despite the fact that teachers have come to the conclusion that in the majority of cases it is the parents who are at fault. As Section 5.1 observed, some children miss a lot of days at school because they are ill as a result of the poor quality of their housing. Others stay at home in winter because they do not have suitable clothing to wear to school. Principals try to be sensitive about these problems but they maintain that a significant number of children miss school because their parents are not fulfilling their parental duties. These are the families that this policy is trying to target. A commonly held view among principals and officials in both cities is that Romani

parents who are unemployed are not willing to wake up early in the morning to bring their children to school. It was also felt that parents were too lenient with their children and let them stay at home for the flimsiest of reasons. A social worker employed by an NGO noted that if a child slept in, her parents would let her stay at home all day rather than send her in to school late:

Often it happens that a client comes here in the morning and has their child with them, who should be at school. When I ask why she isn't at school they say, she slept in and I say well send her in for the next lesson and they answer that there is no point. It isn't laziness but I think they don't have any motivation, not even the parents (NGO Representative 12).

The issue of motivation is a serious one. If the parents can be blamed for high rates of absenteeism among younger children, older children make that decision for themselves. Some schools have even had to resort to locking the main doors to prevent pupils leaving during lessons. One of the FSAs claimed that enforcing the truancy regulations had an impact in some cases. Now parents accompany the child to the door of the school, then a teacher goes with them to their classroom but if these children disappear at break time there is not much that the parents can do. In these instances the key task of the school is to find ways to encourage and motivate the older children to stay at school. Given the high rates of unemployment among Roma, there is a lot of despair that even if they finish school they will not find a job. However, the TAs complained that parents were transferring their defeatist attitude to their children and making their task of motivating the children to stay at school and get qualifications even more difficult.

6.5.2 Experience in Ostrava and České Budějovice

Given the complexities surrounding the issue of truancy, the use of the fines to motivate parents is controversial and many schools are not comfortable with the idea. In České Budějovice, the schools used it as a threat to force parents to take their responsibilities more seriously but no school had actually enforced the regulations. They were satisfied that the threat alone was enough to get the attention of parents. In Ostrava, some schools had used the fines but others had discovered that there were still some loopholes in the procedures which meant the fines were not as effective as they could be. It is still

possible for parents to excuse their children themselves. If they send in a note saying the child was ill, the school has to accept it, even if they do not believe the parents. Some TAs were not happy with the law but realised that in certain cases there was no other alternative, as they had tried everything else to convince certain parents to send their children to school.

We have to remind parents that the children must go to school. Well if they are sick then they can't, they are sick. But if children don't go to school... Unfortunately, it's a bit brutal but parents are literally threatened that if they don't send their child to school then they won't get social welfare. And God help them. [...] It's awful then, unfortunately, it's hard but that's how it is. Otherwise we couldn't force some parents to send their children to school (TA 12).

The Ombudsman's office is also unhappy with the new amendment to the law. In a press release it raised a number of concerns. It noted that particularly among Romani families, the most common reason why children miss school is because their families are in dire financial straits and their parents do not send them to school because they cannot dress them and provide all the things they need to be equal to their classmates. Therefore withholding financial support would exacerbate this problem. Instead it recommends that the causes of truancy should be investigated more thoroughly and schools and children's support services should cooperate with parents to help them overcome their problems. It also noted that the sole purpose of the Act on Social Neediness is to help people who are in desperate need and that it is not supposed to be a means to educate people "in good parenting or in the proper performance of their duties as legal guardians" (Ombudsman 2004). These are valid concerns but now that the law is in force it is unlikely to be changed. Whether it can successfully reform those uncooperative parents or whether it will leave the very poorest families in an even worse situation cannot yet be determined, although most observers fear that the latter result is more likely.

6.6 Reform of Remedial Special Schools

Although the government has repeatedly denied that the special school system deliberately discriminated against Romani children, senior officials recognised that the

system had to be reformed. Jan Jařab, the Commissioner for Human Rights between 2001 and 2004, stated on the record that the majority of Romani pupils in remedial special schools should not be there because they did not have special educational needs in the clinical sense (Jařab 2003). While this argument is still being played out in the ECHR³⁷, the disproportionate numbers of Romani children attending remedial special schools was certainly a cause for grave concern. However, this was not the only problem in the special school system. The whole principle of having a parallel system for children with learning difficulties or other physical handicaps has been increasingly criticised for segregating children with different levels of ability and increasing the stigma in society about people with learning difficulties by not allowing the children to mix with each other in every day life. Polechova (2003: 27) reports OECD findings that 4.9 percent of Czech children are taught separately instead of in mainstream classes, which was the highest proportion of all OECD countries. The demand that children of all abilities be given equal educational opportunities reflects the shift in thinking among educational experts internationally, who now recommend that children of all levels of academic ability be mixed together and taught in a more inclusive environment³⁸. Section 5.2 explained that children educated in remedial special schools did not have the same opportunities as those educated in mainstream schools once they leave school. The education attained in a remedial special school was of a lower standard than that in a mainstream school and this was reflected in the admissions process for secondary schools. Before 2000, pupils graduating from a remedial special school were not allowed to even attempt the entrance exams for technical and grammar secondary schools. They could only proceed to vocational secondary schools, thus limiting their future career options.

The special school system has been reformed incrementally. First, in the late 1990s, the assessment procedures were tightened up and greater attention was paid to the decisions made by educational psychologists who were responsible for placing children in remedial special schools. Secondly, in 2000 the law was changed so that pupils from any school could sit the entrance exams for all secondary schools. Regardless of which type of primary school they had attended, they would be accepted in the secondary

³⁷ In February 2006, the ECHR ruled against the claimants because deliberate discrimination had not been proven but the decision is being appealed in the ECHR's Grand Chamber.

³⁸ For further discussion of the debates surrounding inclusion, see Florian 1998; Rose 2001.

school if they passed the exam (Education Act Amendment 2000: 1). Finally in 2005, with the introduction of the new Education Act, remedial special schools were abolished and replaced by “primary schools with special educational programmes”. This section examines these three key stages of reform in chronological order.

6.6.1 Assessment Procedures

Section 5.2 noted that the Czech government believed the system of placing children in remedial special schools to be fair because all children underwent the same standard testing procedure. Section 5.2 also discussed the criticisms made by NGOs and educational experts about the nature of the allocation of children to these schools. Two very experienced educational psychologists were interviewed in the course of this research. One was based in České Budějovice and the other was based in another city in the Moravia Silesia Region.³⁹ Both educational psychologists assured me that procedures had been improved considerably since 1989 and they rejected the claims of the ERRC that the assessment procedures discriminated against Roma. One complained that the ERRC had not conducted their research professionally and their findings did not reflect the reality of the situation. The assessment procedures were described to me independently by both psychologists and they sounded more thorough than the description provided by the ERRC report. Children referred to the centre are assessed in many different ways. Under no circumstances would a decision be made on the basis of an IQ test alone. They take account of the child’s verbal, mathematical and reasoning skills but they also consider other factors such as motivation, ability to concentrate, maturity, and the ability to act and think independently. Once they build up a picture of the child’s abilities and weaknesses they suggest a learning plan which would allow the child to stay on at the mainstream school, providing they get more support from teachers and parents. They both insisted that no child would be immediately transferred to a remedial special school. One of the psychologists stated that even in cases where they think the child will not manage to stay the course in a mainstream school they will not recommend transfer until the child has been forced to repeat at least one year, if not

³⁹ This educational psychologist requested that I not name the city she works in to protect her anonymity. I wanted to interview staff at the educational and psychological advisory service (*pedagogicko-psychologická poradna*) in Ostrava but no one was willing to meet me.

two. Both psychologists also confirmed that the role of parents had become much more important since 1989 and a child could not be transferred to a special school without the parents' informed consent.

The tests used by educational psychologists have been updated in the past few years. They now use the WISC III test. This test has been developed with new norms to account for the whole Czech population. Romani children were included when setting the norms so it is a "multicultural" test. As discussed earlier, the old tests were not properly standardised but these new tests are more popular with psychologists because they believe they are fairer and more reliable:

That test was used for a long time though, and we began to realise that it did not suit all those who were tested and so now we use – not that we would not be allowed to use the PDV (the old test) – but we, and the majority of advisory centres, have switched over to the test called WISC III (Educational psychologist 1).

In spite of these changes many Romani pupils are still being referred to special schools. The psychologists believed that this was not caused by racism, rather that some Romani children live in particularly disadvantaging circumstances and have not had the opportunity to develop the skills necessary to cope in a mainstream school. Independently of one another, both psychologists referred to structures in the Czech school system as a reason why so many children needed to go to remedial special schools. The educational psychologist from the Moravia-Silesia region pointed out that the curriculum was still very demanding and teachers were hard on children who did not meet the required standard.

Czech schools are very tough and very critical. If a child gets nine out of ten answers right the teacher doesn't say, "well done you got nine right" they ask, "why did you get one wrong?" Children don't get enough praise. They should enjoy learning, not think of it as a chore (Educational psychologist 2).

Educational Psychologist 1 talked about a cohort of children whose IQ was only slightly below average, but who could only manage in a mainstream class if they got a lot of support from the teacher. However, large class sizes and limited school budgets mean that the support resources are not available for these children in mainstream schools.

Therefore, she believed that these children would probably be better off in a remedial special school. However, she stressed that although this was the reality, it was not the role of the educational psychologist to make that recommendation unless the child had repeated at least one year. Both psychologists rejected the idea that the system had deliberately discriminated against Romani children but they did concede that reforms had been necessary and that the procedures had been tightened up in recent years. The educational psychologist in České Budějovice spoke of how the government had launched an initiative whereby parents of remedial special school pupils who got consistently high grades could request a re-evaluation and the possibility of a transfer to a mainstream school. However, as far as she was aware, no parents came forward to avail themselves of this offer. Educational Psychologist 2 knew a lot about the case brought by the ERRC against schools in Ostrava because she worked in the same region. She believed that the procedures have become tighter since the court case was launched but not just because of that. In her opinion, awareness of discrimination and the general need for reform was increasing anyway.

6.6.2 Access to Secondary Education

The second key reform came in 2000 with the amendment to the 1984 Education Act which removed the barrier preventing children who attended a remedial special school from sitting the entrance exams to mainstream secondary schools. This amendment was to answer critics who complained that pupils relegated to remedial special schools, whether correctly or not, did not have an equal chance to compete in the market place because they were denied the chance to obtain better qualifications. By opening up the entrance exams to everyone, the system appeared to be fairer but this is a classic example of a reform that looks good on paper but has no significant impact. Pupils from remedial special schools could now sit the entrance exams but they had no hope of passing them because their level of education was much lower than their peers from mainstream schools. Some NGOs offered children extra tuition in an effort to help them overcome this obstacle but the main obstacle was their lack of knowledge of a foreign language. In the upper classes of mainstream primary schools pupils begin learning a foreign language. Principals pointed out that remedial special schools do not offer any foreign language teaching:

They have to go to the vocational secondary school. In theory they can go to any secondary school even to the gymnasium, but because of the fact that even if they know a lot they don't have a foreign language, they have no chance to get into the gymnasium (Principal 8).

There have been some cases where pupils have taken advantage of the change in the law. Principal 9 talked about one pupil who showed real promise so the school arranged for her to do an intensive one-year course to get up to the standard of a mainstream primary school. She also received private tuition from two retired teachers and she passed the entrance exams to the Romani secondary school in Kolín. This principal believed that this was proof that if the Romani pupils wanted to make something of their lives the opportunities were available and people would support them with the work.

6.6.3 Abolishing Remedial Special Schools

The final stage of the reform process was the decision to abolish remedial special schools entirely. In accordance with the 2004 Education Act, the entire approach to educating children with special educational needs had to be transformed. The 2001 White Paper which outlined the planned reforms argued that a shift to a more integrated approach was necessary and wherever possible children should be educated together rather than segregated according to their intellectual abilities (MoE 2001: 62). Remedial special schools should be transformed into “mainstream schools with special educational programmes for pupils with special education needs”. The 2001 White Paper claimed that this change in the designation of the schools means the children would be educated “without any stigma that could restrict them in their choice of a future career” (MoE 2001: 63).

There were mixed views about the impact this change in the law would have. This fieldwork was conducted during the school year 2004 – 2005, before the measures were implemented. The principal of Remedial Special School 2 estimated that it would take at least two more years before real changes would be seen. She planned to retire before then and was not very interested in the changes being undertaken. The principal of Remedial Special School 3 welcomed the changes. In her school they had already

established classes which were run according to the mainstream curriculum and she considered her school to have most of the features which would now be implemented nationwide. She thought that removing “special” from the name of the school would make it easier for parents to accept that their child needed an alternative form of education.

I’m pleased that they are changing the name because special school is such a pejorative label. It’s traumatic for the parents if they have to put their children in a special school but then for the children it’s much better because the quantity of knowledge in the remedial special school is smaller and they have the feeling here that they are good. They feel successful (Principal 11).

I could not interview the principal of the remedial special school in České Budějovice but I met the principal of another special school in the South Bohemia region who welcomed the reforms to the system. However, officials in the regional education department based in České Budějovice were less enthusiastic about the planned reforms. They complained that the MoE was expecting too much from schools and was not offering sufficient financial resources to compensate for the extra support the schools would have to give children with special educational needs.

We can’t reduce the class sizes because we can’t pay the wages for the extra teachers we would need, from our budget. The state really didn’t help us (South Bohemia Regional Education Department, Senior Official).

In Ostrava there were also reservations about the reforms. A senior official in the municipal education department complained that the reforms were meaningless as they only involved changing the name of the school and not the structures. He also considered the plans to be a cynical ploy to transfer responsibility for financing special education from the regions to the municipalities and said this was causing a lot of bad feeling:

It’s literally a word game but it is also a game about money because right now in the Czech Republic the regions are responsible for remedial special schools and the municipalities are responsible for mainstream primary schools. So whether they are special schools or mainstream schools the regions want to dump them on the municipalities. That

started a row, which is being resolved just now, because the municipalities don't have the money for that. It wasn't in their budget, in the national budget so they don't have the money. Now they are trying to create a third way between the regions and the municipalities so they are closing down the remedial special schools and creating mainstream schools with special programmes (Senior education official Ostrava municipality).

The question remains whether any of these reforms will be of benefit to the children who are at the centre of the process. Changing the names of the institutions and adapting legal procedures regarding admission to secondary school are cosmetic alterations to a system that is in need of major structural overhaul. However, what is the best way to transform the education system when the changes could bring significant disruption to the lives of the children it is supposed to be helping? The MoE favours a radical approach but given the way power is devolved to different levels of regional and local government the Ministry cannot always insist that changes be implemented. This problem will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. On the other hand, even those officials who recognise that the reforms would benefit children if the traditionally demanding school curriculum were better adapted to their needs, insist that the government must invest the necessary funds into the schools to allow them to carry out the reforms properly.

The system of parallel education is gradually being eroded and there is widespread recognition that the entire Czech education system and especially its curriculum needs to be reformed and made more child-friendly. Teachers and officials alike are slowly accepting the ideology of inclusion. Demographic changes are also contributing to the decline of remedial special schools. As a result of falling pupil numbers generally, mainstream schools are becoming less fussy about the academic abilities of the pupils they accept. Respondents noted that pupils, who ten years ago would have been deemed too weak, are now enrolled because the school's budget depends on the number of pupils enrolled. Educational Psychologist 2 reported that one remedial special school in the city where she works in the Moravia-Silesia region has recorded a drop in numbers from 250 to 100 in the past ten years. This may have a positive effect on pupils with special educational needs and also Romani pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, even if the motives are cynical. Teachers and principals may find it is worth their while to work harder with pupils who need more support than to reject them from the school

and risk losing a member of staff. However, unless the MoE is willing to give schools larger budgets this change could have negative consequences. If class sizes cannot be reduced, teachers will have to teach larger groups of children with different levels of ability and may not have enough time for the children who require more time and support. Therefore, they will not benefit from the experience of being included in a mainstream school. The financial implications of education reform will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

6.7 Multicultural Education

6.7.1 Background to the Policy

As discussed above, one of the reasons why Romani pupils do not perform to the best of their ability at school is because the lack of references to their culture in the curriculum alienates them from the education process. The widespread failure to challenge discrimination and prejudice in the majority society also had an impact in the classroom because the negative attitudes of teachers and pupils were left unchecked. In response to this the MoE has developed a comprehensive programme of multicultural education (MCE) to be incorporated into school lessons at every level. The 2001 Strategy stresses the importance of education for tolerance and the role of education in eliminating prejudices which children may have learned at home. The 2000 Concept devoted a chapter to the issue of MCE, which it defines as:

Not only becoming acquainted with other cultures and receiving objective information about them, but primarily altering ethnocentric attitudes to understand the role of your own nation and its culture in the context of the whole world and all cultures (Government of the Czech Republic 2000: 7.1).

The 2000 Concept envisages the incorporation of the ethos of MCE into every subject, rather than treating it as a separate topic to be studied. It suggests ways in which the subject could be included in history, literature or music lessons (Government of the Czech Republic 2000: 7.3). The 2001 Strategy takes the same approach insisting that MCE must be an integral part of the education process from kindergarten until the end

of secondary school (MoE 2001: 11). It is important to note that MCE is not regarded as simply a new way of teaching children from ethnic minority communities, it is about shaping the attitudes of the next generation of Czech citizens to be more open minded and tolerant of the multiethnic nature of Czech society. Therefore, the 2005 Updated Concept stresses the importance of MCE even in schools where there are no pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds (Government of the Czech Republic, 2005: 6.15).

In order to support the integration of MCE into the national curriculum the MoE has provided schools with teaching materials ranging from books and CDs to teaching manuals. Between 1997 and 2003 the MoE had invested 15,245,000Kč (€535,250) in new publications to support MCE lessons (Council for Romani Affairs, 2004: 1.1.2). EU funding through the PHARE programme has also been channelled into developing projects to support the development of training programmes for teachers to introduce them to the concepts and skills necessary to incorporate MCE in all their lessons (Council for Romani Affairs, 2004: 1.1.4). NGOs have been very active in developing projects to improve MCE in schools and to promote more tolerance in society. The MoE commissioned the Czech NGO People in Need to develop training programmes and materials to support teachers and also to develop further anti-racist public education programmes (Varianty 2006). Step by Step is another NGO which has been very involved in promoting MCE especially through the training courses it runs for teachers (Step by Step 2006).

The importance of getting teachers involved in MCE training programmes cannot be overstated. Research conducted on the problem of racism in British schools has established that the teacher plays a key role in transmitting MCE values of tolerance and understanding. Troyna and Hatcher (1992) and Donald *et al.* (1995) concluded that the different experiences of pupils from ethnic minorities in different schools was the result of the stance taken by teachers and non-teaching staff at the schools towards racist incidents. Jones and Street-Porter (1989) and Figueroa (1991) outline the need for more emphasis on awareness of the problems of racism during initial teacher training and also throughout teachers' careers through in-service training. This is also recognised by Czech officials and emphasised in the 2001 Strategy (MoE, 2001: 12) and the 2005 Updated Concept (Council of Romani Affairs, 2005: 6.11).

The MoE is concerned that the MCE programme is not being implemented in a uniform way and commissioned the Czech Schools Inspectorate (CSI) to examine how well MCE is being taught in schools. In a report published in 2005, the CSI concluded that among the schools it surveyed, the schools with preparatory classes implemented the MCE programme correctly but in primary and secondary schools without significant numbers of children from minority backgrounds MCE was “understood as a matter exclusively connected to the education of foreigners and Roma” (Czech Schools Inspectorate 2005: 14). Section 2.3 argued that one of the reasons the communist policy towards Roma failed was because only the behaviour patterns of Roma were criticised and the latent discrimination in the majority society was not challenged properly. The aim of the MoE and the Council for Romani Affairs to create a tolerant and inclusive society can only succeed if issues of multiculturalism and tolerance are accepted as affecting the whole of society and not only people who are in direct contact with ethnic minorities.

6.7.2 Experience in Ostrava and České Budějovice

Part of my research was to determine how the MoE’s plans to train teachers and develop the MCE programme was working out in schools. The questionnaire distributed to teachers asked whether they had attended any training courses to learn about MCE. It also asked if they were satisfied that enough information was available for them to teach lessons according to the principles of MCE.⁴⁰ Of the 67 teachers who filled in questionnaires, 29 said they had not taken part in any training courses or did not respond to the question, 15 described themselves as self-taught using academic literature available in schools and on the internet and 23 had either gone on courses run by NGOs or the municipal authorities or they had done MCE training as part of their teaching degrees. 17 of the teachers stated that they thought there was enough information available to them about MCE, 6 stated that they would like more information and 1 thought there was enough information available but not enough training opportunities; the others did not respond to the question. Although the 2000

⁴⁰ Please refer to Appendix 6 to see the questionnaire.

Concept aimed to provide all teachers with training in MCE and in particular to give teachers a better insight into Romani culture, attendance at training courses is voluntary. Teachers are obliged to do additional in-service training throughout their careers but specific MCE training has not been made compulsory. Some schools clearly put more emphasis on MCE than others. For example, in two of the schools in České Budějovice only one respondent had done any MCE training compared to another school where 7 of the 9 respondents had done some kind of training.

Among the respondents to my questionnaire there was a strong correlation between the interest expressed in getting information about MCE and how the teacher incorporated the principles of MCE into the curriculum. Responding to the question, “How do you incorporate MCE into your lessons?” teachers who had stated that they felt confident they had enough information about MCE wrote that they followed the curriculum guidelines and included discussions about other cultures and customs in lessons wherever it was appropriate. Games, songs, stories and art were all used to transmit the principles of awareness and tolerance of other cultures. Teachers who had little or no information about MCE said they talked about the issues on an ad hoc basis and they based the discussion on their own knowledge and common sense. Happily, the survey revealed that the vast majority of teachers were taking an interest in MCE, only 3 of the 67 respondents from both cities said they did not use MCE in the classroom – one explained that this was the result of a lack of knowledge about it, one disliked the concept and one gave no reason at all. A further 8 did not respond to the question. This led me to conclude that 11 of the 67 respondents did not incorporate MCE into their lessons. It should be noted however, that the respondents to my questionnaire were all teaching in schools with significant numbers of Romani pupils and where there was a high level of awareness of the challenges of teaching children from different ethnic backgrounds. If these teachers are not all convinced of the need to promote MCE, it is possible that teachers in schools without pupils from different ethnic minority backgrounds will be even less interested in these issues.

The 2001 Strategy recognises that teachers are the key when it comes to implementing MCE and it states that undergraduate training for teachers must “include the issues of educating ethnic minorities as a core part of the curriculum in order to remove the

existing prejudices against Roma and other minorities” (MoE 2001: 12). It promises to provide teacher-training institutions with all the necessary academic literature in order to ensure that the educators at these institutions have all the information they need (MoE 2001: 13). During my stay in České Budějovice I was invited to speak at a seminar at the local university’s education faculty. These students study MCE and pay particular attention to the issues related to successfully educating Romani pupils as part of their course of study to become primary school teachers. The MoE and Council for Romani Affairs hope that by highlighting these issues during their training they will be able to relate better to Romani pupils when they begin their teaching careers. The class I met was made up entirely of non-Roma who had little personal direct experience with Roma and shared many of the prejudices of the majority society. For me it was interesting to see that despite learning about Roma as part of their curriculum, they were not yet ready to internalise the issues and needed to have some of their beliefs challenged further. For example, after I made my presentation, I was asked to tell the group about bad experiences I had had with Roma since arriving in the city. They were surprised when I truthfully told them that I had only had positive experiences with all the Roma I had met. This presumption of Roma as guilty until proven innocent was deeply ingrained in some, though not all, students. It is important to remember that these young people have grown up surrounded by the stereotypes and prejudices against Roma so it will take more than one seminar to change their attitudes. Nonetheless, their lecturer was very experienced and committed to the MCE programme and I trust that he will do his best to ensure that the students become more open minded before they graduate.

A further point worth noting is that apart from the national report commissioned by the CSI discussed above, school inspectors do not devote much time to examining how MCE is taught in classes. Inspectors interviewed in České Budějovice acknowledged that this was not currently something they examine when they are inspecting schools because they do not yet have appropriate national guidelines about how MCE fits into the curriculum. If the MoE is serious about ensuring that all pupils are exposed to the principles of MCE then changes to the inspection criteria are necessary. This would be a simple yet effective way to highlight the importance of MCE in the mainstream school curriculum.

6.8 Scholarships for Secondary School Students

6.8.1 Background to the Programme

All the principals interviewed claimed to do their very best to encourage pupils to go to secondary school, but the drop-out rate of Romani students from secondary school is very high. Principal 7 reported particularly poor results:

Every child who leaves here goes to secondary school but in the 13 years
I am here only three children finished secondary school - only three!
(Principal 7)

There are many reasons why Romani pupils do not finish secondary school. For some there is no encouragement or support from home to persevere with education when it becomes more challenging and unlike primary school, attendance is not compulsory. Therefore, teachers and social workers do not apply pressure to encourage students to complete their studies. Furthermore, secondary schools have not undergone the same reforms to be more inclusive of Romani pupils. In Ostrava, Romani Advisor 2 had tried to convince some local secondary schools with a higher number of Romani pupils to employ a Romani TA but there was no interest from the principals.

However, the main reason why many young Roma fail to finish secondary school is because the financial problems at home make the opportunity costs of continuing at school too high. Many prefer to find work, even if this is only unregistered casual work, to supplement the family income, rather than to stay at school and hope that by getting some qualifications they will earn more in the future. I met a group of young people working as street sweepers in České Budějovice, who had come to this conclusion. They were responsible for keeping the streets free of litter but in winter they also had to clear the snow from the pavements. This meant getting up in the middle of the night and working in freezing conditions. When asked if it would not have been better to stay at school and get qualifications which would help them get less arduous work but they completely dismissed my suggestion as naive and impractical. One asked how his family would survive if he were not working. Another pointed out that even if she

finished her education there was no guarantee of finding better work than street sweeping so she would be wasting her time and only putting off the inevitable. The entire group agreed that education was not a guarantee of a better life and therefore, not worth investing more time in than was absolutely necessary.

Responding to the problem of low secondary school completion rates among Roma, since 2000 the MoE has offered scholarships to help ease the financial burden of attending secondary school. This programme is specifically aimed at Roma, rather than young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and so to be eligible the applicant must declare that they belong to the Romani national minority. Money from the scholarship can be spent on school meals, transport, accommodation, fees, books and other things students need for school, such as the protective clothing necessary for some subjects for example. Grants are given to Romani students who are citizens of the Czech Republic and whose parents have difficulties meeting the expenses linked to secondary school education. Young people are included in the programme if they attend school regularly and do not have any serious discipline problems (MoE 2006). The amount of money available depends on the course being studied; the maximum available is 7000Kč (€246) per student per semester. The scholarship is not intended to match the earnings a student would receive were they to find employment rather than stay at school, instead it is intended to relieve the financial burden of the extra costs secondary education can entail.⁴¹

6.8.2 Experience in Ostrava and České Budějovice

Since 2000, the MoE claims to have provided 12,000 students with scholarships (Romea 2006) but uptake of the scholarships was low in both cities under investigation. In České Budějovice in the school year 2004/05 only ten students applied for financial support. The social workers (kurátoři) who managed the applications claimed that there was little interest in secondary education among local Roma. Most young Roma stop attending school when it was no longer compulsory and this scheme was not a big enough incentive for them to continue. In Ostrava, application rates varied greatly from year to year. There was a fall in the number of applicants from 250 in 2003 to only 50 in

⁴¹ The minimum wage in 2005 was 7,185 Kč (€254.28) per month.

2004. Romani Advisor 2 was not sure what had caused the drop in numbers. She was aware that the children of mixed marriages often preferred not to declare officially that they are Roma but she also knew of Romani families who were afraid that if they applied for this financial support it would affect their other social welfare benefits:

When that support started, first we had six applicants, and then they thought it was only for those students at secondary school doing *Maturita*. Then they said no, it's for those doing vocational and technical subjects too. So the FSAs told Roma in their districts and then the number rapidly increased. The year before last we had 250. Then last year when they applied, we confirmed only 50 applications, I don't know what caused the short circuit [...] They are afraid that they will lose the social benefits. I don't know, suddenly the number fell a lot and I cannot find out why. It bothers me because it was increasing and suddenly the number dropped (Romani Advisor 2).

In 2005, 104 students applied for support but she still cannot explain why the numbers fluctuate so much (Romani Advisor 2, email correspondence).

School Counsellor 2, who worked at a vocational secondary school in Ostrava, explained to me how the scholarships work in practice. She highlighted some details of how the money is paid out which make the awards less attractive than they appear at first glance. As stated above, the money must be used for school related costs and to ensure this, students must first pay for the books, equipment, meals etc. and then present receipts to claim the money back. As a result, a great deal of the money allocated is never used. She had done some research into the issue herself and found that in her school on average only about 36 percent of the money was actually claimed. She identified a number of reasons for this. High drop out rates mean that although the students were allocated the money they do not actually stay at school long enough to spend it. The allocation for school meals is also not used fully. One condition of the scholarships is that the money can only be used to pay for meals served in the school canteen; high rates of absenteeism and also the students' own preference not to eat school dinners mean that they cannot claim back this money. The third problem affecting the allocation for books and school equipment is that some students may not have the money to buy what they need in the first place. Others are not organised or interested enough to purchase what they need. The final problem she identified is that

students do not keep their receipts and, therefore, are unable to submit claims (School Counsellor 2).

It was this teacher's opinion, that given all that is known about the lack of home support for education and the lifestyles of young Roma, the system has been designed like this to prevent the scholarships from being fully utilised. The scheme looks practical and fair on paper but the reality is that students are not getting the full benefit of the scheme. She gave one example of a teacher in her school who became frustrated with pupils who had not bought all the equipment they needed for her classes. One day she went with all the students, showed them what to buy, waited with them while they paid and then submitted all the receipts together. However, officials at the MoE queried the claim because it was so much higher than usual. The teacher explained what she had done and was warned not to do this again. The officials argued that if the pupils cannot show some initiative and take the trouble to buy the things themselves, then they do not deserve the funding. The following year only 18 percent of the cost of protective equipment was claimed back by students, demonstrating what happens when students have to take responsibility for the purchases themselves. If students do not have the correct equipment they cannot take part in certain lessons and their overall performance suffers. This leads one to consider whether it is more important to reward young people who demonstrate initiative or to provide more guidance to ensure that more young Roma can benefit from the scholarships on offer.

This scheme is an example of support offered specifically to Romani pupils, on the basis of their ethnicity rather than their socio-economic status and as a result there has been some criticism that it unfairly favours one group of students. However, the MoE has strongly defended the scheme, saying that other means of support are available to families regardless of their ethnicity and that this scheme should be continued because it has been very successful in the past (*Blesk* 2006). In spite of these claims, the MoE has not published any detailed reports outlining exactly how much money has been allocated to students or measuring how effective the scheme has been as an incentive to encourage Romani students to complete their full secondary education. My findings suggest that the scheme has not been as effective as it could be, partly because of problems with how the money is allocated. However, money alone will not be enough

to encourage young Roma to remain at school. The other problems which they encounter in the secondary school system, such as discrimination and alienation, must also be addressed. School Counsellor 2 outlined a number of activities in her school which were aimed at promoting better relations between Romani and non-Romani pupils but she admitted that there was still a lot that needed to be done to overcome the hostility both sides felt towards each other. Equally, Romani Advisor 2 complained that the negative attitude of some teachers towards Romani students needed to be addressed:

As soon as the child feels that there is an attitude of “you won’t last here”, then they don’t last and they leave. They don’t finish it; there is a kind of barrier that someone has judged them in advance. [...] There was one girl there who wanted to get a full education but because they lumped her with all the others and said from the start that she wouldn’t stick it out just like the rest of them, she internalised that and said “well if they already know that I won’t do it then I’ll just stop now” (Ostrava Romani Advisor 2).

It is clear that it is necessary to develop similar reforms to those targeting primary schools for secondary schools if the education system is to become genuinely inclusive.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed account of how six key education programmes to support Romani pupils are being implemented and demonstrated that some of the measures have been more effective in schools in Ostrava than in České Budějovice. Preparatory classes were cancelled in České Budějovice because parents were not enrolling their children. In Ostrava, however, poor attendance rates are also a problem but this has not deterred the principals who believe that the programme is useful and worth persevering with. There were more Romani TAs in Ostrava too and the principals of the schools where they worked were very happy with the contribution they made to lessons. Only one school in České Budějovice employed a Romani TA. Two other schools could not find suitable Romani candidates, therefore, they employed non-Romani TAs and one other principal had decided not to employ Roma in the position because he had bad experiences working with Romani TAs in the past. The reasons why

the experiences of these two programmes have differed so much in the two cities will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

České Budějovice and Ostrava had more in common with regard to the implementation of the other four programmes. The uptake of financial support for secondary school students has been low in both cities and the difficulties in convincing Roma to complete their secondary education persist. MCE training is on offer to teachers in both cities through the teacher training colleges and seminars organised by various NGOs. The incorporation of the principles of MCE is not uniform in all schools however, and depends on each individual teacher's motivation. The majority of teachers surveyed did include MCE into their lessons. However, all the teachers surveyed worked in schools with Romani children and children from other ethnic minorities. Other research examining the situation in schools where pupils are predominantly from the majority society reveals that there is less emphasis on MCE in such schools (Czech Schools Inspectorate 2005). If the aim of the MoE is to educate pupils to be more sensitive to the issues of racism, discrimination and the challenges of a multicultural society then more needs to be done to ensure that all children, and especially those who are not in daily contact with members of ethnic minorities are educated in the multicultural ethos.

The recent reform of special schools and the changes in social welfare law to punish the parents of truants have not yet had much impact on pupils. The threat of withholding social welfare assistance from parents of truants has been effective in some cases but schools are reluctant to actually enforce the rules because they fear that in the long run this could push families further into poverty and be more harmful than beneficial to the children they are trying to encourage to attend school. The changes to how children with special educational needs are educated have been mostly cosmetic, involving changing the names and designations of remedial special schools and amending the law to allow all pupils to attempt the entrance exams to secondary school, even though a child from a remedial special school does not have a realistic chance of passing those exams. The new emphasis on the principle of inclusion in law and in practice is welcome. However, unless this new policy is supported with the additional financial resources which are necessary for the policy to be effective, it may not be of much benefit to the children who most need support. This chapter alluded to the main obstacles which have caused

problems when these reforms were being implemented. These will be investigated in more depth in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7: MAIN CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATION POLICY

Introduction

This chapter investigates the problems which have arisen during the implementation of the new education policies and discusses why certain policies, particularly the employment of TAs and the establishment of preparatory classes have been more successful in Ostrava than in České Budějovice. Chapter 2 concluded with a discussion of factors identified by academics, which have historically been the source of the failure to integrate Romani communities. These included the power of local authorities to block policy implementation, the failure to address discriminatory attitudes in the majority society and the paternalistic approach to policy-making through which decisions were made about what Roma needed without properly consulting them. This chapter examines how these historical problems are affecting the implementation of the new pro-Romani reforms. It also identifies other factors which should be addressed to improve the effectiveness of the education programmes, particularly with regard to how the programmes are designed and financed.

7.1 Local Authorities

The Czech Lands have a long tradition of decentralised government and administration. Since the reform of the Hapsburg Empire in the mid 19th century, municipalities and regions have been responsible for certain aspects of decision-making and public administration. Under the communist system municipalities' self-governing powers were revoked, while their administrative structures were maintained, but in 1990 the whole system of local government was reinstated and since then it has gradually been reformed.⁴² Decentralisation is particularly significant with regard to the education system. Municipalities are responsible for establishing and maintaining nursery schools and primary schools. Regions are responsible for secondary schools and from 2005 the responsibility for remedial special schools (or as they are now known "mainstream

⁴² For more information on the history of decentralisation in the Czech Lands and a description of how decentralised government now functions see Davey, 1995; Illner 1999; Lacina and Vajdová 2000 and Krátký *et al.* 2002.

primary schools with special education programmes”) will be transferred from regional authorities to municipalities. The MoE still controls the main education budget and sets teachers’ wages (Krátký *et al.* 2002).

Guy (1975 and 2001a) has argued that one of the most significant factors in determining how successful any new reform will be is whether or not it has the support of the local authorities. Although policies are developed centrally, ultimately the responsibility for their implementation rests with regional and municipal administration. My research also found that the failure of the central government to convince the local authorities of the merits of the reforms contributed to their lack of enthusiasm towards investing in them. The case of preparatory classes in České Budějovice is an excellent example of how diverging views between the central authorities and the local administration can be an obstacle to the implementation of national policy. Primary schools are the responsibility of municipal authorities and one consequence of the devolution of powers to local government is that the MoE cannot instruct a municipality to establish preparatory classes. Individual schools make a request to the municipal education department, where the decision is taken whether or not to support the proposal and then an application is made for funding from the MoE. If the municipality does not view Romani integration as a priority and chooses not to get involved with the preparatory class programme, officials at the MoE have no powers to change this decision.

As noted in Section 6.3.3, preparatory classes had been run at two schools in České Budějovice but were discontinued before this research was undertaken. Local officials and Romani representatives offered conflicting accounts to explain the situation. According to local officials and school principals, the classes were stopped because there was no demand for them from Romani communities. There were problems with attendance and the year the second class was cancelled, it was because only six children had registered, which was not enough to justify the expense of the running the class. By law, seven children must register to establish a class (Education Act 2004: 47/1). Representatives of Romani communities on the other hand complained that there had been interest from local Romani families but the authorities did not want to fund the classes. Regardless of the reasons why the classes were no longer running, the MoE was not satisfied with the situation. The MoE representative interviewed for this study

blamed the authorities for not doing more to promote the preparatory classes. According to her statistics, the South Bohemia Region had the lowest participation rates of children from disadvantaged backgrounds in preparatory classes in the whole country:

Not because they don't have a problem but because they don't want to solve it. ... In the whole country, 2 percent of all children go to these classes, in that region only 0.18 percent. That is the very least in the country (MoE official, Prague).

She rejected the suggestion that the municipal authorities had a right to cancel the classes because there was no demand from Romani communities:

Other authorities have had the same experiences. [...] If you take children from the street and put them in a preparatory class, in the beginning they aren't going to go every day for you. You have to solve it like any problem. To learn how to manage a preparatory class so that the children attend, that's a process. So if some region doesn't want to do this at all and uses the argument it's not working. Well yes, at the beginning it doesn't work. I have spoken to people at the regional and city authorities and they don't have the will to do it at all. Their argument is that they don't have a problem; they can't do any more than offer the service (MoE official, Prague).

It is likely that the explanations provided by both the officials and Roma were their honest but subjective assessments of the situation. Probably a small number of parents were very interested in the scheme and wanted to give their children a better start, but more parents only brought their children along when it suited them. The authorities did not think that the level of investment required was justified if only a few children were coming regularly and decided to cancel the programme and invest in something else. The problem with this logic, however, as the official at the MoE pointed out, is that such schemes need to be run over a long time to become established in the community. If one family found it helped their first child, they would probably send all their children when they were the right age. As noted in Section 6.3.2, there had also been problems in Ostrava when the preparatory classes were first launched and some classes were discontinued. In their experience, a high level of commitment was necessary on the part of the school, the local community and the local authorities for the classes to be a success.

However, problems with municipal authorities are not restricted to České Budějovice. The Romani Advisor in Ostrava complained that the authorities at the sub-municipal level, i.e. in city wards, knew very little about the 2000 Concept and were not interested in its aims:

If you ask any mayor, they don't know that the Concept even exists because they aren't interested enough to look for it or read it when we say it's on the internet. They have other priorities. (Romani Advisor 2).

From the point of view of the regional and municipal officials who were interviewed, the biggest problem was the failure of the central authorities to consult with local authorities when the reforms were being planned. According to a senior member of České Budějovice's municipal council, the views of municipalities were only heard if they initiated the contact:

There is not much communication between the municipal council and the government. Only if there is some kind of problem, we can use our MP to have them discuss it in parliament. But that someone would seek us out and ask for our opinion? No that doesn't happen (České Budějovice Municipal Councillor).

This failure to communicate with the local authorities can result in the feeling that the policies are being imposed from outside with no real consideration for local needs or priorities. The problems discussed in Section 3.2 relating to the resentment felt towards the EU for imposing policy targets also exist with regard to national policies towards Roma. According to senior officials at the South Bohemia Regional Education Department, they heard about the MoE's plans via memos rather than through any significant consultation and they felt no obligation to promote the initiatives because they were not involved in the policy development:

I suppose state policy reaches us most often by means of different memos, which is the simplest way but the least effective. [...] We approve of the establishment of those preparatory classes but to evaluate if that is necessary, or if it would be effective, that's up to the school that applies for the class. It's not our responsibility seek out the schools (South Bohemia Regional Education Department, Senior Official).

Chapter 6 demonstrated that the introduction of preparatory classes and Romani TAs had been much more successful in Ostrava than in České Budějovice. In Ostrava there seemed to be more willingness to invest in the schemes and a recognition that these were very important programmes which could lead to a real improvement in the academic achievements of Romani pupils. Both of these programmes were first piloted by NGOs in Ostrava and then adopted by the MoE. This raises the question of whether they have been successful here because they were specifically designed to meet local needs. One reason for the failure of these programmes in České Budějovice could be that the programmes are considered alien to the local population. However, on closer examination of the statistics it becomes clear that the programmes have been also successful in other cities. In fact, despite having the longest established preparatory classes, Ostrava does not have the highest proportion of pupils in preparatory classes – in 2003 it was ranked third. The north-western regions of the Czech Republic – Karlovy Vary Region and Ústí Region – had 7.85 and 6.08 percent of six year-olds attending preparatory classes respectively, which was far higher than the national average of 2.04 percent. The Moravia-Silesia Region ranked third with 2.46 percent of six year-olds in preparatory classes and the South Bohemia Region came last with only 0.18 percent (ÚIV 2004: 52).

Like the Moravia-Silesia Region, the Karlovy Vary and Ústí regions also have relatively large Romani populations and problems with unemployment and social exclusion (MLSA 2006a). Therefore, the issue of Romani integration may be a higher priority in these areas than it is in a prosperous region like South Bohemia. However, apart from the size of the local Romani community, there do not appear to be many differences between the Romani communities in the different regions. They suffer disproportionately from unemployment in comparison with the non-Romani majority; the areas where they live are increasingly identified as ghettos and the majority populations complain about crime and anti-social behaviour. Specifically with regard to education, Roma in both cities have low attainment levels and in the eyes of teachers, Romani parents are not preparing their children properly for the demands of the education system. It would appear that the larger the Romani population, the more likely the local authorities are to invest in programmes to tackle Romani integration, possibly because even though the problems are the same they become harder to ignore

when the population is bigger. This is unfortunate, because as Romani Advisor 2 pointed out, in a city with a smaller Romani population the problems are more manageable and it would cost less to implement solutions.

Like I said, if there were not so many of them the problem would be easy to resolve but because there are so many here it's complicated (Romani Advisor 2).

The way in which responsibility for education is devolved to municipal authorities means that neither the MoE nor the government can force the municipal authorities to establish preparatory classes or hire more Romani TAs. Those decisions are solely the responsibility of individual schools and municipalities. However, the MoE can still try to influence local officials in other ways. One possibility suggested by the 2005 Updated Concept could be for the MoE to invest more in publications and conferences where teaching staff from schools in other parts of the country can share their experiences and encourage municipalities to persist with the programmes (Council for Romani Affairs 2005b: 6.9). Better communication between the central policy makers and the local authorities would also help. In the current situation, local officials are only responsible for the administration of state-directed policies, resulting in what Laubeová (2001: 138) terms the “irresponsible implementation of policy.” If local officials felt that they were contributing to the policy making process by offering suggestions about how policy could be adapted or improved they would feel a stronger sense of commitment towards implementing it. The final source of difficulty in convincing local authorities to promote these schemes is the issue of finances because local authorities need to see that by investing in pro-Romani programmes they will not be wasting money and will not have to cut funding for other projects. The financing of the reforms will be discussed later in this chapter.

7.2 Anti-Romani Prejudice

Overt discrimination would not be tolerated in any of the schools I visited and the principals and TAs assured me that they would act immediately if they suspected any

pupil or member of staff discriminated against a pupil because of their ethnicity. However, the underlying racist attitudes of the majority society towards Roma deter some schools from getting involved with the various programmes supporting Romani pupils. In České Budějovice, one Romani NGO worker claimed there was a reluctance to implement any reforms that might attract more Romani pupils and earn the school a reputation as a 'Romani school'. The principal of School 3 which was in the district where the biggest concentration of Roma lived and where 10 percent of the pupils were Romani, confirmed that the decision not to have a preparatory class was based partly on the fear that the school would get such a reputation:

There is a problem here, that some parents don't send their children to us, but to a school where there are no Romani pupils. I know that if I opened a completely Romani preparatory class, that the general public would say we are a 'Romani school' and then we would have a big exodus of white children and an influx of Romani children from the whole city and I can't allow that (Principal 3).

Schools in Ostrava with preparatory classes and TAs were already recognised as 'Romani schools' in the local community and had between 50 and 90 percent Romani pupils.⁴³ However, the increased numbers of Romani pupils were not the result of the introduction of these programmes. On the contrary, the high numbers of Romani pupils enrolling in the school prompted the principals to take action. Significant spatial segregation over the past 15 years, has led to some mainstream schools seeing a dramatic shift in the ethnic profile of their pupils. In one school, the proportion of Romani pupils increased from about 8 percent 13 years ago to 60 percent today. The principal expected the proportion of Romani pupils to increase to 80 percent in the next few years. According to the principals of these schools, the increased proportion of Romani pupils was caused by the movement of non-Romani families away from certain areas and the decision of the remaining non-Romani residents to send their children to school elsewhere:

Here there is a concentration of the Romani community and as a result, unfortunately, the majority of pupils at our school are Roma, so then there is an outflow of white children. Parents take their children out of the school and send them somewhere else and that means that the

⁴³ These are unofficial estimates given that only a very small minority of Roma register their children as belonging to the Romani national minority.

percentage of Romani pupils increases even more. [...] The whites leave for other parts of the city where there are fewer Roma (Principal 10).

However, non-Romani parents do not all decide to send their children to schools further away from their homes simply because they hold racist prejudices about their neighbours. Anti-Romani attitudes certainly exist in society – surveys consistently show that many Czechs have a negative attitude towards Roma (CVVM 2003; CVVM 2006; STEM 2006). In one study, 40 percent of Czechs surveyed identified Roma as the least desirable of neighbours (Burjanek 2001: 59). Nonetheless, the situation regarding schooling is very complex. Ambitious parents recognise that education is the key to success in the post-communist Czech Republic. Therefore, they will do their utmost to ensure that their child goes to the school with the best reputation. Such behaviour is no different to that of parents in any other part of Europe today. The problem for Romani pupils is that the majority Czech society views Roma as a homogenous group and links their ethnicity and the colour of their skin to poverty and social exclusion. These parents do not believe that their child will perform as well in a school with a high number of Romani pupils. They assume that Romani pupils will be less able than their child and that the teachers will have to spend so much time with the Romani children that their child will receive less attention thus limiting their potential. They may well have similar thoughts about sending their child to a school where there are many non-Romani children from socially deprived families but usually they cannot discern the social profile of such a school simply by looking at the colour of the skin of the children as they walk through the school gates. Interestingly, ambitious Romani families prefer to send their children to schools with fewer Romani pupils too. They also believe that ‘Romani schools’ offer an inferior standard of education. I heard a number of people complaining that they were unhappy about sending their (Romani) children to a school with many Romani pupils.

Unfortunately for the schools with high numbers of Romani pupils, it is precisely these parents, who take an interest in their children’s education that they wish to attract. The principals all lamented the fact that their schools did not have a more balanced mix of pupils but could see no way to resolve the problem. Schools are obliged to enrol children in their catchment areas and if the area is home to a substantial Romani population, then this will affect the ethnic profile of the school. Principal 11 blamed the

council for making bad decisions when allocating housing to Romani families. As a result, it was not possible to disperse the children among schools across the city.

The only problem is that the city has dealt with housing in such a way that they put them all in one place and we can't force the parents to travel all the way across town to go to a different school. It's a mistake, it's a mistake, that they are all just housed in the one place (Principal 11).

Teachers at special schools currently earn slightly more than teachers in mainstream primary schools but in general, primary school teachers earn only slightly more than the national average wage (ÚIV 2004: 71). Consequently, it can be difficult to recruit the brightest young people into the teaching profession. The overall decrease in the numbers of children enrolling in schools and the subsequent staff cutbacks also puts pressure on teachers. They have less freedom to choose where they work and are forced to take any job offered to them. The principals in schools with high numbers of Romani pupils insisted that the teachers who worked there were very committed and would work somewhere else if they had a problem with the children. However, one teacher reported that in the school where she worked there was a high turnover of staff as teachers quickly became exhausted and burnt out from the extra demands placed on them when working with Romani children.

Despite the assurances of the principals I met, given the anti-Roma feeling in the majority society, it is possible that the teachers working with Romani pupils may have prejudiced views and this is why anti-racist and multicultural training for teachers is so important. My research demonstrated that awareness about MCE was reasonably good in schools where Romani pupils attend. However, studies such as that of the Czech Schools Inspectorate reveal that schools without Romani pupils do not pay much attention to the MCE guidelines (Czech Schools Inspectorate 2005). If discrimination against Roma and other ethnic groups is to be eliminated, then all young people must learn about the values of tolerance and coexistence. Teacher training institutions in particular must continue to stress these values to ensure that all teachers are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to transmit these values in their classroom, regardless of the ethnic profile of that class.

Section 6.4.2 discussed the experience of Teacher 1 in Ostrava, who along with her colleagues had initially resisted the plan to employ Romani TAs at her school. This is an example of the anti-Romani prejudices which could exist, perhaps unconsciously, in many schools. My research revealed that such reluctance was experienced in other schools too but it is slowly being overcome. Principal 11 spoke of how in the beginning some teachers had questioned whether the TA would share their staff room:

At first the teachers asked “and is she [the Romani TA] going to sit with us in the staff room?” But today ... nobody thinks about the fact that she is Roma, not at all. She is simply a member of the team; it’s excellent (Principal 11).

However, as teachers hear about the positive impact TAs have in schools more are becoming interested in the scheme. The majority of the teachers surveyed in České Budějovice (16 out of 25) said that they had heard about the scheme and would be willing to work with a TA if the opportunity arose. This is a positive sign that the policy can be even more effective if the MoE continues to promote the scheme through in-service training and publications which share information about the experiences of teachers in schools where the scheme is working well.

The segregation of children in special schools was challenged in the courts, but the problem of segregation in mainstream schools because of the ghettoisation of parts of Ostrava is an equally worrying development. The government tried to remove the stigma of remedial special schools by changing their name and altering the ways in which children with special educational needs receive support but if schools continue to be regarded as weaker because they are seen as ‘Romani schools’ then the problem has not been resolved at all. Romani activists have even called on the MoE to limit the number of Romani pupils in any school to 30 percent to prevent segregation (Holomek, 2004).

Principal 7 suggested that if schools with high proportions of children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds received extra funding, it might help to balance out the problems and reduce the stigma of the school in the community. He had heard that the Dutch government allocates extra money to schools for pupils who are considered to be

from 'disadvantaged' backgrounds. He would like to see a similar system introduced by the Czech government, whereby schools received double the standard allowance for their Romani pupils. Some extra funding is already available for schools with a high proportion of children from disadvantaged families. One school in Ostrava had received permission and financial support from the Ministry to divide the first grade class of 28 pupils into two classes of 14, even though the law states that a class must have 31 pupils before it can be divided. The principal was very grateful but he pointed out that only 5 out of the 50 schools who applied for that particular grant had been successful.

It's not just a problem of financing schools, the problem is that schools with a high percentage of Romani pupils should get more money. It would be good if we had that [Dutch system] here but we don't. We have to apply and beg and it takes ages and often it doesn't work out (Principal 7).

Although the Czech economy is growing, it is unlikely that significant further investment will be made in the education system in the coming years. However, the principle of paying certain teachers higher wages and giving schools more funding already exists in relation to remedial special schools (ÚIV 2004: 59) and perhaps with the abolition of these schools some of this money may find its way into mainstream schools with significant numbers of Romani pupils. This will only happen if the principals and school boards actively pursue the relevant authorities for financial support, but there is already fierce competition for all education funding. The structure of neighbourhoods and the reputation these schools have gained locally mean that unless something dramatic happens these schools will continue to enrol higher numbers of Romani pupils. In an ideal world these schools would have better funding, better paid teachers and smaller classes which would prompt other parents to consider sending their children to the school but this is not an ideal world and such an outcome is unlikely in the short term. These segregated mainstream schools are not the best way to teach Romani pupils but as they are the reality, all that can be hoped for is that the teachers are motivated to ensure that pupils receive a high standard of education which will open up further education and employment opportunities when they leave school.

7.3 Financing Reforms

Accessing the financial resources to employ TAs and establish preparatory classes has been a major obstacle to implementing these reforms. In České Budějovice the municipal authorities decided to cancel the preparatory classes because they considered the investment necessary to be too high when compared with the expected benefits of the classes. Local authorities have to make difficult decisions about how to allocate their funds and are obliged to make decisions which will be of more benefit to some groups than to others. As far as the municipal officials in České Budějovice were concerned, projects to support Romani children cost money, of which they had a very limited supply and which they believed would be better spent elsewhere.

We have a budget but it is not split up into individual specific parts for any special purposes, that's the whole budget (České Budějovice Municipal Education Department, Senior Official).

However, according to the MoE representative in Prague, funding was available for Romani education initiatives and should be used for precisely that. This did not appear to be clear to the officials I interviewed and possibly a simple way to resolve some of the problems would be to clarify what extra funding is available for pro-Romani projects. The difficulty of how to provide money for schools with high numbers of Roman pupils when their parents have not registered them as such is an issue with regard to the provision of secondary school scholarships, but given that preparatory classes and TAs are aimed at supporting “children from socially and culturally disadvantaged backgrounds”, it should not be as complicated because families in receipt of social welfare benefits could be easily identified.

Some schools were reluctant to employ TAs because the funding structure for paying their wages was very complex. Currently, there are two ways to hire a TA. If a school employs a person who has previously been unemployed, then the employment office pays the wages of the TA for the first year. This is part of the ‘back to work’ scheme promoted by the MLSA. Alternatively, if the school hires a person directly, they have to apply to the local education authority for funding. Unfortunately, this funding is provided on an annual basis based on the calendar year, rather than the school year. This means that schools have to find other money from their budget to make up the shortfall

for the other months, something which they have great difficulty doing. According to an official at one employment office this puts many principals off the idea altogether.

After an agreement with the MoE it was said that if a school applies they get an assistant and it will be financed by the Ministry. They pay annually, but by the calendar year not the school year. So after Christmas it finishes. Therefore school principals who don't already have much experience with it, leave it altogether rather than going through all the red tape again (Employment Office Official 1).

Principal 3 confirmed that this was an explanation for his delay in hiring a TA (Czech or Romani). Speaking about assistants in the last school where he worked he said:

There was also always a problem with the Ministry when it came to paying them (the TAs). The sluggishness of the authorities meant it took a long time before we received permission from the Ministry, before we got those workers included in the budget, before we got the money for their wages (Principal School 3).

However, the schools with TAs had managed to get through the red tape. Principal 5 explained how they did it:

The first year she (the TA) came through the employment office because she was unemployed and they paid her wages. During that time, we realised that the scheme was really useful and we tried to get financial support from the MoE. For that we had to get the agreement of the regional council. We got that and now she's working here and paid by the Ministry, from special funds that are specifically for issues related to Romani education" (Principal 5).

Clearly in order to encourage schools to hire more TAs the funding structures need to be simplified. In 2005, the procedures changed and schools could apply to the regional education authority instead of the MoE for the funds to employ TAs. Principals of schools in Ostrava appeared to be more aware of how the procedures worked than in České Budějovice. The key to this is better communication with the schools. By providing clear guidance on how to access the funds and how much money schools are entitled to, the procedure would seem less onerous and this would encourage more principals to get involved.

Another complaint about the financing of pro-Roma reforms raised by officials in both Ostrava and České Budějovice was with regard to the reform of the special school system and the promotion of more inclusive teaching. As discussed in Section 6.6.3, one municipal official in Ostrava claimed that the change in status of special schools to “mainstream primary schools with special education programmes” was intended to transfer the burden for financing and running these schools from the regional authority to the municipalities. In České Budějovice the regional officials were also unhappy with the plans because the MoE had not increased the budgets for schools but expected them to be able to provide all the extra resources which would be necessary to integrate children with different learning needs into mainstream classes. The officials there said they tried to point this out when the Education Act was being drafted but no one listened to them:

We warned that the pressure for integration was too big, that the resources to ensure it simply weren't there, my colleague informed you of the result of that a few minutes ago. That means that the deputies didn't look at that, nor did the Minister of Education, so the result will be relatively difficult (South Bohemia Regional Education Department, Senior Official).

If the government can make special funds available for Romani programmes then the local authorities should be aware of this and use the money for its intended purpose. On the other hand, if the national education authorities do expect all these programmes to be financed from the same budget then they need to increase the overall budget or find new ways of convincing authorities to prioritise Romani programmes. Establishing how an initiative will be funded is a key element in the design of any new policy and by clarifying exactly where the money will come from the MoE and Council for Romani Affairs could improve the implementation of many pro-Romani policies across the country.

7.4 Programme Design

This chapter has already discussed how policies to support Roma in the education system can be affected by the lack of support from local authorities, prejudice against

Roma generally and the difficulties involved in accessing the financial support to run the programmes. However, the design of the policies themselves can also be an obstacle to fully overcoming the barriers Romani pupils face in the education system.

The scholarship scheme for secondary school students and the punishments for truancy are examples of poor policy design. Withdrawing social welfare benefits might be a useful threat to focus some parents' minds on their duty to send their children to school, but in many cases, it will result in the children suffering even more. If parents will not send their children to school because they cannot dress them properly, because their living conditions make them ill or because they need their children to help earn extra money to support the family, limiting their income even further will not change that pattern. If anything, it will exacerbate the problems and make it even less likely that the children will go to school. Equally, if young people are the first in their family to attend a secondary school, they will need extra support and guidance when it comes to using their scholarship money properly and schools should be encouraged to help them. It is unfair to propose that only the young people who understand how to follow the guidelines deserve to get the full grant. If the aim of the scheme is to get more Roma to finish secondary school, then the extra support should be considered a necessary element of the whole scheme.

The preparatory classes are an example of a programme with a clear aim to prepare children for their first year in mainstream primary school and in many cases they have been very successful. However, there is a problem with the basic assumption which underpins the aims of these classes. In effect they are designed to *civilise* children, to teach them to behave when they begin school. The emphasis is on changing the children's behaviour rather than adapting the school to meet their needs, for example, by changing the curriculum to make lessons more relevant to the experiences of children from minority ethnic backgrounds or developing individual learning plans and objectives for children who need more specific support. The failure to adapt schools becomes more apparent as the children move up through the school and with each passing year, their overall performance weakens. One teacher I interviewed was conducting a study, comparing the progress of children who attended a preparatory class with those who had not. Her preliminary findings demonstrated that the difference

between the results achieved by the two groups of children was most significant in the first year of primary school. Unfortunately, as the pupils progressed through the school, the impact of not doing homework and not getting support at home reasserted itself and the original advantage provided by the preparatory class was lost (Pavelcová 2005).

Officials working with Romani communities in Ostrava recognised that much more needed to be done. The Romani Advisors had tried to convince the principals of secondary schools to get involved with the TA programme but found that secondary schools were even less interested in supporting their Romani pupils than many primary schools had been. The Regional Coordinator for Romani Affairs was campaigning for a wider reform of the whole education system. In her view, the preparatory classes and TAs were effective but systemic changes, to the curriculum and to the whole ethos of schools, were necessary if Romani pupils were to fulfil their potential.

One of the main complaints about Romani policy during the communist era was that the policy-makers did not consult with Roma about what actually needed to be done. This paternalistic approach led to inappropriate schemes such as the forced settlement and dispersal programmes discussed in Section 2.3. The Czech government is keen to stress that this situation has changed and that Roma now have the opportunity to voice their opinions about how best to tackle the problems facing their community. The main channel for Roma to express their views is through the Council for Romani Affairs, which includes 14 Romani members, who are nominated by their regional councils and tend to have a high profile in their local Romani community. The average Romani citizen can either express his or her views through the ballot box at election time or through informal channels of communication such as their Romani Advisor or NGOs active in their community who then provide feedback to the appropriate authorities. In Ostrava, the head of the municipal education department organised regular round-table meetings with schools, activists and the Romani Advisors in order to plan new strategies and keep up to date with the latest developments. This was not the case in České Budějovice. When I visited there was no Romani Advisor working in the municipality and the Regional Coordinator was only contacted when a problem arose.

In spite of the different approaches of the two municipal councils, in both cities Romani representatives complained about the apathy of local Roma. In České Budějovice, there was only one active Romani NGO and its most popular activities were the social events it held. The activists found it difficult to convince people to work voluntarily for the different projects they were trying to organise. In Ostrava, there were a number of very active and effective NGOs but given the difference in the size of the Romani populations in both cities this was to be expected. Romani Advisor 2 in Ostrava was still not happy with the situation. In her view the same few people turned up to all the training courses and other activities on offer and the majority of people took no interest whatsoever. She found this very frustrating, as she believed that many of these people simply did not see that the courses and opportunities they were being offered could be of real benefit to them:

Even when there was a course for mothers about preparing their children for school, there had to be something to motivate them to make sure that they attended all the time, like buying a schoolbag for the child when they began school, or promising to buy them something for their kitchen. There always has to be something to motivate them. They always want to know what will they get for coming along? They don't realise that this is for them, for their children. They always ask what is it worth? (Romani Advisor 2).

When asked what kind of courses people would be interested in, if they do not take advantage of what is already on offer, she sighed and said 'I don't know'. She herself is Romani and is well educated and very motivated, therefore, she finds the apathy of other Roma very frustrating. It is difficult for the Romani Advisors and TAs to continue to think up new ways to help Roma to overcome their social exclusion if Roma are not interested in accepting the help on offer. This leads to demoralisation. One teacher expressed frustration that her school had gone to such lengths to support Romani pupils but the parents had not changed their attitude at all.

We do so much for them but they don't do anything for themselves. It doesn't matter how much we do, if they don't care and don't show an interest then nothing will change (Teacher 2).

The apathy and passivity of members of Romani communities is part of the legacy of their centuries-long experience of social exclusion. Many Roma have lost trust in the

authorities and like the employees of the street-cleaning firm in České Budějovice, they do not believe they could ever be treated equally, even if they made the effort to get an education. They are aware of the low opinion the majority society has of them and over generations mistrust has increased on both sides. The authorities and NGOs have to accept that this is a problem which can only be overcome gradually and they have to constantly try to find new ways to engage with Romani communities and encourage them to get involved in projects which will help to improve their lives. It will take a long time to achieve this change in attitude and the best way to achieve this is by allowing Roma who have successfully educated themselves to share their experiences and act as positive role models in the community in the way that TAs do at school.

However, it is also worth considering that some members of Romani communities will not adapt their lifestyle, regardless of the efforts of the government. The aim of the 2000 Concept is to integrate Roma into Czech society and give them equal opportunities in every aspect of life. This is an important target which must be reached, regardless of how much or how little interest Roma demonstrate in the policy at the moment. However, the 2000 Concept is based on the assumption that Roma should get an education in order to have better employment opportunities. What if they do not want these 'better jobs' and are satisfied to live on social welfare and the minimum wage and spend their money as they earn it and not worry about tomorrow? Can the state accept that and recognise that even people who make this decision about their lifestyles deserve respect as citizens? The short answer is that while the state might have to respect this choice, they will not pour money into the social welfare system to support such a lifestyle.

That is the root of the problem for Roma who reject the educational opportunities offered to them and their children. As the social welfare system is reformed, they will find themselves under ever more pressure. The TAs believed that some Roma do not yet realise how precarious their position is. Therefore, I would argue that the education policies as they are currently conceived and implemented may not be perfect but it is important that they are implemented and expanded upon. The next generation of Roma needs to be offered more opportunities than their parents were because the social welfare support available to their parents will not be there for them. If parents cannot see this then

social workers, youth workers and other NGO activists will have to give children as much support as possible. Roma in the Czech Lands have suffered from social exclusion and low educational attainment for hundreds of years, it will take more than one generation to overcome these problems. However, the authorities have taken on the challenge and it is important that they do not lose sight of their important goal. Even if there are times when the task seems overwhelming, their advice is falling on deaf ears and no one appears to want their help, they must persevere for the sake of the whole of Czech society.

Conclusion

This chapter argues that the problems, which have historically acted as obstacles to implementing Romani policy, have not yet been fully resolved, although some progress has been made. The central policy makers continue to have difficulties getting the local authorities on board, although this could be improved by making more of an effort to include local authorities in the policy formulation process. Discriminatory attitudes towards Romani communities also remain a problem, as does the failure of Roma to recognise the value of education and qualifications. Some schools refuse to implement reforms to support their Romani pupils out of fear that this would attract more Roma to the school. Others are finding it difficult to cope when the ethnic profile of the neighbourhood results in them having a majority of Romani pupils in the school. The key role of teachers in supporting Romani pupils and promoting tolerance is recognised by the authorities and steps are being taken to educate them about the principles of MCE. In addition to these historical problems, my research has also identified problems with the policy design and the financing of the different education programmes. It is clear that the policies need to be continually reassessed as problems are identified. If the state could invest more money in these programmes this would also have a positive impact. The government is willing to allow Roma to share their opinions about what kind of help their community needs, but even Romani representatives can find it difficult to communicate the importance of the reforms to some members of their communities. The apathy of many Roma with regard to the policies means that the people who are the main targets of the programmes are not providing as much feedback as would be desired. Handling the

frustration of working with people who appear not to want their help is the greatest challenge facing those involved with implementing policy at the frontline.

PART 2: SUMMARY

Part 2 of this thesis investigated the programmes introduced to improve Romani children's experience of the education system. It first identified the main problems which have prevented Romani children from reaching their full educational potential. In particular, the problems caused by poverty and social exclusion, anti-Romani prejudice, the disproportionate numbers of children placed in remedial special schools and the question of how to communicate to parents the importance of supporting their children's education were explored. The programmes to tackle these barriers to education were examined in detail in Chapter 6 and the very different experiences of the preparatory class and TA programmes in Ostrava and České Budějovice were highlighted. The final chapter of Part 2 identified the main challenges which have arisen at the implementation stage and suggested ways to overcome these problems. These include better communication between the central and local authorities about the merits of the policy and clearer information for schools on how to access the funding to finance the programmes. It is also important to keep morale levels high among the teachers, social workers and officials who are responsible for the success of the integration project as a whole.

Education reform is viewed by scholars and by those practitioners who work with Roma on a daily basis as the key to tackling the social exclusion of Romani communities. Roma who achieve secondary school qualifications have a better chance of improving their career opportunities. Equally, by incorporating the principles of MCE into the curriculum for all pupils, the longstanding prejudices against Romani communities can be challenged and a more tolerant society can develop. There are strong links between the themes of education and unemployment. Many Roma are unemployed because they lack the qualifications employers are looking for, and equally, seeing such unemployment and despair in their communities has caused many young Roma to reject the possibility that education could be of any benefit to them. Part 3 of the thesis looks at how the problem of unemployment in Romani communities is being addressed.

PART 3: EMPLOYMENT POLICY

This part of the thesis examines the difficulties facing Czech Roma seeking employment and the policies developed to aid their integration into the labour market. In the communist period the majority of Roma found employment as unskilled labourers in heavy industry enterprises and Guy (2001b: 13) argues that through employment Romani communities gained a small measure of acceptance from the majority society because they were seen to be improving their lives “through their own efforts”. However, the end of the communist regime and the restructuring of industry led to high levels of unemployment among Roma because they lacked professional qualifications and lived in the highly industrialised regions of northern Bohemia and Moravia, hardest hit by the economic transition. High levels of unemployment and dependency on social welfare benefits have not helped Roma to improve the way they are perceived by the majority society and the poverty and deprivation, which are consequences of long-term unemployment, have added to the problem of social exclusion in Romani communities. Based on a careful analysis of reports and legislation published by the Council for Romani Affairs and the MSLA and the information provided by respondents during the field research conducted in Ostrava and České Budějovice, this section examines how the problem of unemployment is being tackled. Chapter 8 discusses the main barriers which prevent Roma from finding employment. Chapter 9 describes in detail how the main policies to tackle these problems are being implemented in České Budějovice and Ostrava and finally, Chapter 10 investigates the principal challenges that have arisen during the implementation process.

CHAPTER 8: BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Introduction

Section 2.3 discussed the communist policy of full employment. All able-bodied citizens were guaranteed a job and a regular wage, although some of these ‘jobs’ would not have been considered necessary had the motivation been purely economic instead of ideological. Since 1990, the Czech workforce has had to come to terms with the threat of unemployment. Restructuring of inefficient enterprises led to redundancies but the overall rate of unemployment increased very slowly, because industries were privatised and rationalised at a gradual pace. This was often referred to as the Czech “unemployment miracle” because it was thought that Czech labour policies had solved the problem of restructuring without causing mass unemployment (Flek and Večerník 2004: 7). In fact, there was no miracle. The slow pace of privatisation and restructuring simply delayed the inevitable and the unemployment rate peaked at 10.9 percent in February 2004 (MLSA 2006a). This rate still compares favourably to other states in the region. However, it disguises significant regional and social inequalities among those who are unemployed. In May 2005, unemployment was lowest in the Prague-West district (2.4 percent) and highest in the Most district (21.8 percent).⁴⁴ Ostrava had an unemployment rate of 15.3 percent and for České Budějovice the rate was 3.9 percent (MLSA 2006b). In the labour market, some social groups are more disadvantaged than others, especially women with small children, school leavers, older workers, people with few qualifications, people who have been recently released from prison, drug addicts and the homeless. However, according to a report published by the MLSA in 2003, Roma are one of the most significant groups identified among the unemployed (MLSA 2003a: 1.2).

Unemployment is a serious problem in Romani communities across the Czech Republic. It is estimated that in many Romani communities, unemployment ranges from 70 to 90 percent (Government of the Czech Republic 1997: 7.2). The MLSA does not keep precise statistics on how many Roma are unemployed, considering this to be a breach of the regulations with regard to collecting data about citizens. However, in 2003 the MLSA estimated that Roma made up almost a third of all those registered as

⁴⁴ Most is a city in the northwest of the county in Ústí Region.

unemployed, despite the fact that Roma account for only about 3 percent of the population (MLSA 2003a: 1.2). There is, however, some debate about how best to measure the rates of unemployment among Roma. O'Higgins and Ivanov (2006: 7) argue that because official statistics do not take employment in the informal sector into account, they do not reflect the true situation of income and work activity in Romani households. This point was also made by an NGO representative:

They go collecting iron, things like that and this earns them more than if they were working somewhere for the minimum wage, which I can of course understand. If this kind of work were counted then maybe 50 percent would be unemployed but as we only count legal work then it really is 99 percent (NGO Representative 12).

However, O'Higgins and Ivanov (2006: 10) accept that even if employment is defined in the broadest possible sense, rates of unemployment in Romani communities are very high and consistently higher than for non-Roma. Long-term unemployment is a particular problem. A significant proportion of Roma have been unemployed since the mid-1990s and according to respondents, there are many younger Roma living in the Czech Republic who have never had permanent legal employment and have been dependent on social welfare for all of their adult lives.

Research on unemployment in other western countries reveals that long-term unemployment can contribute to the social exclusion of individuals and families. The experience of long-term unemployment can cause psychological problems, particularly stress and anxiety related disorders and "a sense of powerlessness and resignation that colours people's broader attitudes to politics and society" (Gallie and Marsh, 1994: 14). Networks become segregated, as unemployed individuals tend to socialise more with others who are also unemployed. This can cause further financial hardship because they have less support available to them in times of financial crisis (Gallie, 1999: 151). Households where the main earner has been unemployed for a long period of time (over 12 months) have a higher risk of poverty in the Czech Republic (Mareš and Sirovátka 2004: 60) and jobseekers who only have a primary level or vocational secondary level education have the lowest absolute income when unemployed. This research highlights the particularly precarious position of Romani communities in the labour market. Long-term unemployment is very common in Romani communities and the levels of

educational qualifications are low which means that Romani communities are at a higher risk of social exclusion. This chapter discusses the main problems facing Roma when they try to find employment. Based on analysis of government documents and the information provided by respondents during field research, it identifies four key barriers to employment. These are: (1) the low education and skills base of many Roma; (2) the discrimination encountered by Roma when they seek employment; (3) the lack of affordable housing which reduces labour mobility and (4) the disincentives built into the structure of the social welfare system which discourage some Roma from applying for jobs paying the minimum wage. Policies to tackle these problems will be analysed in the following two chapters of the employment section.

8.1 Low Education and Skills Base

Chapter 2 described how the policies of the communist regime impacted on the employment profile of Roma. By 1970 the employment rates of male Roma had reached the national average in the Czech Lands but Roma were predominantly employed as unskilled labourers. Kostelancik (1989: 321) argues that it was in the interest of the Communist Party not to encourage educational aspiration among Roma, as a pool of unskilled labour was necessary for the smooth running of heavy industry. However, Čanek (1998: 4) notes that the nature of how work was valued in socialist Czechoslovakia was also an important de-motivating factor. A person with little education performing manual work could earn as much as, if not more than, a person with higher educational status working as a teacher or doctor for example. As a result, many Roma did not see any need to obtain more qualifications. However, this attitude was harshly punished after the collapse of the socialist system and the introduction of capitalist market forces into the labour market. The new economic realities of the transition had the worst consequences for Roma because when inefficient enterprises were being rationalised the first to be made redundant were those with the least useful skills. Although some Roma claimed they were dismissed because of the racist attitudes of their employers, the fact remains that most simply proved dispensable, as they had no skills to offer (Barany 2002: 172 – 176; Guy 2001a: 296).

Chapter 5 discussed the difficulties faced by teachers who try to motivate pupils and their parents to become more engaged with the education system. Young people who leave school with few qualifications have great difficulty finding employment. This is equally true for non-Roma. According to the MLSA *National Action Plan on Social Inclusion*, those most at risk of unemployment belong to more than one ‘at risk’ category “for example unskilled Roma or low-skilled young people” (MLSA 2004a: 9). This has been backed up by other research which has identified education as a key determinant in explaining the incidence of unemployment (Mareš and Sirovátka 2004: 57). In the course of my fieldwork, many officials and NGO activists identified the lack of educational qualifications as the root of the problem of Romani unemployment. One Romani Advisor put it like this:

What can you offer an employer when you have attended a special school or a primary school and not learned any skill? Computer? No. Driving license? No. Something you can do with your hands? No. It is hard to offer anything and today even unskilled work like cleaning in supermarkets is done by people who have *Maturita* because in Ostrava there is high unemployment (Romani Advisor 2).

NGO representatives working with young Roma also recognised the seriousness of the situation and worked hard to encourage them to stay at school. One youth worker, who was also Romani, told me that they do their best to convince the young people who come to the youth club that they have no hope of a better life if they do not stay at school. She also believed that adults like her, who work and keep doing more training courses, are a good example. They show the children that anything is possible:

If the parents are at home complaining that there is no work and no one will ever give them a job because of the colour of their skin then that discourages the children. They need to see examples of adults who did the training and can now work and earn money (NGO Representative 13).

NGOs such as the ERRC complain that the placement of so many Romani children in remedial special schools meant that they never had an equal chance to compete in the labour market. They argue that the low standard of education offered, combined with the stigma of attending a remedial special school resulted in pupils having few opportunities when they left school (ERRC 1999: 38). However, officials in the

Employment Offices did not support this view. Employment Office Representative 1 claimed that graduates of remedial special schools were easier to help than those who dropped out of mainstream primary school before they finished the ninth grade:

Children from special schools are easier to deal with and more willing to work. The ones from the mainstream school, if they dropped out maybe in the sixth grade are a bigger problem for us. Sometimes they are more competent but they are also craftier. They know all the tricks, how to avoid work, when they don't want to work (Employment Office Representative 1).

In her opinion, employers did not mind what kind of school the applicants attended as long as they had the right qualifications for the position. Employment Office Representative 2 argued that the remedial special schools were not the problem, but that the curriculum of the vocational secondary schools, where graduates of remedial special schools continue their education, was at fault:

The problem is afterwards and then it's not just a problem for the Roma but really for all the graduates of that vocational secondary school. If they have that lower [two-year] secondary vocational school, they will have difficulties finding a job. They don't get the same knowledge or skills as those who go to the three-year secondary school (Employment Office Representative 2).

Employment Office Representative 2 noted that school qualifications were only one of many types of qualifications required by employers. In addition to their school certificates, applicants are also often expected to have other kinds of work experience:

When a vacancy comes up there is always some kind of specific requirement, like for example the applicant may only need a primary education, but then they have to have a machine workers' license or they need a state welders' license or the job is somewhere away from Ostrava [so they need their own transport] (Employment Office Representative 2).

The need for relevant skills and training is becoming more evident as the Czech economy develops and the service sector becomes more significant. The OECD has identified problems with a structural mismatch of the skills of the labour force and those

required by employers, which despite high levels of unemployment is in fact leading to a labour shortage (OECD 2004: 37). Overall, the OECD predicts that far higher participation rates in tertiary education will be necessary for the economy to continue to grow (OECD 2004: 156). Therefore, Roma who leave school with only a primary education will have little chance of finding employment. Competition for the limited number of unskilled jobs available is also increasing as more immigrants arrive from Eastern Europe, particularly from the Ukraine (Government of the Czech Republic 2000: 4.1). Worryingly, the message that qualifications and skills can determine whether a jobseeker has any chance to find employment does not appear to have sunk in with some sections of Romani communities. O'Higgins and Ivanov (2006: 11) report that only a small proportion of Roma surveyed identify their low levels of knowledge and skills as the reason why they had trouble finding employment, this suggests that "many Roma do not connect their employment difficulties to their lack of formal knowledge and skills" (O'Higgins and Ivanov 2006: 11). It is absolutely clear that Roma will need to quickly recognise the importance of education and training if they are to have any chance of survival in the labour market. Romani Advisors, FSAs and TAs have an important role to play in getting that message across to their clients and pupils.

8.2 Discrimination

The discrimination experienced by Roma in everyday life is a further problem linked to motivating young people to remain at school. Many young Roma believe that even if they have the necessary experience and qualifications they will not be hired because of the prejudicial attitudes employers have towards the entire Romani community. Certainly, there is significant anecdotal evidence that Roma are victims of discrimination in the labour market, but it is very difficult to prove and to date very few cases have been successful in the courts. The Czech government recognises that discrimination is a problem for Romani jobseekers and the former Commissioner for Human Rights, Jan Jařab, publicly acknowledged how difficult it can be to prove the discrimination:

Usually these discriminators do not unambiguously state that it's because of Romani origin or the ethnic origin of the applicant at all, instead they invent some alternative reason and therefore, it is very difficult to prove (Jařab 2003).

The 1997 Bratinka Report and the 2000 Concept discuss the discrimination Roma endure. The Bratinka report highlights the routine practice of some employers who send lists of vacancies to Employment Offices, with a note attached that the employer "does not accept Roma" (Government of the Czech Republic 1997: 7.4). Roma I interviewed in the course of my fieldwork confirmed that discrimination was a serious problem. One Romani man, now working as a TA, had personally experienced the most common form of discrimination which Roma suffer. He made a telephone enquiry about a vacancy and was invited to an interview. However, when he arrived and the interviewer realised he was Romani, he was told that the position had already been filled.

I know it's hard to prove but it happened to me personally. On the phone I speak correctly and I read a lot and Czech doesn't cause me any problems. I was born here in Ostrava. On the phone they said yes come along [for an interview] but when he saw with his own eyes that I was a Rom, the prejudices were terrible (TA 11).

Romani Advisor 1 confirmed that she had heard similar stories from many clients. Since anti-discrimination clauses were included in the Labour Code in October 1999 (Ministry of the Interior 1999) two cases have been successfully prosecuted in the civil courts. The first case, that of Mrs. Marcela Zupková from Hradec Králové, received significant media attention because it was the first case to be brought under the anti-discrimination legislation. There was clear evidence supporting her case, which led to it also becoming the first successful prosecution. Mrs. Zupková applied to work in the kitchens of the canteen at Hradec Králové University. This service was provided by a local catering firm, Akyma. Her interview was unsuccessful and when asked to complete a form for the Employment Office stating the reasons why the candidate was not accepted, the manager, Mrs. Eva Panochová, simply wrote "Roma origin." Mrs. Zupková claimed that during the interview Mrs. Panochová told her that she had already had enough experience with Romani employees and would not hire them again. Before the case came to the attention of the national media, Mrs. Panochová allegedly told a reporter for the local newspaper *Hradecké noviny*, that while she herself had

nothing against Roma she worried how customers would react if they saw Roma handing out the food (*Mladá fronta Dnes* 2003a). On 7 October 2003 Mrs. Zupková settled her case out of court. She received 200,000 Kc (approx €6,000) in damages and the company issued a brief apology (*Mladá fronta Dnes* 2003b).

Mrs. Zupková won her case because she had written proof that her ethnicity was the main reason why her application was unsuccessful. Most Romani applicants cannot prove their cases this easily. Therefore, NGOs are now using other means to get the evidence they need for a successful prosecution. In the case of Ms. Renata Kotlárová in 2004, a form of entrapment was used to show that the firm involved, the international drugstore chain Rossmann, discriminated against applicants on the basis of their ethnicity. Suspecting that her ethnicity had been a factor in other failed attempts to find employment, Ms. Kotlárová from Cheb, contacted the Counselling Centre for Citizenship, Civil and Human Rights in Prague and asked for their help. When she went to inquire about a position advertised in the local branch of the Rossmann drugstore she was told that there were no positions vacant. However, when Barbara Bukovská, a non-Romani representative of the NGO went into the shop almost immediately afterwards she was interviewed and offered a position on the spot. The whole episode was secretly recorded and on the basis of this evidence, the court ruled that Ms. Kotlárová had been discriminated against on the grounds of her ethnicity (*Právo* 2004).

These two cases are regularly cited as evidence that the majority population discriminates against Roma, and that Roma can never improve their quality of life as they are blocked at every turn by the prejudices of the majority. Officials at the Employment Offices in both cities acknowledged that some employers refused to even interview Romani candidates because of their prejudices or because of bad experiences they had with Romani employees in the past. Although these officials recognised that it is extremely unfair to judge Roma or anyone else on the basis of the actions of other people who share the colour of their skin, they were resigned to this state of affairs:

If the employer has had bad experiences with Roma in the past, then it has happened that they say the position has been filled already. Some Roma complain about that. But you can't be too surprised by the attitude of the employers. They already employed Roma, who were only there a short while, they would often be off sick or just not come to work. So

even if we offer to pay the person's wages we still can't convince the employers to take Roma again (Employment Office Representative 1).

Employment Office Representative 2 believed that shop owners in particular worried that even if Roma they employed were honest and good workers, other people they knew might exploit their friendship and come in and steal from the shop. However, Employment Office Representative 2 refused to accept that discrimination was the most significant factor causing unemployment among Roma. She did not think that Roma had less of a chance to find work only because of their ethnicity but because of the combination of factors which together reduce their chances of being employed.

Simply, if there was a worker and he was young and healthy and wanted to work, then whether he was Romani or not, even if he had big problems he would eventually succeed in finding a job. But if he only has primary education and can't do any heavy work and if he has a criminal record, or if it's a woman who had young children then there is very little hope (Employment Office Representative 2).

I interviewed the managers of four businesses in České Budějovice who employed Romani staff as part of the Employment Office's work placement programme. They spoke frankly about their experiences and were aware of problems with discrimination generally, although they claimed that their own businesses did not discriminate against Romani candidates. Employer 2 talked about her experiences with the recruitment process at length. She would not refuse to hire a Romani applicant simply on the basis of their ethnicity; in fact her catering firm employed many Roma. However, she said she understood why many Roma would be invited for an interview and then get no further:

However, I must admit, some Roma come here sometimes and they don't greet me properly or introduce themselves, they just say: "Have you any work?" As an employer, that kind of thing puts me off. It's not because they are Roma, but because they don't behave appropriately and they don't seem to care about it. If they cared about getting the job they would come dressed nicely and greet me and say, "I am so and so and I would like to ask whether you have any work available just now." But some of them are just not like that and I can't tolerate that because here they have to deal with 2000 employees every day and they have to behave decently and be respectful. We offer a service so that is a necessity (Employer 2).

The problem of conflating the ethnicity of Roma, and particularly their skin colour, with their poverty has been raised a number of times in this thesis. This leads to the general stereotype that all Roma are poor, unemployed and engaged in criminal activities or other forms of anti-social behaviour. As a result, when a Romani jobseeker turns up for an interview the recruiter does not just see another applicant. Instead, all the stereotypes about Roma are included in their appraisal of the candidate. The employers I interviewed were very aware of the negative perceptions many people had of Roma. Employer 1 commented that Roma employees were known to avoid work by pretending not to notice when something had to be done. Employer 3 talked about the reputation of Roma to be late for work. However, both of these employers said their Romani employees did not conform to the stereotype and worked well. The fact that these employers were aware of the stereotypes of Roma as workers and yet chose to hire Romani candidates puts them in the minority.

The comments of the Employment Office Representatives and statements in official publications indicate that employers often decide not to employ Roma based on previous bad experiences with Romani employees. If they have no personal experience with Roma, they base their decision on the commonly held stereotype of the lazy, unreliable Romani employee. A similar phenomenon has been detected in other studies of employers' attitudes in the United Kingdom and the United States. Jenkins' (1986) argument that employers often hire candidates on the basis of their acceptability rather than their suitability for the position was raised in Section 1.3. In her more recent study, Kennelly (1999: 169) argues that employers use rationales based on stereotypes to explain the decisions they make which disadvantage women and members of ethnic minorities. She describes their rationale as a 'sincere fiction', based partly upon the employers' experiences of employees from specific social or ethnic groups, and partly on general stereotypes of the groups to which these individuals belong. My research uncovered a similar process at work in the Czech Republic. Most non-Roma who were interviewed expressed sympathy with the employers because they also believed that hardworking Roma were the exception rather than the rule. Employer 3 admitted he could understand why an employer who had a bad experience with Romani employees in the past might be reluctant to hire Roma again:

If say, he has experience with that group of people. When he brought them on the building site they stole all sorts of implements and materials. So I think the solution is always to meet face to face and maybe to have a reference (Employer 3).

The fact that Roma have to prove that they are different to the stereotype is an added burden they have to bear at their interview. It is not enough to have the necessary qualifications, they must also challenge the stereotyped image the employer has of them in her or his head in order to convince them that they are suitable for the position. It is hoped that new anti-discrimination legislation will help Roma to overcome this problem, in the employment sphere as well as in other areas of life. The development of this legislation and its likely impact on hiring practices will be discussed in the next chapter.

8.3 Low Mobility in the Labour Market

Given the stereotype of Roma as a nomadic people, their reluctance to move in search of work must also be examined. Many non-Romani respondents referred to the nomadic heritage of Roma to explain many aspects of their supposed 'mentality' and attitude to life. However, the romantic image of the nomadic Gypsy does not reflect the real experiences of most Roma. The majority of Roma living in both Ostrava and České Budějovice have migrated from Slovakia since the 1950s but their lifestyles could not be described as nomadic. As discussed in Chapter 2, only a very small minority of East European Roma continued to live as nomads in the twentieth century; most settled on the outskirts of villages and towns in the eighteenth century. Discussions with Roma revealed a very strong bond with their family and home and this was often given as a reason why they were not willing to move from Ostrava to Prague or other parts of the country where employment prospects would be better. Some Romani respondents knew of families that had emigrated to the United Kingdom or Ireland to find work and a better life, but the majority returned because they were too homesick and could not settle in. This does not match well with the classic image of the wandering Gypsy, although it must also be acknowledged that many who returned were forced to do so because their claims for asylum were rejected. One Romani woman said she would be devastated if any of her children decided to move, even to Prague, to find work. She

wanted to keep her family close to her. On the other hand, some of the TAs interviewed had moved to Ostrava from other parts of the country to work in schools there. One TA commuted daily from a town 30km away. They spoke of the need to make sacrifices in order to find employment and of the unwillingness of many Roma to recognise this.

Apart from strong feelings about staying close to home, there is another more practical reason why Roma and other citizens on low incomes are reluctant to move away in search of employment – the cost of accommodation. At present there is a significant shortage of affordable housing in the Czech Republic and in particular in the large cities. Between 1990 and 1995 there was a sharp decrease in housing construction and although rates of construction picked up again in the late 1990s these homes were built by private investors and intended for purchase at the higher end of the market, rather than as rental housing (Lux 2004: 25). This has led to a significant shortage of affordable housing for migrant workers at the lower end of the pay scale.

In Ostrava, the shortage of decent, affordable housing is particularly severe. Romani Advisor 2 estimated that about 600 Roma in the city do not have satisfactory accommodation. Some families live in houses with no indoor toilets and no hot running water. Families who have been evicted for defaulting on their rent move in with relatives, causing even more overcrowding, or move to *holobyty*, blocks of flats which have no electricity or hot running water, and which charge only minimal rent. As the housing market is privatised, people with low earning power find that they can only afford to live in the least desirable parts of cities where housing and local amenities are of a lower standard and this leads to increased levels of spatial segregation. There also tend to be fewer employment opportunities in these areas and because public transport links are not as good, commuting to other parts of the city for work becomes more difficult. Living in substandard conditions leads to serious health problems and as a result many adults are unfit for work, particularly for the hard labouring jobs which are almost the only kind of employment available to people with no educational qualifications. These housing problems have become a vicious circle. Children do not perform well at school because they are often ill and this increases their risk of unemployment in later life. Equally, adults suffer from health problems and have no option but to remain on disability allowances. There is a significantly higher chance that

an unemployed person will only be able to afford to live in such low-standard accommodation because they have less access to credit to take out a mortgage and landlords are unwilling to accept tenants who do not have a regular source of income. Thus the cycle continues.

The gradual privatisation of accommodation and restitution of properties confiscated by the communist regime has created a two-tiered market with the rent for some kinds of homes still regulated and kept very low, while the rent of other homes is now set by market forces. In 2001 the average regulated rent was approximately one-fifth of the average 'market' rent (Lux 2004: 28). However, it is very difficult to find an apartment with regulated rent because the low turnover results in long waiting lists. Lux (2004: 34) argues that the pressures of the housing market have a negative impact on unemployment. The OECD reports similar findings, noting that according to a Ministry of Finance study, two percentage points of the unemployment rate are directly attributable to problems in the housing market (OECD 2004: 147). Rent regulation and the lack of affordable housing discourage mobility, because if a person who has a rent-regulated apartment moves to a new municipality with better employment opportunities they have no right to a rent-regulated apartment there. Given the scale of the difference in regulated and market rent this is a serious consideration for anyone thinking of giving up their apartment and looking for employment elsewhere. If they failed to find work and moved back home, they would be forced back to the bottom of the housing waiting list again (Lux 2004: 34). The process of de-regulating all rented accommodation is underway, but this may well make matters worse as it could price the lowest paid workers out of the market completely. More investment in affordable housing will be crucial to encourage jobseekers to migrate to other parts of the country to find employment.

8.4 Social Welfare Disincentives

Even if Roma complete their education and overcome the prejudices of recruiters, a further problem remains. The loss of social welfare support when the candidate begins earning wages combined with the rising costs of commuting leads some Roma to

calculate that they are better off not working. Many non-Roma complain that Roma take advantage of the generosity of the state. However, often it is not that simple and in the current economic climate, the opportunity cost of working for the minimum wage is a real problem. At present, as a result of how social welfare payments are calculated, a family with four or more children is better off if both parents are unemployed and receiving social welfare benefits, than if one parent works and earns the minimum wage. As has already been discussed in this chapter, the majority of Roma are only qualified for unskilled, low-wage employment and do not expect to earn more than the minimum wage. Therefore, they are discouraged from seeking work in the first place.

The minimum subsistence amount (MSA) is the officially recognised “minimum amount of income which the citizen needs before s/he is held to be in a state of material poverty” (Minimum Subsistence Amount Act, 1991: 1.) The amount is calculated on the basis of the number of people in the household and children of different ages are also calculated separately (see Table 8.1 below). If an individual or households earnings fall below the minimum subsistence level, they are entitled to a range of social welfare benefits.

Table 8.1: 2005 MSA calculations:⁴⁵

Amount to ensure individual’s survival (Kč/month)

Child under age 6	1720 (€60.87)
From age 6 to 10	1920 (€67.95)
From age 10 to 15	2270 (€80.33)
From age 15 to 26 (dependent)	2490 (€88.12)
Other Adult	2360 (€83.52)

Amount to ensure basics for the household (Kč/month)

Household with 1 member	1940 (€68.65)
With 2 members	2530 (€89.54)
With 3 or 4 members	3140 (€111.13)
With 5 or more members	3520 (€124.58)

⁴⁵ Data provided by Municipal Department of Social Affairs, Ostrava April 2005.

On the basis of these calculations a single person living alone is estimated to need 4,300 Kč (€152.18) monthly to survive, whereas a family with 3 children ranging in age from 3 – 14 years (one in each age category) would need 14,150 Kč (€500.78) monthly. The minimum wage in 2005 was 7,185 Kč (€254.28) monthly. Therefore, a large family would need to have both parents working in order to survive (MLSA 2005). In addition to ensuring that all citizens have enough money to survive, and providing unemployment benefits to jobseekers, the state also provides other forms of social welfare support to families. Families on low incomes (lower than 1.6 times their MSA level) are entitled to a housing allowance. Families with an income less than three times the MSA are entitled to a children's allowance. Parents who choose to look after their children at home are entitled to a parental allowance, which is not means tested. Families also receive a once-off payment of a birth grant when a new child is born (MLSA 2006c). The structure of the social support system led many respondents in both cities to complain that Roma were being encouraged to have large families because it was more profitable to have children than to work.

If a Romani family has lots of children, they get family benefits and the children's allowance according to how many children they have. If they have 4 or 5 children, they have an income of about 16,000 Kč without having to work at all (Employment Office Representative 1).

My daughter is a teacher on maternity leave and her husband works at the regional authority. They have two small children and their income is 13 – 14 thousand. The income of an unemployed Romani family on benefits is higher (Principal 3)

However, despite what the general public might think, the benefits are not all that generous. In the case of the non-Romani family described above they are raising two children, whereas the 'typical' Romani family Principal 3 is complaining about would have to have three or more children to get monthly benefits in excess of 14,000 Kč. Therefore they have to feed and clothe a bigger family on a similar sized budget.

In order to make unskilled work appear more attractive, the government has been pursuing a policy of steadily increasing the minimum wage. In January 2005 the monthly minimum wage was set at 7,185 Kč (€254.28) (MLSA 2005) compared to an

average industrial wage of 18,833 Kč (€666.51) (*Radio Prague* 2005a). However this has not had a significant impact on the problem because as Flek and Večerník (2004: 19) argue, the reservation wage, i.e. the minimum amount for which jobseekers are willing to accept employment, is higher than the minimum wage, and is in fact closer to the average industrial wage. As discussed above, the monthly minimum wage is not actually sufficient to support a family but the employee must also take other costs into account. Income tax of 15 percent must be paid on all earnings and the costs of commuting to work, which have been steadily increasing, must also be deducted. Therefore, the MLSA acknowledges, “for certain citizens it is more profitable to receive unemployment benefit or social welfare benefits than to sacrifice a fairly high proportion of their wage for travel expenses” (MLSA 2003a: 2.4). The attractiveness of living on social welfare benefits increases further when the opportunities for undeclared casual work are taken into account. Many Roma find short-term work labouring on construction sites or gathering scrap which provides them with an additional source of income for their family. They would not have time for such activities if they were working full time. This problem has been identified in the 2004 *National Action Plan for Employment*, and transforming undeclared work into regular employment is one of the priorities of the plan (MLSA 2004b: 38-39).

In addition to these rational calculations, there is a further problem with the culture of dependency on social welfare. Respondents spoke of families where no one had worked since 1990 and school children whose only plan for the future was to live on social benefits. This particularly worried one Romani TA who feared that the government would introduce severe cutbacks when the social welfare system was reformed. He felt that too many people believed naively that they could live off the state forever:

We have the biggest problem with the generation who grew up after the revolution. They have never known work, because they didn't have to work. They think they get everything for free. They think they will get something for free forever, that they don't have to study, that they will get support for free. But as soon as the measures come next year then I don't know, I don't know. It will be a big problem. Our generation [born 1960] grew up honestly. Our parents worked and reared us. But I don't know what will become of that generation, God only knows, crime, robbery, and prostitution in Northern Bohemia (TA 11).

This problem of a dependency culture is difficult to address. It will require a great deal of effort on the part of teachers, social workers and NGO activists in local communities to help Roma to appreciate that they have talents which may be of benefit to society. Equally, when stricter new social welfare regulations come into force, support mechanisms will be necessary to help people who have lost all interest in finding employment. They will need help to identify what kind of occupations they could be suited to and what steps they will have to take to learn new skills relevant to the employment market. Such support structures exist and these will be discussed in the next chapter. However, when the social benefits system is reformed there will be more demand for these services and this will have to be addressed by the relevant authorities. Motivating people to find legal work and to avoid getting involved in criminal activities will be a key challenge for all those involved in working with the most socially disadvantaged members of Romani communities.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the main barriers facing Roma when they seek employment. The key issues identified by the MLSA and the respondents interviewed in Ostrava and České Budějovice are the low levels of education and qualifications of many Romani jobseekers, the problems of discrimination in the labour market, the lack of decent affordable housing to encourage labour market mobility and the lack of incentives to give up social welfare benefits and accept minimum wage employment. The need to have qualifications in order to compete in the labour market cannot be overstated and cooperation between the MoE and the MLSA is extremely important because more needs to be done to get this message across to young Roma and their parents. Discrimination is a problem facing Roma in all aspects of life but it is particularly prevalent in the labour market. If Roma make the effort to gain qualifications then it is important that their civil rights are protected by the state. This is the only way to build up the confidence of Romani communities and to encourage them to keep trying to find employment.

The lack of decent affordable housing acts as a barrier to employment in two ways. Firstly, people are reluctant to move to a new place in search of employment because

they fear they will not be able to find somewhere suitable to live and secondly, the dreadful conditions some families are forced to live in lead to significant health problems which means they are unable to work and their children are absent from school so often that they fail to achieve the qualifications they will need to find employment. Therefore, significant investment in developing new housing in the big cities is necessary to break this cycle. Finally, the problem of the opportunity cost of giving up social welfare and accepting low paid work needs to be addressed. The current social welfare and tax system have created a situation whereby it is not rational for Roma in certain circumstances to accept employment. It will be difficult to resolve this problem without putting some families at an even greater risk of poverty and social exclusion. Some Roma who have been unemployed for ten to fifteen years may well never work again as the psychological effects of being unemployed for so long have taken their toll. The main focus will have to be on young people who can be given targeted support to prevent them being caught in the dependency trap.

These four barriers to the labour market are closely intertwined. The experiences of discrimination and the lack of incentives to give up social welfare discourage people from seeking employment or gaining qualifications and in some cases Roma believe they are refused employment on the basis of their ethnicity, when in fact the problem lay with their lack of suitable qualifications. It will not be enough to tackle any one of these problems on its own. It is important that the MLSA implements a comprehensive package of reforms which will effectively break down the barriers and improve the rates of employment in Romani communities. The following two chapters look in detail at the programmes that have been developed and the problems that have arisen during their implementation.

CHAPTER 9: IMPLEMENTING EMPLOYMENT REFORMS

Introduction

This chapter will examine the policies developed by the Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA) to deal with the problem of unemployment in the Czech Republic. It first outlines the aims and rationale of the employment strategy and then looks in detail at how the main programmes to address unemployment in Romani communities are being implemented in Ostrava and České Budějovice. The five key policy areas examined here are: (1) the offer of incentives to employers who create jobs for people in the “difficult to employ” category; (2) the introduction of anti-discrimination legislation; (3) the offer of training and re-qualification courses for school leavers and individuals who have been unemployed for over one year; (4) the employment of Romani FSAs and (5) the reform of the social welfare system. These policies were chosen as the main focus of study because they receive the most discussion in the policy documents of the MLSA and because respondents talked most about these initiatives during interviews.

9.1 General Employment Reform

Although the slow pace of industry restructuring after the collapse of the communist system meant that unemployment remained unnaturally low until after the economic crisis in 1997, structural unemployment and regional inequalities have emerged as significant problems. Therefore, national reforms are necessary to help a wider cross-section of society than only that of the Romani communities. Reform of legislation regulating labour relations and the social welfare system has been slow and controversial, given the competing political views on how best to address the problems. The main right-wing parties the Civic Democrats (who have been in opposition since 1998) and the Christian Democrats (the Social Democrats right-wing coalition partner from 2002 to 2006)⁴⁶ want the labour market to be more flexible, making it easier for employers to hire and fire employees in order to allow them to react better to market pressures. However, the Social Democrats (the main governing party from 1998 - 2006)

⁴⁶ For full election results and government formations since 1992, please refer to Appendix 7.

argue that protection of employees' rights is fundamental and that labour laws which allow too much flexibility could be abused and cause increased insecurity in the labour force. The merits of these different arguments will not be addressed here, for a more detailed discussion see Rashid *et al.* (2005). For the purposes of this study, it is sufficient to note that the Czech government coalition of Social Democrats and Christian Democrats, which governed between June 2002 and June 2006, agreed to follow the guidelines proposed by the Lisbon Strategy and tried to increase participation in the labour force by improving flexibility without endangering the rights of workers (MLSA 2004b).⁴⁷ Nonetheless, reform is slow because of all the political arguments about how to proceed. Reform of the social welfare system is another contentious issue, balancing right-wing demands to cut back on social security with the left-wing policy of ensuring protection for the most vulnerable members of society. The Social Democrat government wanted to make social welfare a less attractive option than employment by increasing the minimum wage, reducing the Minimum Subsistence Allowance (MSA) and enforcing stricter regulations to put more pressure on people to find employment, while still providing a basic minimum of protection for the most vulnerable members of society. The Slovak government introduced similar reforms in February 2004 but this led to serious unrest in Romani communities. It escalated into five days of rioting and looting, forcing the government to deploy army troops to help the police regain order (RFE/RL 2004). The Slovak reforms were more severe than those proposed by the Czech government, as shall be seen later in this chapter. Nonetheless, many Romani representatives are worried about the impact that these reforms will have.

Other measures, besides legislative reform have also been introduced. Since the early 1990s, the Czech government has invested in Active Labour Market Policies, including incentives for employers to promote job creation, re-training, counselling, career guidance and micro-loans to set up new businesses. Spending on these programmes has been relatively high compared to other Central and East European countries (Kramer 1997: 91). In 2003 the MSLA published a *National Action Plan for Employment* identifying four key areas which had to be addressed in order to tackle unemployment. These key 'pillars' were to improve the employability of jobseekers, to develop a

⁴⁷ The government formed after the 2006 election deadlock may take a different stance but this coalition government was not approved until 19 January 2007 and it survives on the slimmest of majorities. Therefore, it is too soon to predict the direction of future policy.

culture of entrepreneurship in order to promote job creation, to encourage the adaptability of both businesses and employees and finally to guarantee equal opportunities for women and men (MLSA 2003b). The Plan was updated following a review by the Council of the European Union. The *National Action Plan on Employment for 2004 to 2006* includes more policies to combat discrimination and to promote the inclusion of older workers and individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds into the labour force. It also contains the additional priorities of addressing regional employment disparities, enhancing work attractiveness and transforming undeclared work into regular employment (MSLA 2004b).

9.2 Employment Policies Targeting Roma

Unlike the MoE, the MLSA does not have a separate strategy to address unemployment in Romani communities. Instead, the National Action Plans on Employment discuss the needs of Romani jobseekers alongside the needs of other groups who have difficulties finding employment, such as school leavers, mothers with young children, former prisoners and individuals who are homeless. However, the MLSA is also expected to fulfil the recommendations of the 2000 Concept and the National Action Plan on Social Inclusion which stress the links between social exclusion and unemployment (MLSA 2004a). As is the case with the policies developed by the MoE, the MLSA has some programmes specifically aimed at Romani communities. The development of the posts of Romani TAs and FSAs in local authorities and the opportunities for Roma to train as police officers, without having all the necessary school qualifications, are intended to offer Roma an alternative path to employment. Anti-discrimination clauses, which have been incorporated into existing employment legislation (Act on Employment Amendment 1999), are also intended to benefit Roma.

Notwithstanding these examples of policies which specifically help Roma, it can be argued that the general approach of the MLSA is characterised by ethnoculturally neutral policies. Generally, Roma are either included in the socially disadvantaged category with homeless people, single mothers or recently released prisoners or in the 'foreign groups' category with refugees and other non-nationals living in the Czech Republic (MLSA 2004b: 29-31). The particular problems of Romani communities,

combining social disadvantages with the ethnic characteristics which distinguish them from the majority of society, are not properly addressed in the National Action Plans on Employment or any other documents prepared by the MLSA.

Chapter 4 discussed the debates over the question of whether specific policies are necessary to deal with the problems of Romani communities, particularly with regard to unemployment. The state now considers that “persons in a deprived situation for various socially or historically conditioned reasons (not limited to members of the Roma community)” would benefit from positive action programmes because more than basic protection against discrimination is needed “to eliminate the long-term deprivation formed over generations” (Government Resolution 2002: 4.1). However, in spite of this, the MLSA is continuing with a universal approach when offering support to jobseekers. The effectiveness of this approach will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 10. The rest of this chapter investigates the implementation of the key programmes to tackle unemployment and social exclusion which have the most impact on Romani jobseekers.

9.3 Incentives for Employers

9.3.1 Background to the Programme

Although successive Czech governments have rejected the idea of introducing a quota system to raise the employment rates of Roma, offering incentives to employers to encourage them to hire people from the “difficult to employ” category is considered acceptable. The proposal was first introduced in the 1997 Bratinka Report (Government of the Czech Republic 1997: 7.5) and highlighted again in the 2000 Concept (Government of the Czech Republic 2000: 4.2). The MLSA has adopted the proposal as part of a broader range of incentives offered to employers through the Employment Offices to encourage job creation (MLSA 2004b: 7.4). The conditions for these incentives are outlined in the 2004 Employment Act, although the law states the Employment Offices *may* rather than *must* provide employers with these benefits (Employment Act 2004: 104 - 119).

As part of the Ministry's Active Labour Market Policies, Employment Offices can provide subsidies to firms that offer training courses to staff, covering the full cost of the training. They can also cover some of the wages or social insurance contributions for staff, if they belong to the "difficult to employ" category. The 2004 Employment Act includes in this category:

Persons with health problems, persons under the age of 25, graduates of higher education for two years after completing their study – or until they are 30 years old, pregnant women, women who breast feed and all mothers for the first nine months after giving birth, persons looking after children aged up to the age of 15, persons older than 50 years of age, persons who have been registered as unemployed for longer than six months and persons who are in need of special assistance (Employment Act 2004: 33).

Roma are not specifically mentioned but they can be included in many of these categories. Employment Office Representative 1 reported that "persons without education" was used as a euphemism for Roma, because they were not allowed to refer to clients by their ethnicity any more:

We try to create new jobs. We discuss with employers whether it would be possible to employ people without education. We must not say Roma. Before we used to have statistics, what proportion of the unemployed were Roma, what level of education they had. But then they said we couldn't do that to protect information about individuals. We can't register them separately. [...] So the question, what do we do for Roma can be answered by telling you what we do for people without an education. For all people, but they are the majority (Employment Office Representative 1).

9.3.2 Experience in České Budějovice

In České Budějovice, the most popular use of the incentives available was for employers to hire school leavers who did not have the necessary qualifications but who would receive training on the job. In return for the extra time and effort involved in employing these trainees, the Employment Office would pay their wages for the first year. This is viewed as an investment because it is hoped that after a year the trainees will have gained enough experience to find further employment – either at the same

place or somewhere else. Employment Office Representative 1 explained how the scheme worked:

We agree with the employers that if they create a new position for such a person then the Employment Office will contribute a certain amount every month that the person is employed there. For those under 18 the Employment Office carries all the costs – wages and insurance. That's because if you create a job for those under 18, they don't have work habits like getting up, going to work, staying for the whole working day. So whoever takes them on has to have someone there all the time who will supervise them and make sure they come to work on time, stay all day and work when they are supposed to (Employment Office Representative 1).

She reported that the scheme was not a guaranteed success. There were cases where the new employees did not come to work regularly:

We used to have more employers for the young people but seeing as how they hired two or three people, who came one day and then didn't turn up for three days and that happened a few times, then some said that they didn't want to participate any more (Employment Office Representative 1).

The Regional Coordinator for Romani Affairs in South Bohemia reported another problem with the scheme. Although he welcomed the efforts of the Employment Office to find placements for young people, he worried that the scheme was being abused:

They only work for one year. For a year the Employment Office pays the wages but then it stops so they hire new people and the cycle starts again. It's hard to find regular work, permanent work (Regional Coordinator for Romani Affairs, Southern Bohemia).

To gain a better understanding of how the scheme worked, I interviewed three employers in České Budějovice who were involved with the scheme and had hired young Roma as trainees. Employer 1 explained that it was a worthwhile programme because it helped young people to bridge the gap between school and the 'real' world of work:

He has been here since he was sixteen on this placement so that he can get familiar with the process of work, so he can cross over from the school age to working; to learn what the working day is, what work responsibilities are, to develop work habits. None of this has anything to do with being Roma or whatever. Basically it's so he can make the jump from school to working and understand how to fulfil his contract and all his tasks (Employer 1).

Employer 2 spoke of the necessity to *teach* trainees to come to work on time and to take their responsibilities seriously:

They are 16, 17 years old. Who wants to work flat out at 17? I even think myself it's not possible but still I want to teach them somehow that they have to have a responsible attitude towards work. [...]If they come an hour late for work they have to work an additional two hours. We have punishments like that so they realise that they have a responsibility. If we expect them at seven in the morning they must come at seven and not at eight. So that is something that works (Employer 2).

The point raised by the Regional Coordinator about the chances of the trainees getting permanent posts was also discussed. One of the employers ran an ironworks company, where employees generally needed to have technical training. As the young Romani man he employed had not attended a secondary school, the employer was unsure as to whether he could keep him on after the programme ended. Although he was very pleased with the trainee's work rate and attitude, he did not think he could afford to keep on a member of staff who could only do very basic level work. During the interview he emphasised the importance of education a number of times, which links to the problems raised in Chapter 8 about the need for Roma to get a good education, in order to have a chance to find employment.

Happily, this policy has resulted in some success stories too. Another employer, who worked in the charity sector, encouraged the young woman he had taken on to participate in training courses during the year and at the end of her placement he helped her to find a new sponsor to continue working for the organisation. He considered the scheme to be a very positive experience for his organisation and for the young woman they employed. He said when some people thought about the scheme, they thought if you could teach a young Romani person how to sweep the floor it would be a success, but their trainee developed a profound understanding of the issues the organisation was

dealing with. The Romani woman who worked as a TA in School 5 in České Budějovice is another positive example of the scheme. When the school first employed her, the Employment Office paid her wages as part of this scheme. However, as was explained in Section 7.3, when this funding stopped after a year the school wanted to retain her as a member of staff, so the principal found an alternative source of funding through the MoE.

9.3.3 Experience in Ostrava

This scheme is relatively successful in České Budějovice but in Ostrava there were more difficulties with the programme. For example, there were some complaints raised about how Employment Offices dealt with applications. One NGO in Ostrava used the scheme to support the employment of additional staff but the representative I interviewed was not entirely satisfied with the procedures currently in place:

These programmes are lovely but they are inflexible, they don't treat each case individually. [...] We as employers use the programme to get grants for new employees. But we have to bombard them, we have to ask and ask and keep obliging them. We wanted to create two new positions, to employ two people who had been unemployed for a long time and we wanted to start in January but now it won't start till May. They really should be more flexible and look at each case separately. (NGO Representative 5)

Another issue raised was that although the scheme was popular with employers, in Ostrava it was not as effective at helping Romani jobseekers. An official at the Employment Office explained that this was due to the generally high rate of unemployment:

It is really supposed to create new jobs for the "hard to employ" jobseekers but anyone who is here longer than half a year is in that category *de facto*. So although there is a lot of interest from employers in this, we can't set up all these places and unfortunately it looks like the money will run out, so we have to limit it somehow (Employment Office Representative 2).

As well as having to compete with non-Roma for these subsidised positions, many Romani jobseekers had health problems in addition to their low level of education and skills. This meant that even with the offer of subsidies, few employers could find space for them.

Unfortunately those jobs for the people who are hardest to place – that is the group with primary education and with different problems such as health limitations – those jobs are very few. Even with the support very few jobs have been created. For those who are registered for more than a year we have publicly beneficial works and we can place people there who are here for a long time and are healthy. It's worse for the others [with health problems] though (Employment Office Representative 2).

Generally such placement schemes appear to be a good idea, giving a chance to Roma who wish to learn new skills and improve their employability. However, it is quite an expensive scheme and in cities like Ostrava, where the high level of unemployment results in very high demand, the Employment Office is under a great deal of pressure to facilitate all the people who wish to avail of the service – employers and jobseekers alike. Nonetheless, given the long-term benefits of such programmes, this is an area of employment policy where future governments should focus investment.

9.4 Anti-discrimination Legislation

9.4.1 Background to the Legislation

One example of how the EU is influencing policy in the Czech Republic is in relation to anti-discrimination legislation. As discussed in Section 8.2, Roma often encounter discrimination when they try to find employment. Introducing comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation has been a slow and complex process, but as a new member of the EU the Czech Republic is obliged to implement EU law in the form of the Race Equality Directive.⁴⁸ This section will examine the process of introducing anti-

⁴⁸ The General Framework Directive (Directive 2000/78/EC), establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation addressed discrimination based on disability, age, religious belief and sexual preference (but not race or ethnicity), was adopted in November 2000. This will not be discussed in detail here, as it does not provide any specific protection to Roma and only applies to the sphere of employment.

discrimination legislation and discuss the views of respondents on whether this legislation can actually protect Romani jobseekers from discriminatory attitudes.

Before detailing how Czech legislation will have to adapt to accommodate the Race Equality Directive, a brief synopsis of its most important features will be presented. The Race Equality Directive (Directive 2000/43/EC), which implements the principle of equal treatment between persons in all spheres of life irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, was adopted on 29 June 2000. Prospective EU member states, including the Czech Republic, were required to adapt their legislation to comply with the requirements of the Directive, which was due to come into force immediately after membership was finalised in May 2004. The Race Equality Directive provides, for the first time, definitions of direct and indirect discrimination (Directive 2000/43/EC: 2). It also includes harassment and instruction to discriminate in the definition of discrimination (Directive 2000/43/EC: 2.3- 2.4) and, importantly, it transfers the burden of proof from the claimant to the respondent, so that it is the obligation of the employer or service provider to demonstrate that discrimination did not occur (Directive 2000/43/EC: 8.1). The Race Equality Directive applies to all persons, in both the public and private sectors in relation to employment, training and education, social protection, social security, healthcare, and access to goods and services available to the public, including housing (Directive 2000/43/EC: 3.1).

In terms of enforcement, Member States are obliged to have judicial and administrative procedures in place to enforce the Race Equality Directive and to ensure that these services are available to anyone who feels that they have been the victim of discrimination (Directive 2000/43/EC: 7). Member States are also obliged to protect the claimant from victimisation after the case has been heard (Directive 2000/43/EC: 9). Other obligations on the Member States include the dissemination of information about the Directive and its consequences (Directive 2000/43/EC: 10) and undertaking social dialogue with both industry and the appropriate non-governmental organisations (Directive 2000/43/EC: 11-12). An independent body must also be established to promote the equal treatment of all, regardless of racial or ethnic origin and to conduct independent surveys and investigations into discrimination (Directive 2000/43/EC: 13). Finally, Member States must abolish any laws, contracts or administrative provisions

contrary to the principles of equal treatment, ensure that the new regulations of the Directive are enforced and apply adequate sanctions to those who breach the new regulations (Directive 2000/43/EC: 14-15).

Czech legislation dealing with discrimination is very complicated. There is no one single act covering all aspects of defining, prohibiting and prosecuting discriminatory acts in all spheres of life. Consequently, Czech law cannot provide the comprehensive protection against discrimination required by the EU's anti-discrimination directives. The Czech Constitution does not specifically prohibit discrimination, instead it is dealt with in the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms (hereafter "the Charter"), which forms part of the constitutional order (Constitution of the Czech Republic 1992: 3). Article 3 of the Charter expressly prohibits discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, colour, language, religion or belief, political or other conviction, national or social origin, membership in a national or ethnic community, property and birth or other status (Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms 1993: 3). Chapter 4 of the Charter (Articles 26 – 35) deals with the areas which the new EU Directives seek to protect, i.e. social, economic and cultural rights. However, the Charter serves only as a framework. It does not set down conditions or details of social and economic rights, nor does it outline procedures when these rights are denied, instead it refers to the regulations of ordinary Czech laws. In fact protection against violations is only available in cases where specific provisions exist in ordinary Czech laws (Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms 1993: 41).

In terms of civil law, the Labour Code and the Employment Act have been amended to comply with the conditions of the Race Equality Directive (Labour Code Amendment 2004: 1; Act on Employment Amendment 1999: 1; Act on Employment 2004: 4) but there are still no anti-discrimination provisions in the laws governing consumers' rights, social security or healthcare. The Czech government has acknowledged the problems associated with the disjointed nature of anti-discrimination legislation. In February 2002, the *Report on Possible Measures to Combat Discrimination* which addressed the question of how best to implement both the Race Equality and General Framework Directives was approved by parliament (Government Resolution 2002). This report offered two possible solutions: either amend each individual law to comply with the

new standards of the Directives or introduce a new general law which would cover all aspects of both Directives. The report strongly favoured the second option and proposed introducing a General Draft Law on Equal Treatment and Protection Against Discrimination, which would apply to all matters under civil law (Government of the Czech Republic 2002: 30). A working group was established to develop the proposed legislation but disputes about the best possible approach delayed implementation (Bukovská and Boučková 2003: 2). In December 2005, almost three years after the report was published, the Chamber of Deputies passed an anti-discrimination bill complying with all the conditions laid out in the EU directives and covering race along with an exhaustive list of other possible grounds for discrimination including age, gender, disability, religion, and sexual orientation (*Právo* 2005). However, the bill was rejected by the Senate and returned to the Chamber of Deputies in January 2006 because senators considered the wording of the bill to be too vague (*Hospodářské noviny* 27. 1. 06). Negotiations to resolve the problems with the bill are ongoing.

9.4.2 Perceptions of Legislation in České Budějovice and Ostrava

Despite the problems regarding the development and implementation of general anti-discrimination legislation, the law governing employment relations has included a ban on discrimination on a variety of grounds including race and ethnicity since 1999 (Employment Act 1999:1). The cases of Marcela Zupková and Renata Kotlárová discussed in the previous chapter were brought under this legislation. In 2004 the legislation was amended to include definitions of direct and indirect discrimination and outlining the forms of compensation available to claimants (Employment Act 2004). Respondents who were asked about the development of anti-discrimination legislation, particularly in the sphere of employment, expressed mixed views on the subject. Some respondents were sceptical that the legislation would offer better protection to Roma. They believed that the changes to the legislation would be very difficult to enforce:

The law is nice but in practice it's a big problem. [...] No one has to state that they are a mother with children, or Romani. But if it says on the CV that the person has never worked or only for a month, then they have much less of a chance. Is that discrimination? The law forbids discrimination but if employers design a clever application form, and use

that to choose people then it's hard to prosecute (Employment Office Representative 1).

Romani Advisor 2 was also sceptical about how the legislation could possibly be enforced:

We are curious about what it will be like in reality, because there is open discrimination and hidden discrimination and it's hard to prove the hidden discrimination. I was in America and England and it is everywhere, it's hard to prove (Romani Advisor 2).

On the other hand, the Moravia-Silesia Regional Coordinator for Romani Affairs was hopeful that the new general anti-discrimination legislation would be more helpful than the existing laws governing employment relations:

It's a fact that according to the new legislation (going through parliament) that the aggrieved party will not have to prove that he was discriminated against, but on the contrary the one who is alleged to have discriminated must prove that he did not discriminate. I think that is very positive especially for the Romani community, who are affected relatively often. But that doesn't apply yet. (Moravia-Silesia Regional Coordinator for Romani Affairs)

Employment Office Representative 2 in Ostrava, viewed the legislation very optimistically. She believed that just as employers had become used to treating men and women equally, they would also adapt to the new anti-discrimination rules:

I think it will work, the employers are already used to not distinguishing between men and women for these vacancies, the age isn't stated. It's hard for us to force them to take someone when they make concrete choices, but really it depends on them. (Employment Office Representative 2)

The employers interviewed in České Budějovice viewed the new legislation with some nervousness. One pointed out how difficult it is to define discrimination and another was worried that the new laws might be taken too far:

Generally my opinion on this question is that any step to civilise society, to fulfil Christian principles, basically good principles, is good. But it shouldn't be exaggerated. Like sometimes in the United States feminism

is exaggerated. [...] Roma know how to defend themselves. I think that should be the idea. Patiently teach them how to function in society. They shouldn't always be protected by exception in the law, that's not the right solution (Employer 3).

Another employer pointed out that it was not just a question of rights, but also responsibilities:

Of course employees should be given certain rights but they always forget about the responsibilities which go hand in hand with the rights (Employer 2).

Given that these employers were all happy to employ Roma in their businesses but were still cautious about endorsing anti-discrimination legislation, it is clear that the government will have an uphill struggle when implementing the legislation. As the other officials pointed out, it will be difficult to enforce and a major campaign to educate employers and officials about the importance of the legislation will be necessary, if it is to become a useful tool to defend the rights of ethnic minorities.

9.5 Training

9.5.1 Background to the Programme

Chapter 7 highlighted how the lack of relevant skills among many Romani jobseekers acted as a significant barrier, preventing them from finding employment. All the employers who were interviewed raised this problem and it has been recognised by NGOs and local officials dealing with Romani communities. The employer who ran the ironworks company also stressed this point. He said no matter how hard-working or keen his trainee was, if he did not have the correct technical training, which secondary school would provide, he would only be able to do unskilled work. Therefore, most employers would not be willing to hire him.

The MLSA has also recognised this problem and developed a range of programmes to improve the employability of jobseekers. These have been developed in conjunction with the MoE and the Government Council for Human Resources Development (MLSA 2004b: 13-14). The main emphasis is on providing jobseekers with counselling and

training or re-training opportunities. However, a report published by the Government Council for Human Resources Development cites reform to education programmes in schools and institutes of further and higher education as another strategic area of reform (Government Council for Human Resources Development 2003: 24 – 27). In practical terms, the MLSA has developed two important schemes to tackle the problems of long-term unemployment. “First Opportunity” is intended for young jobseekers and provides them with “counselling, training, retraining, work experience or other measures within the first six months of unemployment” (MLSA 2004b: 1.1). A similar scheme for older jobseekers who have been unemployed for up to one year is also being piloted (MLSA 2004b: 1.2). These schemes are organised through the Employment Offices but the MLSA also hopes to get local NGOs and private enterprises involved in the scheme too. According to EU employment policy guidelines, 25 percent of the long-term unemployed in every member state should have participated in such programmes by 2010 (MLSA 2002b: 11). In 2004, 15 percent of registered jobseekers had participated in the various programmes available and the MLSA plans to achieve the European target, provided Employment Offices get the necessary extra investment they require to successfully implement these schemes (MLSA 2004b: 12).

Employment Offices offer a range of counselling services to jobseekers. They provide guidance and information to school leavers about possible career opportunities and they support young people by finding placements for them such as those described earlier in this chapter. Similar services are also available to older jobseekers who are classified as ‘long-term unemployed’ i.e. they have been registered at the Employment Office for 12 months or more. In addition to offering these people career guidance, Employment Offices provide support in the form of counselling and motivational courses to prepare these people to return to the work force. Officials consider this to be very important for people who have been unemployed for a very long time because they may no longer have confidence in their ability to find and hold onto a job. One Employment Office Representative described the programme:

Another thing is we try to motivate jobseekers. We have a variety of motivational courses, which they do before the re-qualification courses. These are especially for the people who are on our register for a long time and for those who lost their working habits a long time ago. We have motivational courses which are for people who have been looking

for work for a long time, who need a boost for their morale. We have a counsellor here in the Employment Office and we have courses away from here, which we have contracted out. Quite a lot of people do these courses and I have to say they have been successful (Employment Office Representative 2).

These courses are particularly important given the recurring theme of the necessity to motivate Roma to find employment. Many of the people who have not worked since the early 1990s have lost all hope of ever working again and have become accustomed to finding alternative ways to survive. One Regional Coordinator for Romani Affairs described this phenomenon:

I see the old guys, in their fifties, who haven't worked for 14 years. A person gets nervous and tense about that for a while. It upsets them for the first three months. After six months if they don't have work they begin to feel apathetic and they start to lean towards other means of earning a living. They try to earn a little under the table and they stop looking for regular declared work (Moravia-Silesia Regional Coordinator for Romani Affairs).

These courses help to build up confidence and show jobseekers that they can develop useful skills which employers are looking for and earn a living that way. In such cases psychological support is just as important as the re-qualification courses which teach new skills.

All the training and counselling opportunities discussed above are open to any Czech citizen who is unemployed but there are also specific training courses available to members of Romani communities who wish to work in certain positions. These positions include the Romani Advisors discussed in Section 2.5 and TAs discussed in Section 6.4. Further new positions are also being created in municipalities for FSAs who work specifically with Romani communities. A more detailed discussion of these new job opportunities for Roma will be provided in the next section of this chapter. Here, the discussion focuses on the training for these different occupations. As discussed in Section 6.4, training for TAs was provided by NGOs until the MoE adopted the scheme and, together with the MLSA, developed a code of qualifications and training requirements necessary for candidates who wished to work in schools. The MLSA was also responsible for codifying the positions of Romani Advisor, Regional

Romani Coordinator and FSA (Council for Roma Community Affairs 2004: 2.1.1; 2.2.2; 2.5.2).

Training for TAs is still run centrally in Prague. Over the course of one school year (September to July) trainees travel to Prague for 14 day-long sessions and also participate in one intensive weekend session (Nová Škola 2005c). The training for Romani Advisors and Regional Coordinators is more intensive and involves participation in a university degree programme. The actual requirement for the position is to complete a one-semester course but one of the Romani Advisors in Ostrava and both Regional Coordinators had university degrees. The second Romani Advisor in Ostrava was working and studying for her full degree at the same time. The training for the position of FSA is provided locally. The basic training to qualify as a FSA, which is a lesser qualification than that of a social worker, involves attending seminars for 2 or 3 days each month. A new scheme at secondary school level has also made it possible to study social work as a core subject and this is proving very popular with young Roma. To participate in the training for any of these careers it is necessary to have a minimum of a full primary education. FSAs were being employed and trained in Ostrava but there were none in České Budějovice when the research for this thesis was conducted.

9.5.2 Experience in České Budějovice and Ostrava

The training provided by the Employment Office, in conjunction with local employers or NGOs, takes a number of forms in both cities. One programme involves participants working in their placement four days per week and spending one day in a classroom learning about more general or theoretical aspects of the job. Participants in this scheme can work any trade where employers can be found to participate. In this programme workers can earn a wage and keep some of their social welfare benefits but altogether they will not necessarily earn more than the MSA or have more money than if they stayed at home and did not take part in the scheme. On the other hand, if they complete the course, they get a certificate and the Employment Office will help them to find a proper job. In Ostrava, computer skills courses are organised by NGOs and some local schools offer workshops for parents in the afternoons. Support for these courses comes from both the Employment Office and various funding opportunities from the municipal

authority and EU funds. Local community centres have facilities such as sewing rooms where locals can learn how to make or mend clothes. However, such a skill is not considered very useful in terms of improving a person's chances of finding employment.

Officials and NGO workers highlighted a number of problems with regard to the usefulness of re-training courses for local unemployed Roma. Particularly in Ostrava there was a feeling that running these courses was a waste of time and money because even after people completed the course there were still no jobs available. The Employment Office Representative stated the problem in the bluntest possible way:

It constantly comes to nothing because even if the people are really motivated and everything, we don't have any vacancies for them and that is the biggest problem. [...]It's like this, if they want to learn we can help them with that, but if they want to work there are no vacancies (Employment Office Representative 2).

However, the difficulty of finding employment for participants in the scheme was only half the problem as far as the Employment Office Representative in České Budějovice was concerned. Given the low unemployment rate in the city, success rates for participants in the scheme were higher than in Ostrava, a fact recognised by the Regional Coordinator for Romani Affairs. Nonetheless, the local Employment Office Representative felt that too few Roma were interested in participating in the scheme and that they did not have the necessary motivation.

There is not much interest from their side. They say "we want to work straight away we want money, we don't want to learn". But without education it's hard for us to find work for them. We don't understand each other from that point of view (Employment Office Representative 1).

Romani Advisor 2 in Ostrava also complained that too often Roma who most needed help rejected the opportunities offered to them to learn new skills.

There are opportunities; plenty of them but the problem is finding people for the courses. It has happened again just now. There is a computer course running, it's free and we can't fill it. It's at the local school, every

Friday at 2.00pm. We've told everyone about it and only one woman goes regularly (Romani Advisor 2).

This theme arose in many interviews, where respondents working with young Roma felt they lacked the understanding that if they wanted to improve their prospects in life, they would have to invest time and effort in their education. On the other hand, Section 6.8.1 discussed how many young Roma believed that even with an education they would be rejected by prejudiced employers who refuse to employ any Roma. They also felt under pressure to earn money immediately to support their impoverished families. They considered education to be a luxury they could not afford. The 2000 Concept also recognised the importance of designing courses carefully so that they would be of real benefit to participants:

It often happens that graduates of these courses remain on the unemployment register. This leads Roma to lose the confidence and motivation for further self-education (Government of the Czech Republic 2000: 4.6).

Other research examining the impact of re-training courses on employment prospects has also revealed that the pessimistic view of these young Roma may be correct. O'Higgins and Ivanov (2006: 13) report:

Unemployment rates fall with education level [...] but much more slowly for the Roma than the non-Roma populations living in close proximity to Roma (suggesting that discrimination prevents the Roma from reaping the full returns from a higher educational level).

The 2000 Concept calls for more research into the needs of the labour market and the particular needs of Romani jobseekers when designing re-qualification programmes. It notes that there are some skills which few Roma have which are taken for granted by the majority population and lacking in these skills can prevent them from finding employment (Government of the Czech Republic 2000 4.7). Rashid *et al.* (2005: 83) argue that while it is important to design training schemes which take the requirements of the local labour market into account, it must also be remembered that training opportunities do not create jobs; that can only be achieved by investment and economic development. Nevertheless, investment in developing the human capital of jobseekers is equally important given the current labour market conditions. Careful design of training

courses is only one part of the solution, however. It is also necessary to challenge the traditional indifference in Romani communities towards the value of educational qualifications and to tackle discrimination in the labour market to ensure that Roma who persevere with their education and enhance their employability will be rewarded for their efforts.

9.6 Field Social Assistants

9.6.1 Background to the Programme

The measures outlined thus far in this chapter have been designed to help any jobseeker having difficulty finding employment, regardless of the reason why. There are however certain support mechanisms available specifically for Roma. There are direct opportunities for Roma to work as Romani Advisors, TAs, health liaison assistants, police liaison assistants and Field Social Assistants (FSAs). Each of these positions has been designed to improve communication between Romani communities and state institutions, given the traditionally poor levels of trust and cooperation between both parties. Such employment opportunities are an example of what the 2000 Concept and the subsequent Updates to the Concept refer to as “equalising action” (Government of the Czech Republic 2000: 4.1; 2005: 4.1). The Romani Advisor and Regional Coordinator for Romani Affairs are responsible for raising awareness in the local community. In Ostrava, the Romani Advisors have a range of responsibilities but they are keenly aware that one of their most important tasks is helping local Roma to rejoin the labour force. They keep a note of the characteristics of the clients who visit looking for advice, so that if an opportunity arises they can contact them:

When a client comes with a problem and they appear to me to be smart and communicative, I immediately put them into our database. Then if an opportunity comes up – for some kind of education, maybe as a FSA, then I contact them, they do the training and then decide if they want to do that work. So we catch them that way. He comes with some other problem and we discover he would be a great social worker, but he didn't know that such an opportunity existed (Romani Advisor 2).

FSAs were also first piloted in Ostrava and as the contribution they made to tackling social inclusion was recognised, the government approved the employment of assistants

in other areas. They are responsible for identifying any issues which might exacerbate the general problems of social exclusion in the communities where they work. Their work is varied, ranging from reminding parents to bring their children for health checks, to counselling jobseekers, to helping people to sort out problems with debts. They also explain to clients how bureaucratic procedures work, help them to fill out official forms and inform them of their rights and entitlements. In cases where clients find themselves in debt and unable to pay their rent or bills, the FSAs help to negotiate payment plans to prevent the tenant from being evicted or cut off from the gas supply. In cases where eviction cannot be prevented, they try to help their clients to find new accommodation. They also play an important role in supporting jobseekers who are trying to find employment. They perform a counselling role similar to that offered at Employment Offices, encouraging and motivating people to look more actively for employment. If a client fails to attend an interview the Employment Office contacts the FSA and they visit the client and try to establish the reasons for the missed appointment. It may be due to health reasons, or simply forgetting, but if it appears to be that the client is not taking the process seriously, the FSA tries to find alternative ways to motivate the client. The problem of motivating Roma to seek work has been discussed many times in this thesis and the employment of FSAs is envisaged as another way to tackle the problem. As is the case with TAs, the government hopes that self-confident, educated Roma, acting with authority and empathy in their own community, can be role models for young people and adults alike. They demonstrate that it is possible for Roma to get an education and find employment.

These positions are also open to non-Roma who can demonstrate that they have experience working with Roma and can communicate well with them, but Roma stand a better chance of getting the job, as long as they have the necessary qualifications. When respondents were asked about the merits of hiring Roma for such positions, the general consensus was that a Romani FSA would be more readily accepted by the local community and would have a better understanding of their needs.

9.6.2 Experience in České Budějovice and Ostrava

The role of the FSA is particularly important, both in terms of finding a new source of employment for Roma and providing additional support to local Romani communities. The municipal authority in Ostrava employs 6 FSAs, three of whom focus on health related issues. Additionally, local NGOs employ a further 12 social assistants, both Romani and non-Romani. Part of the funding for these positions comes from the Council for Romani Affairs. FSAs have a key role to play in improving relations between local Romani communities and official institutions. Their work could be carried out by social workers, and in České Budějovice this is the case, but as the assistants belong to Romani communities, they can win the trust of locals more quickly and have a better understanding of the complex nature of some of their clients' problems. The most important aspect of the role of FSAs is that they work in the community and visit people in their own homes, instead of sitting in an office and meeting clients there. The daily routine of a FSA involves a briefing session with the municipal social worker responsible for their community and then visiting specific people. However, walking through the neighbourhood and talking to people every day is an equally important task. This allows everyone to gradually get to know the assistants and build up a trusting relationship, making it easier for them to approach the authorities and ask for help when necessary.

As part of my research in Ostrava, I accompanied three FSAs on their daily rounds. I observed them as they worked and as we walked from the homes of one client to the next we discussed their work. One woman worked in a community where she also lived but the others worked in an area where they were not well known, although it turned out that they knew many of the residents through their extended families. The assistants exploited these links in order to develop better relationships with the clients. There were mixed views about the merits of living and working in the same area. Romani Advisor 2 said she discouraged that because she felt they would effectively be on call all the time and the line between professional and social relationships could become blurred.

The FSAs felt their work was valued by local Roma. Observing them as they chatted with clients, it was clear that they were well respected and that their assistance was appreciated. The work of an FSA is not always easy. In the winter when they make their

rounds in the community, it can be very cold walking through the snow. People do not often invite them into their homes because they have nothing to offer them and they can spend three or four hours every day outside regardless of the weather conditions. They also sometimes have to deal with uncooperative clients, and their help can be perceived as interference. It is also not always possible for them to solve the clients' problems and at times the expectations of what they can achieve are too high. Dealing with the problem of debt is particularly difficult. As noted above, the FSA can help negotiate with landlords or official companies such as the gas and electricity boards but many Roma run up huge debts with moneylenders who are less open to dealing with the authorities and the assistants cannot help very much in these cases. One assistant explained how frustrating it was to see moneylenders and also banks lending far too much money to unemployed Roma, who they must know could never afford to pay the money back. Instances where the assistants cannot help can lead to disappointment and resentment on the part of the client and also to feelings of frustration for the FSAs. Nonetheless, they accept this as part of their job and are happy that overall they are providing a useful service in the community.

České Budějovice did not employ any FSAs, although the Regional Coordinator for Romani Affairs there was doing his best to convince the municipal authorities that it would benefit the community. He explained that although he told the municipal officials that they could apply for financial support to employ FSAs, many of them were not interested:

They say: "We don't have a problem here. We don't distinguish between Roma and the non-Roma. They are all the Czechs. They live like that. Roma won't listen to advice, they live the way they do and no one can help them" (South Bohemia Regional Coordinator for Romani Affairs).

Nonetheless he intended to keep promoting the scheme until he had convinced everyone of its merits. He believed it was crucial because he could not look after all the Romani families on his own and the only other people who were officially responsible for looking after Romani communities were the *kurátoři*. These are non-Romani social workers, based in the town hall who are also responsible for helping other people at risk of social exclusion such as homeless people and recently released or paroled prisoners. As a result, they could not devote as much time to the concerns of Romani communities

as the Regional Coordinator would like. He wanted a full time Romani Advisor and FSAs to help him work with the local Roma and he believed that the municipal authorities would eventually support him, once they understood that the costs would not have to be covered by their budget. Getting funding might not be as easy as the he believed, however. The Romani Advisors in Ostrava reported problems in accessing funding for some FSAs employed by local NGOs but as far as the Regional Coordinator in South Bohemia was concerned, it was certainly worth persisting with.⁴⁹

The positive work done by FSAs in Ostrava demonstrates that this is an effective way to support Romani communities and to help Roma who are trying to find fulfilling and interesting employment. Assistants earn the minimum wage and, given that this scheme helps people to escape from the social welfare dependency trap and provides an additional source of support to socially excluded communities, it is in fact a very efficient use of taxpayers' money.

9.7 Social Welfare Reform

9.7.1 Background to the Policy

Since the fall of the communist regime successive governments have been faced with the task of reforming the social welfare system. Under communism, the state provided pensions, sickness and disability benefits and a range of healthcare and childcare services for all citizens. There was no provision for unemployment benefit because the system was structured to ensure that there was full employment. In most Western countries the burden of these costs is shared to a greater or lesser extent among the state, employers and various private sector enterprises such as insurance companies and banks. Given the general upheaval in Czech society during the transition to a market economy, it was considered important that the basic social safety net be left intact, in order to offer citizens a minimum level of protection. A system to provide unemployment benefits also had to be designed and implemented.

⁴⁹ In 2005 the České Budějovice municipal authority appointed a non-Romani man as the city's Romani Advisor and one Romani field social assistant.

Unemployment benefits in the Czech Republic were among the most restrictive of all CEE countries (Kramer 1997: 90). Originally, a person was only entitled to the benefit for 6 months and the benefits were calculated as a percentage of the person's average wage for the previous year. As a result, many unemployed people, particularly the long-term unemployed and people who had difficulty maintaining regular employment, were not entitled to unemployment benefits. Mareš and Sirovátka (2004: 57) report that in 2000, 45 percent of the unemployed were entitled to unemployment benefit and in 2002, this had fallen to 37 percent. Recognising the growing problem with long term unemployment, the 2004 Employment Act increased the duration of unemployment benefit to nine months for those aged over 50 and twelve months for workers aged over 55, on the condition that they had paid social insurance taxes for 25 or 30 years respectively (OECD 2004: 141). The restrictions on unemployment benefits mean that other forms of social assistance, particularly the MSA discussed in Section 8.4, are more important than unemployment insurance. Although unemployment benefits are limited, the whole social welfare system is a heavy burden on the Czech state. Higher taxation and economic growth have helped to sustain the system but equally, the state needs to reform social welfare policy, particularly pensions, to ensure it remains sustainable for the future (Kramer 1997: 54; OECD 2004: 29).

Furthermore, the design of the social welfare system has created inefficiencies in the labour market. As noted in Section 8.4, the small difference between the minimum wage and the basic level of social welfare provided to families where both parents were unemployed does not encourage people to seek employment. The broad eligibility criteria for disability pensions and the decision in the early years of the transition to offer workers early retirement have also led to problems. Early retirement schemes made the general unemployment rate appear lower but the cost to the state was higher because the basic pension was worth more than the unemployment allowance (Kramer 1997: 83). It also removed a large cohort of skilled workers from the workforce. High numbers of people receive disability benefit, indicating that either the conditions to receive the benefit are very loose or there is widespread abuse of the system. In 2003, 11 percent of the labour force was receiving full or partial disability benefits (OECD 2004:163). This is well above the 5.5 percent average rate in 20 OECD countries measured in a 2003 study (OECD 2003: 40). Abuse of the system in terms of

undeclared and, therefore, untaxed casual work is a further problem, which costs the state, both in terms of lost tax revenue and the cost of the benefits being paid out.

Reforming the social welfare system and stricter measures to combat benefit fraud are only half of the government strategy to reduce the attractiveness of social welfare benefits. The other important measure is the use of legislation to increase the minimum wage. Between 1998 and 2005 the minimum wage was raised 10 times (MLSA 2005). As explained in Section 8.4, in 2005 the minimum wage of 7,185 Kč per month (€251.12) was 41.5 percent of the average industrial wage of 18,833 Kč (€658.22) (*Radio Prague 2005a*). Raising the minimum wage has not yet been an effective tool, however. It is still too low compared to the MSA to be considered an incentive to seek employment, but equally the current economic situation cannot sustain higher wages for the lowest qualified jobs. Competition from migrants from the Ukraine and other East European countries, also ensures that employers can find willing workers who will accept a lesser wage than that which would be considered acceptable for unemployed Czech citizens (Flek and Večerník 2004: 22). Respondents also expressed concern that raising the minimum wage might actually have a negative effect, as it might cause employers to create fewer jobs. However, in spite of these concerns, an OECD study has revealed that only 1 percent of Czech employees earn the minimum wage. Therefore, changes to the level of the minimum wage do not have a particularly strong influence on general conditions in the labour market, although it does have more of an effect on certain sectors, particularly among young people (OECD 2004: 155).

9.7.2 Views on Social Welfare Reform in České Budějovice and Ostrava

Successive governments have been gradually reforming the system to tackle these problems, but they have ensured that the reforms do not disadvantage the most vulnerable members of society too severely. Until now the changes have been introduced gradually but new legislation will be introduced in January 2007, which will simplify the benefits system and be stricter with people who are not actively seeking employment or who are abusing the system in other ways. During the period of fieldwork for this dissertation (October 2004 – May 2005) the legislation was still at the proposal stage but respondents were aware that changes were coming and expressed their views on the subject. Section 8.4 briefly discussed the view of many respondents

that Roma abused the social welfare system and preferred to ‘sponge off’ the state rather than get the necessary education and training to find employment. This was a common theme in many interviews and even some Romani respondents raised this as a problem. One Romani woman working with young people in an NGO talked about how she herself felt frustrated when she saw Roma around her not working and happy to live off the state while she worked hard to earn a living.

There were mixed opinions about whether or not cutting back on social welfare benefits would help the situation or make things worse. In České Budějovice, respondents believed that cutting back on social welfare in the same way that the Slovak government did in 2004 would finally force Roma to take education seriously and actively seek employment. The view of Employment Office Representative 1 was shared by many:

If they knew that they would not get benefits, that they would have to work and go to school, otherwise they would not survive, then the situation would change. [...] It's because we raised them to think that. It's our fault. We've made them that way. They are not ashamed. They complain we don't give them enough. [...] Even reduce the benefits a little bit, just so they see that they are responsible for themselves and their own life. So they know that they can't have children when they are 15 because they can't afford to raise them (Employment Office Representative 1).

However, others were unsure that cutting back the benefits would be beneficial. Some respondents feared there would be similar problems with rioting, as was the case in Slovakia, but in the long term the greater fear was that more Roma would be forced to turn to illegal activities to find the means to survive. Employment Office Representative 2 was concerned that the cut backs would only lead to more deprivation because in Ostrava, even if people wanted to work there was nothing for them:

That's hard. I really don't know how we can escape this vicious circle. It's really difficult to resolve these problems because you can't take away the social welfare from these people, otherwise they couldn't live decently, and the employers cannot employ so many people, they would collapse. I think there need to be new conditions for employers to help them create more jobs (Employment Office Representative 2).

The general consensus was that the current situation with social welfare benefits had to be changed but the reform should not be as drastic as in Slovakia. NGO workers and officials agreed that such a complex problem required a comprehensive reform programme, which included job creation strategies as well as reforms to the benefits system.

If they reduce social welfare benefits the same way they did it in Slovakia then it will result in a similarly bad situation. It depends on how the MSLA or the government interprets that because it's not a totally bad idea to reduce the benefits, but it is necessary to develop a range of measures and steps before they do it. You can't just say from one day to the next, I'm going to cut your benefits and that's the end of it. [...] If the Czech government has learned from the bad tactics in Slovakia and wants to deal with the reduction of social welfare using a really functioning mechanism, which is tested over one year or two then that will be fine, but if they do it as fast as in Slovakia, it will end in catastrophe (NGO Representative 12).

A senior official in Ostrava's municipal social welfare department agreed that a comprehensive programme was necessary. In her view, it was important to find new ways to create jobs, but also to tackle the problems of undeclared work.

I know that the motivation is very important, maybe the most important thing, because why would I go to work if I could lie about at home for the same money? And I could earn a bit more on the side then too. I deal with business people, employers and so on and ask them not to employ people illegally, not to exploit their helplessness because they can pay them half of what they would pay a normal employee. So as long as the system has these kinds of holes in employment, unless they are somehow repaired, then I don't know (Ostrava Municipal Education Department Senior Official).

A study into the phenomenon of undeclared work in EU member states conducted for the Directorate-General for Employment and Social Affairs noted that under communism undeclared work was an "integral part of the economic culture" which survives today as a result of high taxes and poor control mechanisms (Renoy *et al.* 2004: 121). In its assessment of the economic conditions in the Czech Republic, the OECD reports that the high tax wedge on labour, which it calculates as being one of the highest in the OECD, places a heavy burden on employers and encourages tax evasion (OECD 2004: 150). The 2004 – 2006 National Action Plan on Employment discusses

measures to tackle this, which include expanding the powers of Employment Offices to inspect businesses and ensure that all employees are correctly documented. Regulations are also being amended to allow employers who have been caught with unregistered employees to avoid or reduce sanctions if they repay the amount due in income tax, health and social insurance owed (MLSA 2004b: 39). These changes to the law had evidently not registered with respondents, as no one raised the issue when talking about ways to address the problems with benefit fraud.

New legislation on social welfare was passed in December 2005, after the fieldwork for this thesis had been completed. The new system is designed to be stricter with people who do not actively seek employment or who refuse offers of employment made to them. From January 2007, instead of receiving the Minimum Subsistence Amount (MSA), they will only be entitled to the Minimum *Existence* Amount of 2020Kč (€71.25) per month. This is less than half the 2005 MSA entitlement of 4300Kč (€151.68) per month and barely enough to survive on. The claimants may be entitled to receive other benefits, such as housing support, but the MLSA has warned that this will be at the discretion of the municipal Department of Social Affairs. A spokesperson for the Ministry stated:

This is to promote the principle that those who work have to be better off than those who avoid work. It is absolutely not intended to harm people who need help. The aim is to sufficiently and fairly protect people from destitution but also to motivate them to actively seek employment and accept even low paid work (*Právo* 2006).

The general consensus among respondents in České Budějovice was that the principle of rewarding people who seek work should be a priority; therefore they would probably welcome this change to the law. However, a different reaction could be expected in Ostrava, where representatives of the Employment Office and Department of Social Affairs believed such changes to be irrelevant when there are no jobs to be had, even for people who are motivated to work. Other changes to the system, particularly the changes to maternity and children's allowance benefits would be received more sceptically. Maternity benefits and the children's allowance will be significantly increased – almost doubled in fact, in an attempt to address the current demographic

trend in the Czech Republic of small families and an aging population (*Právo* 2005). This is a serious concern of the government. Since 1989, the number of marriages has declined and fewer children are being born (Flek and Večerník 2004: 8). Although the government considers it necessary to offer incentives to couples to have more children, given the prevailing stereotype that Roma have big families in order to get more of these benefits, this aspect of the reform could be seen as sending out mixed messages to Romani families. This question will require further research once the new system is fully established.

It is on this aspect of reform that the Czech and Slovak models differ significantly. Although both governments have decided to reduce benefits for individuals who are not actively seeking work, the Slovak model also changed the payment structure of children's allowance benefits, reducing the payments linked to the number of children in a family (Bricker 2004). The Czech system will, therefore, continue to be perceived as more generous. Given this difference in approach, Romani communities should not suffer as much as Roma in Slovakia did after the reforms were introduced in 2004. Nonetheless, many Romani representatives and activists were still nervous about what the future held for them. Equally, there is a fear among politicians that more Roma will move from Slovakia to the Czech Republic to exploit the more generous social welfare provisions (*Mladá fronta Dnes* 2006). In Ostrava there was already some evidence that more families were moving in from Slovakia. Again, further research will be required to establish whether this will become a significant problem for the Czech social welfare system.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the key programmes designed to resolve the problem of unemployment in the Czech Republic. Apart from the training and employment of FSAs, the policies are ethnoculturally neutral and are available to any person who is finding it difficult to enter or return to the labour force. The policies to create more employment opportunities for Roma in the private sector have been more successful in České Budějovice, where there is lower unemployment and Roma have less competition for placement opportunities. In Ostrava, where unemployment is high among non-Roma as well as among Roma, the training schemes have been less successful and it has been

harder to find employers willing to take on unqualified Roma as trainees. Anti-discrimination legislation has not yet been successfully developed to cover all aspects of life and although employment legislation has been amended, officials and Romani representatives were sceptical that it would have any impact in real life situations. To improve the motivation of Roma to seek work, changes are being introduced to the social welfare system and FSAs are being employed in Ostrava to work directly in communities with large Romani populations. These assistants should work with long-term unemployed Roma and encourage them to find employment, both through counselling activities and also by acting as role models, demonstrating that support is available if a person is serious about changing their situation. Throughout this chapter, different problems which have acted as obstacles to the implementation of the programmes and policies have been raised; the next chapter examines these issues in more detail.

CHAPTER 10: MAIN CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EMPLOYMENT POLICY

Introduction

Chapter 7 discussed how issues, which have traditionally been identified as obstacles to the successful implementation of policies targeting Romani communities, such as the influence of local authorities and underlying prejudices against Romani communities, continue to pose problems for the implementation of education policies. Chapter 7 also highlighted new problems specific to the implementation of education policies. These include problems relating to the financing of reforms and the difficulties of engaging Romani communities in the process. This chapter will examine the main challenges to the implementation of programmes to improve the inclusion of Roma in the labour market. Given the differences in the design of the education and employment policies, the challenges to successful implementation also differ. This chapter first notes how traditional obstacles to reform influence the implementation of employment policies. Secondly, it highlights other problems such as regional inequalities in economic development and the continuing difficulties with encouraging mobility in the labour force. It concludes with a discussion about whether general or specific policies to support Roma are the most effective means of tackling high and long-term unemployment in Romani communities.

10.1 Traditional Obstacles to Reform

Three problems identified by analysts to explain the failure of Romani policies up to the end of the twentieth century were discussed in Chapters 2 and 7. These are: (1) the intransigence of local authorities, who did not cooperate with the plans of the central authorities; (2) the paternalistic approach to policy design, which did not take the views or wishes of Roma into account and (3) the tolerance of anti-Romani prejudices in the majority society. All three problems contributed to the failure of successive regimes to successfully integrate Romani communities into Czech society. The establishment of the Council for Romani Affairs, which includes 14 Romani representatives, to advise the government on policies targeting Roma has helped to address the problem of policy

design. However, poor cooperation between the central and local authorities and the persistence of anti-Romani prejudices in the majority society continue to hamper the effectiveness of both education and employment policies. The first part of this chapter will look at how these long-standing problems affect employment policy in the Czech Republic today.

10.1.1 Local Authorities

Unlike education policy, employment and social welfare policy is more tightly controlled by the central government and local authorities have fewer opportunities to influence how employment policy is delivered. Municipal departments of Social Affairs have some freedom to decide how to allocate emergency social welfare benefits but the overall policy regarding the minimum wage, unemployment benefits and social welfare benefits linked to the MSA is determined by the MLSA and governed by national law. The new legislation reforming the social welfare system will allow increased flexibility to take into account the differences in costs of living across different parts of the country. However, it should be noted that local authorities have little influence over policy design and few opportunities to interpret employment and social welfare policies to suit their own circumstances. This frustrated some officials, who felt that sometimes their hands were tied because they had to adhere to the national policy:

We are much closer to the citizens. The citizens turn to us with their problems. We try insofar as it is possible to resolve the problems but it is unpleasant for us when for example the laws of the country do not enable us to resolve the problem in the way that would be most advantageous. I think that the central level creates laws unfortunately without a lot of regard for what is necessary at the level of the lowest components [citizens] (Ostrava Municipal Social Affairs Department, Senior Official).

As far as Romani employment policy is concerned, the most important areas where municipal authorities can exert their influence are in the provision of social housing and the decision to employ Romani Advisors and FSAs. Chapter 8 highlighted the importance of investment in affordable housing in order to encourage labour force mobility. This is an area where municipal authorities can play a significant role. The

building of new houses and apartment blocks slumped in the mid 1990s and took a long time to recover. In 1990, 44,594 new dwellings were completed. By 1995, this had fallen to 12,662 but in 2005 32,863 new homes were completed (Lux 2004: 26; Czech Statistical Office (2006a)). Much of this new housing is developed by private investors and is marketed at wealthier families. Municipalities have limited budgets to deal with housing and have to spend a great deal on maintaining their existing housing stock. There were no statistics available to compare how much the municipalities of České Budějovice and Ostrava invested specifically in developing social housing, but because Ostrava is a much larger city with higher levels of unemployment, demand for social housing is much greater and the lack of housing was causing serious problems. The housing problems in Ostrava have been alluded to in other chapters. Some families are forced to live in terrible conditions. Apartments are overcrowded and some families live in homes without heating or indoor plumbing, causing serious health problems among children and adults. Romani Advisor 2 believed that improving housing standards was the key to resolving all the problems in Romani communities but she was still finding it hard to convince the local authorities to take the issue seriously and provide the necessary investment:

Until they resolve the social housing problem and link it with other social programmes, we will not make any progress. We've been fighting for that for three years. We have proposals here for social housing and the first project – social housing with an accompanying social programme – has been submitted to the city. We asked the mayors to give us maybe three flats in every sub-municipal district, which we will then try to use as a model, as a pilot programme but we were not successful. Now we are waiting to see what will happen because [an NGO] got money for the project from a grant and now they will go and say, “we have the money, give us three flats as a pilot model and we will try to work with the people, send the children to school and see that the parents find work or do a re-qualification course” (Romani Advisor 2).

The other area where municipalities have some control is over the decision to employ FSAs. As discussed in Chapter 9, the scheme was well established in Ostrava and the municipal officials recognised its merits. The officials in České Budějovice were also gradually becoming more involved but they still had some reservations about the idea of hiring Roma in such roles. The Romani Advisor who was eventually appointed in České Budějovice in 2005 was not Romani because the local officials believed that the

candidate's qualifications were more important than their ethnicity. It was also more difficult to fill such roles in České Budějovice because Roma with qualifications and the motivation to work could find employment in the open labour market more easily than they could in Ostrava. This meant that there were fewer candidates registered at the Employment Office who would be suitable for such positions. In Ostrava, the larger Romani community requires more support from social workers; therefore, more FSAs are necessary and given the severe lack of employment opportunities in the city generally, there is more demand for such positions from Roma.

Given the centralised nature of employment and social welfare policy, local authorities do not have much scope to interpret policies to suit the specific needs of their local Romani communities. However, in the areas where they have influence, it is evident that again there are differences between how they tackle problems facing Romani communities. The local authorities in České Budějovice insist that the civic principle should apply and that Romani communities should not receive any special treatment, but because the prevailing economic conditions are good, Roma have opportunities to find employment and their housing is of a good standard. In Ostrava, the local authorities support Romani communities where they can afford it. They can employ Romani FSAs because financial support is available from the central government, but in the case of housing their budget is very limited and in some sub-municipalities the authorities prefer to resolve the housing problems of the majority society before they tackle the problems of the Romani residents, to ensure that they win favour with voters. The Romani Advisors in Ostrava found it difficult to overcome these problems and had to rely on NGOs to tackle the local housing problems. Given that the availability of social housing is a key factor in the overall employment policy to improve labour force mobility, this is a problem which the government and the MLSA need to address. However, as is the case with education policy, when powers are devolved to the local level it can be difficult for the central authorities to enforce certain policies. Better communication and cooperation in the policy development stage is vital if the objectives of the central policy-makers are to be effectively met among communities across the country.

The reforms in 2001 to establish self-governing regions (*kraj*) were intended to promote regional development by giving regional authorities the power and resources to develop their own regeneration plans (Ferry and McMaster 2005: 185). For the Moravia-Silesia region, where Ostrava is situated, this was particularly important, because unlike most new regions, it is large enough to be designated as a NUTS II Cohesion Region. This allows the region to become a direct partner in future EU regional funding programmes (Ferry and McMaster 2005: 186). Although the regions have had a positive impact in terms of allowing regional actors from industry, local government and NGOs to participate in developing new strategies for regeneration of the region, there are still problems with regard to the relationship between the regional and central governments. Ferry and McMaster (2005: 189) argue that limits on the budgets of regional authorities constrain their ability to plan and coordinate reforms. There are also concerns that the regions do not have the financial competence to co-finance projects which have been approved to receive EU funds. Under the current system, municipalities, although they are smaller, have more economic strength due to their ability to raise certain taxes. They are in a better position to match EU funding and can influence economic development, however, they are less capable of coordinating large projects (Ferry and McMaster 2005: 190). In spite of these problems, there have been some recent successes. A major deal with Hyundai to build a new car production facility in the Moravia-Silesia region was signed in 2006. Winning the deal required cooperation between the municipal and regional authorities and the support of the Ministry of Industry and Trade. It is hoped that the plant will employ approximately 3,500 people and provide a significant boost to other local support industries. Although many of the jobs will require highly skilled workers, who may be recruited from abroad, it is hoped that the investment will bring many benefits to the region, including further opportunities for job creation in firms providing external support services to the plant. This is one example of successful cooperation between different levels of government and different agencies. More cooperation like this is crucial if the region's problems with unemployment are to be resolved. Until the overall rate of unemployment is reduced, Romani communities will have difficulties finding employment and reintegrating themselves in the labour market.

10.1.2 Anti-Romani Prejudice

Anti-Romani prejudice has also been identified as a traditional obstacle to Romani integration. The failure to eliminate anti-Romani discrimination from wider society has direct implications for the implementation of employment policies. Investment in training courses and job creation will only benefit Roma if employers can be convinced to overcome their fears and prejudices with regard to hiring Romani employees. The new anti-discrimination legislation is important but as was discussed in Section 9.4.2, there is a fear among Roma that the laws will not be properly enforced. It should not be the responsibility of NGOs to get involved in secretly filming instances of discrimination. The Employment Offices and the police should take responsibility for investigating and bringing charges against any employers who fail to respect the law. When the general anti-discrimination legislation is finally passed, this should send out a strong message that discrimination for whatever reason will not be tolerated in any sphere of public life but the fact that it has been particularly difficult to pass this legislation has not been helpful. It may have a detrimental effect by sending out mixed messages to people instead of a clear signal that prejudices of this kind are unacceptable in a modern democracy.

The Ministry of the Interior runs annual campaigns highlighting the problem of racism but it is taking a long time for the message to have an impact on people's perceptions. The media also has a part to play in promoting tolerance. Given the influence the mass media has over how the general public forms opinions, it has a particular responsibility not to publish or broadcast inflammatory material which could propagate negative stereotypes about Roma. Reviews of how the national press deal with stories relating to Romani communities reveal how the media can reproduce stereotyped views. Based on his analysis of the press coverage of attacks against Roma in the early and mid 1990s, Homoláč (2003a: 80) argues that the Czech media would only accept that an act of violence was racially motivated after "all other possible motives have been eliminated". In another article, Homoláč (2003b: 122) uses the case of the murder of Romani man Tibor Berki in 1995 to demonstrate how by stressing the respectability of the man and the unprovoked nature of the attack, the Czech media was effectively differentiating this case from others where Roma were injured or killed by skinheads during 'skirmishes'

where blame could be apportioned to both sides. A further interesting point with regard to press coverage in the early 1990s was the frequency of discussions about Romani involvement in crime or other negative stereotypes of Roma, even when the story was about a member of Romani communities who had been a victim of a crime (Homoláč 2003b: 122; Šabatová *et al.* 2003: 102). In this way the media was subtly reinforcing the image of Roma as criminal and anti-social and unwilling to accept the ‘civilised’ values of the majority.

More recently, there appears to have been a shift in how the press handles stories about Romani communities. Based on his review of two broadsheet newspapers, in the period 1998 to 2002, Fawn (2002) argues that these newspapers treated Roma fairly in their reports and opinion pieces. They did not use pejorative language when referring to Roma, nor did they ascribe collective guilt when discussing the anti-social or criminal behaviour of Romani individuals. However, Fawn also argues that the politically correct approach of these newspapers did not necessarily reflect the views of readers:

If anything, the media are seen in some Czech eyes as too sympathetic and too attentive to the Roma without giving due attention to the majority’s ‘experience’ or ‘concern’ with the Roma (Fawn 2002: 88).

The complex nature of how the media reflects and forms public opinion was highlighted in 2004 when the main commercial TV channel, *Nova*, broadcast the following joke:

A Czech Gypsy⁵⁰ walks into a pub where a football game (between a Czech team and another team) is on television.
The Gypsy asks, “How are we doing?”
And someone answers, “Your people aren’t playing are they?”

While a joke such as this gives weight to Holy’s (1996) argument that Roma cannot be accepted as belonging to the Czech nation, the reaction to the joke also provides a good example of how Czech society and the media are too tolerant of anti-Romani sentiments. The response to the joke was muted in the national press. *Mladá fronta Dnes* published three articles in the days following the broadcast, two of whom condemned the decision of TV Nova to air the joke (*Mladá fronta Dnes* 2004a; *Mladá*

⁵⁰ In the Czech translation of the joke the more pejorative word *cikán* was used instead of *Rom*.

fronta Dnes 2004c) and one which was ambivalent, questioning why people would be so upset over something as harmless as a joke (*Mladá fronta Dnes* 2004b). *Radio Prague* also published an article condemning TV Nova (*Radio Prague* 2004) but the other national newspapers did not report or comment on the case. Reacting to complaints from outraged Romani representatives, the head of entertainment at TV Nova, Ivan Rössler, stated that he would apologise to any Roma who felt offended by the joke, in the same way he would apologise to any blondes or police officers offended by jokes which targeted them (*Mladá fronta Dnes* 2004a). The fact that this incident was not considered controversial and that comments comparing racist jokes to blonde jokes were left unchallenged – apart from in the articles mentioned above – demonstrates how far Czech media and society still have to go before such racism is rejected as socially unacceptable.

Chapter 8 discussed the problem of “sincere fictions” – myths which employers genuinely believe in and then use to justify decisions regarding the recruitment of people from different ethnic or social backgrounds. This is very relevant in the case of employers dealing with Czech Roma, especially given the widespread views held in society about the Romani “mentality”. In many interviews, questions about the behaviour of Roma were explained away by the fact that Roma were considered to have a different “mentality” to Czechs and that this was inherent in all Roma and could never be changed. For example, the fact that Roma lived a nomadic lifestyle many centuries ago explained why they did not respect private property in the 21st century. Their failure to manage their money stemmed not from a lack of education but from their childlike desire for instant gratification. Alcoholism and gambling addictions were also viewed as signs of a lack of self-control and responsibility rather than as symptoms of the hopelessness of their situation, given the exclusion they have suffered over generations. One principal insisted that even educated Roma could not escape the “mentality” of their community:

In this country there are Roma who are maybe lawyers, educated people, but from their behaviour you see that they are Roma. Like when one clan starts to fight with another, those clans can't stand each other. Right then, even those university-educated people get involved in the fight between the families (Principal 3).

Employers who take these stereotypes seriously will be less willing to give Romani candidates a chance, even if they personally have never had a negative experience with a Romani employee.

Referring back to the case of Marcela Zupková discussed in Section 8.2, it is clear that the employer involved was either unaware or unconcerned that her comments would be considered racist. As part of their training, teachers, judges, police officers and other public officials take part in multicultural education courses to ensure that they understand the problems of racism and discrimination. Managers in the private sector are under no such obligation. Therefore, strict enforcement of anti-discrimination legislation, national anti-racism campaigns and fair coverage of Romani issues in the media are the only ways to challenge the prejudices and break down the cycle of discrimination in the employment sector.

It is clear that the issues, which have acted as obstacles for successful Romani policy in the past, remain a problem today. However, employment policy does not exist in a vacuum; external factors such as the general state of the economy, regional disparities and other issues which influence structural unemployment must also be taken into account. Chapter 8 highlighted the problems of mobility and the opportunity costs of accepting minimum wage level work. The huge disparities across regions in terms of how well local industry coped during the transition also have an impact on unemployment levels and the opportunities for job creation. These problems affect all jobseekers, although given their additional historical disadvantages Roma are sometimes affected more than others. The following sections of this chapter look in more detail at how these issues have influenced the effectiveness of the employment and social welfare policies.

10.2 Motivation to Seek Employment

Although unemployment is a serious problem in some parts of the Czech Republic, the situation is not as extreme as in some other countries in CEE. One of the biggest problems is that many Czech jobseekers (Romani and non-Romani) are not flexible enough in their attitude to finding employment. Many are unwilling to move to find

employment and many are also unwilling to work for wages at the rate of the minimum wage. A comparative study of work values revealed that compared to other Europeans, Czech were more likely to choose to remain unemployed rather than to migrate to find employment or to accept a low paid job (Flek and Večerník, 2004: 20). An important challenge of the employment policy is to find ways to overcome the lack of flexibility in the Czech labour force.

The lack of affordable housing for workers who need to migrate from one part of the country to another is a problem which has already been raised in Section 8.3 and was highlighted by the MLSA in the National Action Plan on Employment 2004 – 2006. However, their proposed solution was to allow a fully free housing market to emerge by reforming the system of regulated rent (MLSA 2004b: 18). This policy has been pursued and in December 2005 the Chamber of Deputies approved legislation which would deregulate the rent market. The result will be that from January 2007 regulated rents will rise by an average of 14.2 percent per annum for 4 years (*Radio Prague* 2005b). Deregulation has been recommended by the OECD as a means to increase the geographical mobility of the labour force, but the reforms could make life even more difficult for low paid workers. Rent deregulation is necessary in order to create more realistic prices, to ensure that citizens who could afford to pay more do so and to ensure that landlords earn enough money on their properties to pay for the proper upkeep of the buildings. There are cases where people are reluctant to seek employment in another part of the country because they do not want to move and risk having to pay higher rents. Increasing rent everywhere will remove this obstacle to labour market mobility but it will also add to the financial problems of the poorest members of society, who under the new rules will find it difficult to afford to live anywhere. Therefore, increased investment in building affordable and social housing is necessary if people at the low-wage end of the spectrum are to be encouraged to move in order to find employment. This part of the equation has yet to be properly addressed by the government and the municipal authorities and pilot schemes such as that proposed by Romani Advisor 2 in the previous section need more support in order to guarantee the right of all citizens to a decent home.

A further problem with regard to motivating people to seek employment is that the difference between earning the minimum wage and receiving social welfare benefits is not substantial enough to motivate jobseekers to accept the opportunities of employment they are offered. Studies indicate that the reservation wage – the lowest wage which jobseekers are willing to accept – is higher than the minimum wage. Flek and Večerník (2004) argue that the reservation wage is actually close to the average industrial wage and, as such, a totally unrealistic aspiration for jobseekers with no qualifications. They accuse jobseekers of being too “choosy”, claiming that even in areas of high unemployment certain unattractive positions would remain unfilled if foreign workers were not recruited (Flek and Večerník 2004: 20). Reducing the amount of benefits for jobseekers who refuse to accept reasonable employment offers may help to motivate some, but this problem is extremely complex and requires a multi-faceted approach. The tax burden on low-wage earners needs to be addressed, as does the question of how to regulate benefits for part-time workers. One innovative new programme proposed by the MLSA offers workers earning the minimum wage the opportunity to job share, retaining their wages and spending the rest of their working time either studying or working as a volunteer for an NGO. In this way two people are removed from the unemployment register and gain work experience and NGOs get extra support from the volunteers (*Radio Prague* 2006b). The scheme will run first as a pilot project and, based on an assessment in 2007, a decision will be made on whether this will be rolled out nationwide. The impact of the new social welfare reforms must also be monitored closely because there is a danger that some people might find themselves in an even more precarious situation. The overall aim of employment and social welfare policy is to prevent social exclusion, not to punish ‘parasites’ and the implementers of the policies must not lose sight of that key goal.

10.3 Regional Differences

The employment reforms discussed in this thesis are intended to be of benefit to all Czech citizens who need assistance to return to the labour force. However, in terms of benefiting Romani communities in particular, these reforms have been more successful in České Budějovice than in Ostrava. This is because the overall rate of unemployment is much lower in České Budějovice (3.9 percent in May 2005) and Roma face less

competition when they apply for work. Active Labour Market Policies such as training and placement programmes were not as helpful to Roma in Ostrava because unemployment was a much bigger problem generally (15.3 percent in May 2005), which did not only affect Romani communities (MLSA 2006b). The pressure to have qualifications and work experience was much more pronounced in Ostrava. In České Budějovice, officials were of the opinion that local Roma would find employment if they wanted to work, because employers were willing to hire unskilled staff and train them themselves. On the other hand, in Ostrava, it was acknowledged that even if jobseekers were very motivated and attended training courses to get more suitable qualifications, they would still run into difficulties because of the overall lack of employment opportunities in the city. The Employment Office Representative expressed her frustration about this problem to me:

We have motivational courses for people who have been looking for work for a long time, who need a boost for their morale. [...] Quite a lot of people do these courses and I have to say they have been successful. But it constantly comes to nothing because even if the people are really motivated and everything, we don't have any vacancies for them and that is the biggest problem. [...] It's like this, if they want to learn we can help them with that, but if they want to work there are no vacancies (Employment Office Representative 2).

The region around České Budějovice relies on agricultural production (particularly fish farming) and tourism as sources of income. The city has attracted investment from international firms including Bosch and has also marketed itself as a popular tourist destination, particularly for Austrian and German tourists. The manufacturing industry is not extensive but it is diverse, including textiles, food and beverage production and machinery production (Kraj-Jihočeský 2006). This diversity made the transition to a full market economy easier to manage and is in stark contrast to the situation in Ostrava.

The nature of economic development during the communist period has left an extremely problematic legacy in some parts of the Czech Republic and Ostrava is a classic example of how this legacy is causing intractable problems with unemployment. Ostrava was developed as a key industrial complex where industry was focused almost entirely on mining, metallurgy and heavy industry (OECD 1996b: 111). Two steel works, Vítkovice and Nová Huť were the city's main employers. The key markets were

other CMEA countries and as a result of the availability of massive amounts of state subsidies, the lack of competition and the failure to introduce new technology, the enterprises were very inefficient in terms of the use of labour and material resources. These problems were exposed in the 1990s and despite the efforts of the state to minimise the blow to the region, many people were made redundant as industry was restructured (OECD 1996b: 111). Since 1989, the numbers employed in steel production have halved and in coal mining and related industries, there was a 62 percent drop in employment between 1989 and 1998 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006). The concentration of employment in these failing industries and the shock caused by mass lay-offs has had a significant impact on the city. A great deal of investment and support is required to find alternative sources of income and employment.

A further problem for the city is its location at the periphery of the country. Although Ostrava is the third largest city in the country, transport links are not very good. The city is not connected to the motorway network and although plans to finally resolve this problem are viewed as a step in the right direction, not everyone is convinced that this will be enough to transform the fortunes of the city. The representative from the city's Employment Office painted a bleak picture for the future:

We said that when they begin building the motorway the situation will improve but now we say once they have finished the motorway it will improve. Really, we are very cut off from the outside world, you can't get here easily. Companies should set up some warehouses or factories here but because of the inaccessibility, more are actually moving away (Employment Office Representative 2).

If employment policies are to be effective, more must be done to promote investment and job creation in the Moravia-Silesia region. Earlier in this chapter it was noted that the Moravia-Silesia Region has been designated as a NUTS II region. The funding available from the European Commission must be used and invested in job creation strategies. The success in 2006 of attracting Hyundai to the region is an excellent start and hopefully more such projects can be developed over the coming years.

10.4 Pro-Romani Policies

The decision of the MLSA to offer support to “persons who are difficult to place on the labour market” rather than specifically Roma has been referred to throughout the chapters on employment policy and a discussion of the merits of this decision will be provided here. The 2002 Updated Concept notes that although the recipients of the support offered under this ethnoculturally neutral definition are often Roma, direct programmes aimed at Romani communities should become a priority of the overall policy (Council for Romani Affairs, 2002: 14). The Concept recommends offering additional support in the form of “equalising action programmes” to help people “in a deprived situation for various socially or historically conditioned reasons”. It argues that this is the only way to resolve problems which have formed over generations. However, the report also adds that this definition could include non-Roma in similar circumstances (Government of the Czech Republic: 4). Certainly, the research for this thesis demonstrates that when employment opportunities are generally scarce the provision of training and placement programmes does not have a significant impact on unemployment in Romani communities. Their lack of relevant skills and the problems of racial discrimination mean that when Roma compete with members of the majority society for employment opportunities, they are generally at a disadvantage. It would therefore, appear obvious that programmes and policies specific to the needs of Roma are necessary to assist their inclusion in the labour market. The question of how, or whether, to develop policies specifically for Romani communities was discussed by many respondents. Their views will be outlined here.

A senior official in Ostrava’s social welfare department talked about the importance of developing policies which were sensitive to the needs of different ethnic groups because, in her experience, Roma had very different needs to non-Roma. She argued that although many Roma had problems with housing and unemployment, like other socially disadvantaged members of the majority population, in other ways they differed from the majority:

For example, you don’t find many Roma among the homeless people, or in the retirement homes. I don’t think we have one single Rom in our retirement home and you could say it’s because they don’t live as long or

they look after their elderly family members themselves. They are used to looking after their own, young and old. That's an example of how they are different to the majority. So besides all the laws and regulations which we are given and are part of the social policy, there must also be social programmes for different groups of citizens (Ostrava Municipal Social Affairs Department Senior Official).

On the other hand, many respondents voiced concern that the non-Roma majority population resented the extra funding being allocated to Romani projects. The official cited above also remarked that given that so many Roma were completely dependent on social welfare support to survive, many non-Roma considered this sufficient assistance:

Society disapproves of that [pro-Romani policy] and is resentful of it. You feel it here too in the social welfare sphere, that when you want to treat everyone the same way but although you treat everyone the same way almost 90 percent of Roma are on social welfare (Ostrava Municipal Social Affairs Department Senior Official).

The idea that Roma are already the recipients of too much support and are not sufficiently grateful for the help they get was a common theme. Many respondents cited the problem with housing as a key example. It is a commonly held belief that Romani families are allocated apartments ahead of non-Romani applicants and that when Romani families get a new home they soon destroy it by burning all the furniture as firewood and selling any iron fittings as scrap. They then have to be provided with a new home. The Romani Advisor in Ostrava admitted that this has indeed happened on occasion, whereas other respondents believed that such cases arose frequently and nothing was being done to punish the behaviour. One municipal official in České Budějovice claimed:

We are not so rich that we can tolerate a Romani family who gets a flat from the city, then destroys it; burns the windows, the doors, destroys the whole building – because when they ruin one flat they move into the second, third, fourth and they wreck the whole building. Then they come to the town hall and say they need a flat! (České Budějovice Municipal Education Department, Senior Official)

One (non-Romani) NGO worker also raised the problem of the destruction of property. In his view the problem was that too often these tenants did not appreciate the value of

what the state had given them. He worried that the whole basis of the social welfare system was flawed:

Many times when white people see that they give the Roma new flats, which they destroy and then get repaired and they [the non-Roma] have to buy their own flat because they don't get one from the state, then that adds more fuel to the fire. Truly that is the problem; most of them don't know how to look after it [their flat] because it didn't cost them anything. They don't have to pay for it. They just get it and so they have no real relationship with it. ... How many times has the help actually damaged the people because they are not capable of developing a relationship to those things, so that the thing has some kind of value and they must work for a month to earn it? When they get it, it is sometimes a false help, rather it hurts them and then they go to the state and want more but the state has no money so it ends up like in Slovakia, where they cancelled the social welfare (NGO 6, representative 11).

The perception that the state is overly generous to Romani communities is already widely held and many respondents were unsure that the majority society would tolerate policies offering Roma more support. One regional official thought this could only work if the government showed how helping Romani communities would be of benefit to the whole of Czech society in the long run. The majority of respondents believed that offering extra support to children to help them get a proper education was worthwhile but they were less convinced about offering support to adults. In these cases the respondents felt it would be necessary to stress to Roma the responsibilities which come with their rights, although some felt that the support programmes would always be abused by some Roma.

Interestingly, specific programmes for Romani communities are not very popular among Roma either. Many prefer having equal access to the general programmes offered to jobseekers and are suspicious about programmes which specifically target Roma. Employment Office Representative 1 reported that her Romani clients did not want to be treated differently because they suspected that programmes only for Roma would not be as good. They believed that it was better to be integrated into general programmes:

They want to integrate themselves, at least that's what they tell me. They don't want something special just for them because they have the feeling that it is bad (Employment Office Representative1).

This view was shared by one FSA who did not approve of segregating Roma in the provision of housing or services. One of the schools in Ostrava had been established with the needs of Romani children in mind and provided pupils with a carefully tailored curriculum and many forms of additional support. However in her view this was still not as good as having a mainstream school teaching a mix of Romani and non-Romani pupils. NGOs in Ostrava also encouraged Romani and non-Romani members of the community to get involved in joint activities, although in some cases this worked better than in others. The most successful project – the co-existence village – provided housing and support services to Romani and non-Romani families and this was considered to be an example of best practice.

Indeed, even if there were a strong demand for exclusively Romani programmes, it would be very difficult to provide this kind of support. The South Bohemian Regional Coordinator for Romani Affairs pointed out that the main problem with giving specific support to Roma was that it is difficult to define who would be entitled to this support. This is because firstly, there are no clear figures as to actual size of the Roma population, and secondly, there is no official definition of what designates a Romani person. This makes planning and developing proposal targeted specifically at Romani communities very difficult:

In order for us to push any reform through, we need more financial resources for the projects, for the work with the community. It's not possible for this reason [that we do not have reliable statistics]. We need this information for ourselves, to know how many Roma there are in the Czech Republic, how many Roma are unemployed, how many are pensioners, how many Roma have serious problems with housing, how many have problems with drugs. You couldn't abuse this information, it would only be for internal purposes. Just so the government can know how many Roma there are in the country so they can develop programmes specifically for Romani communities (South Bohemia Regional Coordinator for Romani Affairs).

Equally, not all Roma are in need of help. There are Romani families, such as those of many of the TAs interviewed, where the parents are employed, who ensure that their children attend school and who are well integrated into the majority society. These families do not need extra financial support, as they are capable of managing on their own. However, they do still need support in terms of protection from discrimination because this affects Roma in all social classes. Others, particularly the families of mixed marriages prefer not accept offers of extra support because they do not wish to officially declare themselves as Roma. The Romani Advisor in Ostrava has encountered this phenomenon:

Nowadays there are many mixed families - Roma with non-Roma and that is easier, especially for the children. They aren't identified as Roma and don't feel it at school. They do not declare that they are Roma. So if I know of someone and offer them the scholarship for secondary school, many of them don't want it because the children would have to declare on the application that they are Roma and they do not want to do that (Romani Advisor 2).

Although it might be considered useful for the MLSA to invest in programmes which only target Romani communities, in practice this is not likely to happen. The government has rejected the idea of enforcing quotas for when employers recruit staff. The question of collecting data based on ethnicity has yet to be resolved. This is problematic because it is not possible for Employment Offices to track how much of their time is spent helping Romani jobseekers, or how successful the outcomes of these programmes are for Romani communities. The employment of Romani Advisors and FSAs to work in Romani communities, which is the one programme designed to specifically employ Roma, is useful and deserves further investment. Although this involves expanding the staff of the state bureaucracy, something successive governments have pledged to prevent, it is nonetheless a useful means to provide support to socially disadvantaged Roma. However, to be most effective, it could be argued that instead of developing pro-Romani programmes, a better solution would be to enhance investment in general job creation and training programmes, as well as to ensure the strict enforcement of anti-discrimination legislation.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that there are still many problems with the current economic policies generally and that they are still not meeting the needs of all Romani jobseekers. Traditional obstacles to policy implementation, such as the lack of cooperation with local authorities and the persistence of prejudicial and discriminatory attitudes pose obstacles to the efficient implementation of employment policy reform. Wider problems, which affect all jobseekers, and not only Romani communities, also exist. These include issues with the design of the employment policy, which fails to encourage the geographic mobility of the workforce and has not yet resolved the problem of the reservation wage being higher than the current minimum wage. Further problems with regional inequalities also need to be resolved. The MLSA has decided to support Romani jobseekers using the same support instruments that are available to all jobseekers regardless of their ethnicity. While this appears to be the fairest, and possibly the only realistic means of providing support, it further highlights the importance of tackling racism in society to ensure that Romani communities get a fair chance to compete with all other jobseekers. Motivating members of Romani communities who have been unemployed for a very long time, some since 1990, is a serious issue and the best prospect to resolve this problem is to employ FSAs in socially disadvantaged Romani communities who can support jobseekers and encourage those who have lost interest in finding employment to try again. Education, of course, is also a key element of the employment policy and this is the link to the other main section of the thesis. If more Romani children can be encouraged to stay at school and get good qualifications which improve their chances of finding employment, this will also benefit the employment policy as it is far easier to help jobseekers with skills than to work with those who have nothing to offer employers.

PART 3: SUMMARY

Part 3 of the thesis examined the problem of unemployment in Romani communities in the Czech Republic. Chapter 8 outlined the main barriers which have prevented the full inclusion of Roma in the labour market, particularly the problems of a low skills and education base, discrimination, poor quality housing and the fundamental flaws in the design of the social welfare system, which mean that for some individuals, particularly adults with large families, accepting social welfare benefits is more profitable than working for the minimum wage. Chapter 9 provided a detailed analysis of the programmes being implemented to support Romani jobseekers and Chapter 10 discussed the challenges which face the MLSA in terms of creating new employment opportunities and reforming the social welfare system.

Regional economic inequalities are a significant factor in explaining the different experiences of Roma in Ostrava and České Budějovice. In Ostrava there is a severe housing shortage and high unemployment. This means that there is more competition for every available vacancy and many Roma subsequently suffer from a lower standard of living. Problems of communication and cooperation between the central, regional and local authorities cause difficulties in terms of implementing policy. Furthermore, anti-Romani prejudices are a persistent problem in the labour market because many employers are reluctant to hire Roma either on the basis of their own previous negative experiences or because they are influenced by the stories they have heard about Roma being unreliable or dishonest employees. Unemployment is one of the most significant factors leading to poverty and social exclusion and if the government is committed to tackling the problem more investment will be needed, particularly in job creation and training schemes. The social welfare system is being reformed and it remains to be seen how much of an impact this will have on the rates of unemployment in Romani communities. The taxation system also needs to be addressed and more support must be directed towards those earning the lowest wages.

The MLSA has developed a generally ethnoculturally neutral policy to support all jobseekers rather than singling out Romani communities. It is the conclusion of this thesis that direct support, other than in the form of employing Romani FSAs, TAs and

Advisors, would be inappropriate given the current complexities with directing specific support at Romani communities. The link between Part 3 and Part 2, which examined education policy, is the strong evidence that the main reason why so many Roma are unemployed is their lack of educational qualifications and work experience. Therefore, if the overall policy of Romani integration is to succeed, it is important that the problems in the education system are addressed in tandem with those in the labour market. The concluding chapter of this thesis will draw together the main themes of the thesis and offer an assessment of the overall effectiveness of the state's plans to create a more inclusive society.

CHAPTER 11: CONCLUSION

11.1 Overview of Thesis

The main objective of this thesis was to investigate how national policy to address the social exclusion of Romani communities in the Czech Republic was being implemented at the local level. In order to achieve this, it was necessary first to study the government's overall integration strategy and then to discuss how this policy was being translated into practice with the key actors (local officials, social workers, school principals and NGO workers) who were responsible for policy delivery. Much has been written about the development of integration policy at the national level, as the literature review provided in the introduction to the thesis demonstrated. However, this thesis addresses the lack of empirical data regarding the effectiveness of these policies by providing a detailed analysis of how key programmes in the spheres of education and employment policy are being implemented.

The discussion of Romani integration policy provided by this thesis complements the existing literature examining Roma in a variety of ways. It offers a case study of the situation in the Czech Republic, with details of the historical development of Romani policy and the current state of affairs, which can be used in conjunction with other recent research examining policy towards Roma in other CEE countries, to aid comparison of the integration of Roma across Europe. Using Guy's earlier research of Czechoslovak and Czech policy towards Roma as a model, this thesis provides new empirical data and a detailed analysis of the implementation of the 2000 Concept at the local level. The emphasis on the views of officials and practitioners involved in policy implementation offers a new approach to the question of how best to address social exclusion of Romani communities. It complements other recent research examining how the integration process is influenced by mainstream political parties (Barany 2002 and Pečínka 2004), Romani politicians (Mirga and Gheorghe 1997 and Sobotka 2001b), advocacy networks (Vermeersch 2005), the media (Fawn 2002 and Homoláč 2003), the EU (Ram 2003 and Guglielmo 2004) and by the prejudices held by the majority society and Roma themselves (Říčan 1998, Čulík 2000 and Barany 2002).

Two Czech cities, Ostrava and České Budějovice, were chosen as research sites. It was initially hoped that the obvious differences between the cities in terms of their size, the strength of the local economy and the size of their Romani populations would allow for a better understanding of why certain programmes were more successful in one city than the other. However, it became apparent that although some of the divergence in the success of various programmes could be explained by these differences, other problems which arose during the implementation of the main programmes, were common to both cities. For example, placement schemes for employees with no marketable skills were more successful in České Budějovice where unemployment levels were lower and there was less competition for vacancies. However, there was less of a difference in the experience of both cities with regard to the uptake of secondary school scholarships or protection from discrimination in the labour market.

In terms of research design, the decision was taken to focus on the views of the people involved in policy delivery, rather than policy development because it was felt that they were in the best position to explain how the programmes functioned in practice and to identify the obstacles which hampered the effectiveness of the programmes. Given that these actors have few opportunities to contribute to the consultation process during policy design, offering an analysis of policy from their perspective strengthens the originality of this thesis. Other research has demonstrated the extent to which these 'street level bureaucrats' (Lipsky 1980) can influence policy delivery. Therefore, it is important to understand how these individuals perceive the policies and how committed they are to achieving the aims of the integration strategy. An analysis of their views is an important contribution to understanding how to develop programmes which will be truly effective.

One of the key areas of debate with regard to directing support at Roma is the question of whether the problems in Romani communities should be framed in terms of minority rights protection or the alleviation of poverty and deprivation. Given that Roma do not properly fit the standard paradigm of a national minority – primarily because they lack a homeland state which would be willing to defend their interests at the international level – the social exclusion model framework is more helpful. Understanding social exclusion as a multifaceted process that can impact on families or communities in different ways

is particularly useful as a means to describe the situation of Roma in the Czech Republic. Socio-economic exclusion and spatial exclusion are the most apparent problems for many Romani communities but exclusion from the political and cultural spheres of social life also affects families who may be financially secure but are still rejected as outsiders by the majority society. The 2000 Concept and the MLSA policy documents also focus on the social exclusion of Romani communities; therefore, the same approach was adopted for this thesis.

The thesis was divided into three parts, each of which offered an analysis of the integration policy embodied in the 2000 Concept and other important policy documents, first from a general perspective and then focusing on the spheres of education and employment. Part 1 provided an overview of the discrimination experienced by Roma since they first settled in the region and strategies employed by successive regimes from the Middle Ages onwards to manage the Romani communities resident in their territory. It also discussed the development of the current integration policy. Chapter 2 provided a chronological account of those strategies and noted recurring problems which hampered the effectiveness of the policies – in particular the difficulties involved in forcing local authorities to implement policy and the failure to address the deeply entrenched anti-Romani prejudices held by the majority population. This chapter noted the predictions of other scholars that these issues would continue to hamper the implementation of the 2000 Concept and so this was one of the central questions examined in the thesis. Chapter 3 examined the reasons why the Czech authorities decided to prioritise the question of Romani integration in the late 1990s and argued that this was the result of external pressure from international institutions such as the European Union rather than domestic pressure from voters. This raised the concern that it would be difficult to convince local officials of the merits of pursuing a social inclusion policy targeting Roma when this did not appear to be a priority for their local constituents. Chapter 4 discussed the debates which arose as the Romani integration strategy was developed. It observed how adherence to the civic principle persisted in the manifestos of political parties and in the opinions expressed by officials, despite the change in official policy as stated in documents such as the 2000 Concept and its Updates. It highlighted the difficulties involved in explaining to the general public how the overall strategy has shifted from an assimilationist to an inclusive policy and how this requires changes in

their behaviour, as much as it demands changes in the behaviour of Roma. Finally, Chapter 4 questioned whether policies which specifically target Romani communities would be more effective than ethnoculturally neutral programmes which address particular social problems. The discussion of education and employment policy in Parts 2 and 3 examined how Roma suffer from exclusion in these particular spheres and analysed the implementation of policies which should help to support the inclusion of Roma in schools and the labour market. The questions raised in Part 1 were referred to throughout Parts 2 and 3 and the conclusions reached are drawn together below.

11.2 Contribution to Policy Implementation Literature

The main aim of this study was to identify and explain the different outcomes of integration programmes in Ostrava and České Budějovice and the methodology was designed with Lipsky's (1980) focus on practitioners at the 'street level' in mind. This thesis provides new information about the discretion which bureaucrats and practitioners can exercise at the policy implementation stage and the local pressures which influence how they make decisions about resource allocation. As was noted in the introduction, this thesis did not set out to develop a new theory to explain how policies are implemented. A multi-disciplinary approach was adopted and a variety of frameworks were drawn upon to explain the empirical findings, as has been recommended by policy implementation scholars (John 1998; Meier 1999; O'Toole 2000; Saetren 2005).

The low level of engagement with the policies of the 2000 Concept in České Budějovice and the subsequent problems implementing the main educational programmes are evidence in support of Hjern and Porter's (1981) 'inter-organisational analysis' framework, which emphasised the need for organisations at different institutional levels to cooperate in order for a policy to succeed. However, to understand why this cooperation was lacking, Goggin *et al.*'s (1990) 'communication theory' is helpful. They highlight how individuals responsible for policy delivery at the local level can struggle to take in all the information and instructions coming from the centre and claim that this has implications for how activities are prioritised. The research for this thesis revealed this to be the case in České Budějovice, where officials had

misinterpreted some of the objectives of the 2000 Concept and were not aware of how to access funding for the main programmes. Bardach's (1977) focus on the defensive nature of implementation politics is also relevant here. His research found that too much energy was wasted "manoeuvring to avoid responsibility, scrutiny and blame" rather than trying to find solutions to problems. This analysis captures well the tensions between the MoE, the municipal authorities and the local Romani community in České Budějovice.

Sabatier and Jenkins-Smiths' (1989) 'advocacy coalition framework' focusing on subsystems of actors who shared a 'policy belief' regardless of their role in the policy-making hierarchy can be applied to the more positive situation in Ostrava, where the municipal authorities worked together with NGOs and schools to improve education programmes targeting Romani pupils. NGOs and schools developed successful pilot projects which were eventually adopted as national policy. This would not have been possible without the support of local officials who shared the belief that more had to be done to support Romani children and lobbied the MoE to provide more funding for such initiatives.

The different approaches taken by local officials to the national integration strategy in Ostrava and České Budějovice reflects Mayntz's (1993) analysis of how a range of factors, including how powerful, well organised or independent an organisation is, influence the relationship lower levels of government have with central authorities leading to varying outcomes for policy and governance. Some will be more able or willing to avoid direction than others. The manner in which officials in České Budějovice resisted the demands of the MoE to run preparatory classes exemplifies her analysis. However, officials in Ostrava did not engage more with the national policy because they felt under duress. Rather, they were acutely aware of the need to develop an effective policy and they cooperated with the central authorities to win more funding and support for local projects.

As a study of the implications of the decentralisation reforms this thesis offers further insights into the problems already identified by other scholars in the field. The continuing financial dependency of municipalities and regions on central authorities

highlighted by Lacina and Vajdová (2000) and Krátký *et al.* (2002) led in this case to uncertainty about how and when to access funding for different projects and caused significant problems for the implementation of integration programmes. Tensions regarding how responsibilities are shared between the municipal and regional authorities, noted by Ferry and McMaster (2005b) and Myant and Smith (2006), were also reflected in the debates in Ostrava over the abolition of remedial special schools.

With the transformation of remedial special schools into mainstream primary schools with special support programmes, responsibility for managing these schools was transferred from the regional authorities to the municipalities. However, municipal officials complained that this was a cynical move because although these schools would still have to provide additional support to pupils with special needs, the municipalities had not been allocated extra funds to meet the new costs.

This thesis illustrates the important role played by local officials and practitioners at the policy delivery stage and emphasises the importance of improving communication and collaboration among the different actors and institutions involved in the integration policy process. By providing a detailed account of the case of implementing integration policy in the Czech Republic this can be classified as a Phase I study according to Schneider's (1999) definition, whose empirical findings may be utilised in the future to develop a comparative analysis of integration policies in CEE.

11.3 Main Obstacles to Policy Implementation

Other scholars including Marushiakova and Popov (2001) and Guy (2001a) predicted that issues, such as the uncooperative attitudes of local authorities and the pervasive anti-Romani sentiment in the majority society would cause the policies designed to resolve the social exclusion of Romani communities, outlined in the 1997 Bratinka Report and the 2000 Concept, to fail as previous policies had. The main findings of my research confirm that these issues remain problematic. Municipal authorities have a great deal of influence over how programmes are implemented, particularly with regard to education programmes because they are responsible for the running of primary schools. In České Budějovice, education officials believed that they could not afford to fund projects specifically targeting Romani pupils from the municipal education budget and they were not well informed regarding how best to access extra funds from the

MoE. They were also unconvinced that preparatory classes and TAs were actually necessary to improve the educational attainment of Romani pupils and resented being told to implement programmes, especially as they had not been consulted about the design of the programmes. In terms of employment policy, the local authorities had less direct influence over policy implementation as decisions about the minimum wage and social welfare reform were made centrally. However, municipal authorities had influence over the decision to employ Romani Advisors and FSAs and also over the development of affordable housing. In these instances the authorities in Ostrava were more pro-active with regard to the employment of Romani Advisors, Assistants and FSAs than the officials in České Budějovice. Housing standards were more problematic in Ostrava, however. The city is overwhelmed by the enormity of this problem in some areas and new investment strategies need to be developed to successfully deal with the issue of housing. Local authorities play a key role in ensuring that the aims of the 2000 Concept are met. Therefore, it is imperative that the central policy makers in the Ministries and the Council for Romani Affairs communicate with local authorities and invite them to become involved in the policy design process. This would enable officials to recognise the value and relevance of the programmes and encourage them to be more enthusiastic when it came to implementing policies and finding the necessary funding to support the programmes.

Anti-Romani prejudice continues to hamper efforts to promote social inclusion in the sphere of education and employment. Schools with a high proportion of Romani pupils acquire a reputation of offering a lower standard of education. The principals of these schools then find it difficult to convince families who are very interested in their children's education to enrol their children, which results in the ghettoisation of schools. School principals in České Budějovice were worried that if they implemented programmes for Romani pupils such as establishing preparatory classes or employing Romani TAs they would attract more Romani pupils and this would cause non-Romani parents to withdraw their children. This had not been the experience in Ostrava, where such programmes were successfully established in a number of schools. The rising proportion of Romani pupils was not caused by the introduction of these programmes, but rather by the spatial segregation developing in neighbourhoods and catchment areas as non-Romani families moved away from the parts of the city where Roma lived.

Despite the introduction of anti-discrimination legislation in employment relations, the failure to pass comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation covering all aspects of public life has weakened the message that all forms of discrimination are unacceptable. Many employers are prejudiced against Romani applicants but this is very difficult to prove. On the other hand, some Romani jobseekers who are not hired for valid reasons blame racism instead of their lack of qualifications or their poor interview techniques. Until a level of trust can be developed through the strict enforcement of anti-discrimination legislation, this problem will continue.

While the attitudes of local authorities and widespread anti-Romani discrimination continue to act as obstacles to the implementation of the strategy outlined in the 2000 Concept, these are not the only issues hampering the implementation process. My research revealed problems with the design and financing of programmes, the question of how to win the trust of Roma and to encourage them to participate in the programmes and the difficulties caused by regional economic inequalities. While better communication and collaboration with local authorities is important in order to win their approval for the strategy, it is equally important that the process of accessing funding to run the various programmes is straightforward and that programmes are designed to be relevant to the needs of local Romani communities.

The transfer of payment of TA wages from the MoE to regional authorities should increase the efficiency of that scheme but the design of the scholarship scheme should be amended to provide students with more advice and support around the submission of claims. Given the complexities surrounding the problem of truancy, withholding social welfare payments from the parents of truants is an example of a programme which could cause more harm than good if teachers and principal enforced the rules in every case. However, it remains at the principal's discretion whether or not to use this regulation as a means to ensure parents send their children to school.

Encouraging Roma to get involved with the programmes on offer is an issue which could be addressed by using Roma Advisors and FSAs to promote the schemes and to raise awareness about the aims of the 2000 Concept. It is equally important to ensure that the programmes are relevant to the local communities. For example, training

schemes for jobseekers should teach skills which are in demand in the local labour market. This is important to prevent money being wasted, but also to demonstrate to local Roma the usefulness of the programmes. The necessity for Roma to acquire skills must be made clear but local Employment Offices must also be seen to be taking the issue of discrimination seriously in order to challenge the scepticism of Romani jobseekers.

Regional inequalities make the implementation of certain schemes more difficult in some parts of the country. For example, the placement scheme for “difficult to employ” jobseekers was more successful in České Budějovice where there was more willingness on the part of employers to train staff. In Ostrava the high level of unemployment locally meant that unskilled jobseekers found it difficult to compete with qualified and experienced jobseekers and consequently finding employment was much more difficult. Alterations to the Romani integration strategy will not be enough to deal with this particular problem, a national strategy focussing on regeneration of the economically weakest regions in the country is necessary and improved Romani integration into the labour market will follow as general employment conditions improve.

11.4 Impact of External Pressure on Local Perceptions of Policy

Chapter 3 raised the possibility, that the development of a national Romani integration strategy motivated by international rather than domestic pressure would have negative implications for policy implementation. There were concerns that local authorities would resent having to adhere to the demands of international bodies and would feel less obliged to implement policy that had not been requested by local voters. However, the research for this thesis indicates that the situation was more complex than this. Many local officials did express annoyance that they were not consulted properly about policy development but generally they recognised that a strategy to deal with the question of social exclusion of Romani communities was necessary, whether or not voters considered it a priority. Pressure from the EU was also viewed differently in Ostrava and České Budějovice. In České Budějovice, local officials were aware that the central authorities were being put under pressure by the European Commission but they did not believe this would have any implications for them. Romani integration policy

was not a high priority in the city and the officials were dismissive of the idea that the EU could influence their behaviour with regard to Romani policy. They also expressed cynicism about the way the treatment of Roma was criticised in the Czech Republic when conditions were, in their view, worse in many of the ‘older’ member states. In this way these officials conformed to the behaviour predicted in Chapter 3. In Ostrava, however a different trend was observed with regard to opinions about the pressure from the EU. Here, the municipal authorities were already trying to find ways to improve social inclusion and as a result the intervention of the EU was welcomed. The interest of the European Commission in the question of Romani policy was viewed as a means to access more funding and to motivate the central authorities to give more support to the plans and programmes developed locally.

However, there was one example in Ostrava of ‘foreign’ pressure which was not welcome – the court case brought by the ERRC and local families. While the youth clubs and events organised by the Salesian missions and the activities of local grassroots NGOs were approved of, the ERRC was considered to be a foreign NGO because it did not have a proper base in the city and its interest in the court case was viewed by schools and officials as politically motivated rather than having the best interests of the children at the centre of the case in mind. Although many officials accepted that the case had resulted in some good, they resented the way that Ostrava had been cast in such a bad light. Where NGOs cooperated with the local authorities rather than antagonising them, examples of which are referred to in the thesis, the results appear to be very effective.

11.5 The Civic Principle

Section 4.1 discussed how the civic principle, which was widely considered to be the fairest way to deal with the presence of ethnic minorities when the Czech Republic was established, is now being reassessed. However, although the language of policy documents such as the 1997 Bratinka Report and the 2000 Concept has changed to favour equal opportunities programmes which allow Roma the chance to catch up with the rest of society, in reality the civic principle is still widely applied. The main problem identified in Section 4.1 with regard to the civic principle was that confusion existed

over the legality of collecting and holding statistical information about Roma or other ethnic minorities. Therefore, the failure of many organisations to hold such information makes it extremely difficult to measure the effectiveness of programmes designed to benefit Romani communities or to identify the people most in need of support. This in turn makes it difficult to advocate the development of policies which specifically target Roma rather than ethnoculturally neutral policies which would benefit any citizens in need of help, as discussed in Section 10.4.

There was widespread support for the civic principle among officials in České Budějovice, where the appointment of a Romani Advisor for the city was delayed because the officials were not willing to appoint a Romani person for the post, simply because they were Romani. Instead, they insisted on finding the most qualified person, regardless of their ethnicity. Opinion among school principals was divided over the employment of Romani TAs. While some principals believed that a Romani person would be more suitable because he or she could win the trust of children and parents more easily, others insisted that it was the personality rather than the ethnicity of the candidate which was more important. However, anti-Romani prejudices also exist among some teachers. For instance, when schools in Ostrava first began to employ Romani TAs, there were difficulties convincing teachers that a Romani person would be able to do the job properly. This is another example of the difficulties Roma face in the labour market, where they have to challenge the preconceptions of employers about their abilities as a result of their ethnicity. The policy of employing Roma as Advisors, TAs or FSAs was intended to provide Roma with an easier path to employment in some spheres. However, if members of the majority society reject this attempt and insist on choosing the best candidate for the post, although this may be considered fair, it is missing the point of this policy initiative. While an appointment system based on merit is generally recognised as the fairest in civic democracies, in certain cases such as that of the Roma where generations of marginalisation have left many at a general disadvantage in the labour market, affirmative action policies can be an important way to redress the balance. Therefore, for this policy to succeed it is important that the MLSA clearly explains how such types of affirmative action will be beneficial to the whole of society in the long term, by encouraging young Roma to remain at school and get qualifications and by helping to address the problem of unemployment in Romani

communities. Equally if Roma could be convinced that by declaring their ethnicity and allowing data about their lives to be monitored anonymously they would benefit through the development of more effective forms of support, then the dilemma over how to provide support specifically to Romani communities could be resolved.

11.6 Explaining the Social Inclusion Strategy to the General Public

Section 4.4 demonstrated how the main political parties also use the discourse of the civic principle in their manifestos to avoid alienating voters by appearing to favour any ethnic group. However, on many occasions this thesis has raised the difficulty of educating the general public about the necessity to support programmes which address social exclusion of Romani communities and the obligation to eliminate all forms of institutional, physical and verbal discrimination against minority groups. National surveys and research conducted by other scholars highlight the fact that many members of the majority society have yet to accept that the government's integration strategy will also require them to adapt their behaviour. My research also revealed this phenomenon. Principals reported their belief that parents would withdraw their children if they felt that an unacceptably high proportion of Romani pupils attended the school. Employers and officials at the Employment Office confirmed that it was more difficult for Roma to find employment because some employers still made decisions about the suitability of applicants on the basis of prejudices they held about Roma. Media reporting of stories involving Roma has become more sensitive but problems remain. A consensus about the inappropriateness of racist jokes about Roma has yet to be reached, with many members of the majority society still likening jokes about Roma to jokes about blondes, when in fact all expressions of racism or humiliating persons on the grounds of their ethnicity should be rejected in democratic societies. Unless the message that Romani inclusion cannot be successfully achieved without the support of a majority society which is willing to treat Roma as equals rather than as an untrustworthy 'other', it will be difficult to fulfil the aims of the 2000 Concept.

11.7 Concluding Remarks: Directions for Further Research

Given the complex nature of social exclusion in Romani communities, it is expected to take at least 20 years to achieve the aims of the 2000 Concept. This thesis offers an assessment of the achievements and challenges experienced in the first five years since the policy was launched. One of the main aims of this study was to provide a balanced account of the question of Romani integration, which would take into account the views of both Romani activists and state officials. Human rights abuses against Roma have been well documented in the Western press but Czechs often complained that they had few opportunities to tell their side of the story and that presenting Roma as innocent victims persecuted by a vindictive majority over-simplified the situation. Therefore, this thesis provides a space for them to express their views and acknowledges that alongside tackling widely held anti-Romani prejudices it is also necessary to find ways to encourage Roma to engage with the majority society. This thesis stresses that full and fair social inclusion will be difficult to achieve because generations of discrimination and exclusion have left a legacy of mistrust on both sides. On a more positive note, however, examining the situation in two cities revealed that there are ways to overcome the problems of social exclusion. Sharing the positive experiences of successful projects with other communities can encourage officials, schools and NGOs to persevere in their efforts to address the most significant obstacles to inclusion in their areas.

This thesis identifies a number of obstacles which have delayed or reduced the effectiveness of the integration strategy. These include: resistance from local authorities who resent having to implement and fund policies, when they had no influence over how the policy was designed; confusion about accessing funding for programmes; reluctance to offer extra support to Romani communities out of fear that it might offend the majority population and finally regional economic inequalities which lessen the impact of job creation policies. While it is accepted that the inclusion process requires time, some steps could be taken to hasten the resolution of the problems listed above. Better communication with local authorities especially with regard to consultation during policy development would help to address the resistance currently experienced in cities such as České Budějovice. Clear information about how to access funding and a guarantee of when payments will be made would aid budget planning for schools and NGOs, particularly with regard to the employment of TAs and social workers employed

by NGOs. An effective and sensitive way to collect data about members of ethnic minorities must also be developed in order to evaluate the effectiveness of programmes and to determine where to target assistance. A concerted effort must be made to communicate the importance of the aims of the 2000 Concept to the majority society and in particular to the officials and practitioners responsible for implementing the key programmes. However, it is also crucial that communication with Roma is improved because unless they are willing to participate in programmes, by sending their children to school and finding ways to integrate themselves into society and into the labour market, the policy cannot succeed. Romani Advisors and FSAs are best placed to explain how the state is now trying to help Romani communities and reverse the effects of generations of discrimination. Given their key role in the process, it is vital that more positions such as these are created in cities and towns across the country.

The central aim of this thesis was to provide an account of how policies to aid the integration of Romani communities are being implemented locally. In so doing, it offers an important contribution to the understanding of the complexities of the problems facing socially excluded Romani communities in the Czech Republic. The methodological decision to focus on the views of the practitioners and officials responsible for implementing the programmes, offers a new perspective on the issue, because until now scholars have either focused on the views of actors at the state level or on the Romani communities directly affected by the policies. The new empirical data provided by the study of policy implementation in České Budějovice and Ostrava and the detailed analysis of legislation and key policy documents contribute to a better appreciation of the complexities of the problem of social exclusion and allow for an objective evaluation of the successes and failures of the 2000 Concept strategy to date. This new information, which is based on the practical experiences of those at the front line of policy delivery, indicates ways in which programmes could be reformed and improved to increase their effectiveness.

While this study explores the experience of the first five years of the 2000 Concept, implementing the policy is an ongoing, dynamic project which offers much scope for future research. This study deliberately focused on the role of practitioners responsible for policy delivery. Interviews with school children or with the clients of social workers

would have had significant ethical implications regarding obtaining informed consent and ensuring that power relationships were not exploited. Given the gap in the literature regarding the perspective of practitioners, I felt a study of this level of policy delivery made an important contribution to improving our understanding of Romani social exclusion and more generally of the challenges involved in implementing state policy. Nonetheless, further interviews with officials in the central government and with Romani jobseekers who are the targets of the employment strategy or with the parents of Romani schoolchildren, would complement this study by offering a wider range of perspectives on the central question of how the policies of the 2000 Concept are being implemented and experienced locally. The role played by NGOs and Romani political parties in the integration process and the representation of Roma in the media, are issues which are touched upon briefly in the thesis and which could offer alternative starting points for further analysis of the national integration strategy.

While some theorists make the case that it takes up to 40 years to fully appreciate the conditions and constraints which affect the implementation of any given policy (Sabatier 1989: 3), conducting research as the project is still being implemented can be of immediate and practical use to central policy designers and to the practitioners who are responsible for policy delivery. Undoubtedly, reflections on the impact and consequences of this case study from a distance of 20 to 40 years may identify other more important factors than those addressed in this thesis. Indeed, research for this thesis indicated that the reform of the social welfare system, which had not been fully implemented when the fieldwork for this study was undertaken, could have a significant impact on Romani communities. Therefore, new research is required to examine whether these reforms act as an incentive encouraging people to seek work or whether they exacerbate the already precarious socio-economic position of families living in areas of high unemployment. Another interesting avenue to explore would be to conduct research into the teaching of multicultural education in schools where there are few or no children belonging to ethnic minorities, to gauge the effectiveness of anti-discrimination awareness in areas where there is less immediate contact with members of minorities. The methodology employed for this thesis could also be applied to these other questions.

The social exclusion of Romani communities is a problem that the Czech authorities and Czech society as a whole can no longer afford to ignore and as this thesis demonstrates some progress is being made. However, the truth of a Romani proverb “a child is not born with teeth” reminds us that everything takes time. The damage caused by centuries of persecution and neglect cannot be rectified quickly and the 20-year target of the 2000 Concept may prove to be overly ambitious. Nonetheless, the efforts to attain this target must be given every chance to succeed and hopefully, research such as that presented in this study, identifying problems and suggesting ways to improve policy delivery will be of some benefit to the process.

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF RESPONDENTS

* Indicates that the respondent is Romani

Principals

České Budějovice

Principal 1	School 1	05/10/04
Principal 2	School 2	08/10/04
Principal 3	School 3	12/10/04
Principal 4	School 4	15/10/04
Principal 5	School 5	18/10/04
Principal 6	RS School 1	13/10/04

Ostrava

Principal 7	School 7	17/03/05
Principal 8	RS school 2	16/03/05
Principal 9	RS school 3	18/03/05
Principal 10	School 8	23/03/05
Principal 11	School 11	26/04/05

Deputy Principal 1	School 10	04/04/05
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Teaching Assistants

České Budějovice

Teaching Assistant 1	School 2	13/10/04
*Teaching Assistant 2	School 5	19/10/04
*Teaching Assistant 3	(School not in sample)	19/10/04

Ostrava

* Teaching Assistant 4	School 8	23/03/05
* Teaching Assistant 5	School 9	23/03/05
* Teaching Assistant 6	RS School 2	28/03/05
* Teaching Assistant 7	RS School 2	28/03/05
* Teaching Assistant 8	RS School 2	28/03/05
* Teaching Assistant 9	School 7	29/03/05
* Teaching Assistant 10	School 8	13/04/05
* Teaching Assistant 11	School 11	26/04/05
* Teaching Assistant 12	School 11	26/04/05

Teachers

České Budějovice

School Counsellor 1 School 6 20/10/04

Ostrava

Teacher 1 School 7 29/03/05

Teacher 2 School 10 06/04/05

School Counsellor 2 Secondary School 1 02/05/05

NGOs

České Budějovice

NGO Representative 1 NGO 1 21/10/04

NGO Representative 2 & 3 NGO 2 09/11/04

* NGO Representative 4 NGO 3 18/11/04

Ostrava

NGO Representatives 5, 6 & 7 NGO 4 23/03/05

NGO Representative 8 NGO 5 24/03/05

NGO Representative 9 NGO 5 24/03/05 & 14/04/05

NGO Representative 10 NGO6 14/04/05

NGO Representative 11 NGO 6 14/04/05

NGO Representative 12 NGO 7 19/04/05

*NGO Representative 13 NGO 7 19/04/05

NGO Representative 14 NGO 8 21/04/05

State officials

České Budějovice

* South Bohemia Regional Coordinator for Romani Affairs 06/10/04

South Bohemia Regional Education Department, Official 11/10/04

Employment Office Official 1 21/10/04

South Bohemia Regional Official with responsibility for minorities 21/10/04

School Inspectors 1 & 2 09/11/04

Educational Psychologist 1 10/11/04

South Bohemia Regional Social Affairs Department, Senior Official 11/11/04

České Budějovice Municipal Education Department, Senior Official 12/11/04

České Budějovice Municipal Social Affairs Department, Senior Official 16/11/04

České Budějovice Municipal Councillor 19/11/04

South Bohemia Regional Education Department, Senior Official 26/11/04

Prague

Ministry of Education official 26/10/04

Ostrava

* Ostrava Municipal Romani Advisor 1	15/03/05
Moravia-Silesia Regional Coordinator for Romani Affairs	18/03/05
Educational Psychologist 2 (Moravia-Silesia region)	21/03/05
* Ostrava Municipal Romani Advisor 2	4/04/05 & 25/04/05
Ostrava Municipal Education Department Senior Official	05/04/05
Employment Office Official 2	12/04/05
Ostrava Municipal Social Affairs Department Senior Official	20/04/05 & 26/04/05
Moravia-Silesia Regional Education Department Senior Official	22/04/05

Employers

České Budějovice

Employer 1	2/11/04
Employer 2	3/11/04
Employer 3	5/11/04
*Employer 4	18/11/04

*Group of Romani employees working for Employer 4 18/11/04

Social workers

České Budějovice

Municipal Social worker 1 (responsible for social welfare)	11/10/04
Municipal Social worker 2 (responsible for Romani community)	08/11/04
Municipal Social worker 3 (responsible for Romani community)	08/11/04
Municipal Social worker 2 (responsible for young people)	16/11/04

Ostrava

* Municipal Field Social Assistant 1	08/04/05
* Municipal Field Social Assistant 2	29/04/05
* Municipal Field Social Assistant 3	29/04/05

APPENDIX 2: PROFILE OF SCHOOLS IN SAMPLE

České Budějovice: Mainstream schools

Code	Description	Respondent	Date
School 1	Preparatory class: No TAs: No	Principal 1	05/10/04
School 2	Preparatory class: No TAs: Yes (non-Romani)	Principal 2 TA 1	08/10/04 13/10/04
School 3	Preparatory class: No TAs: No	Principal 3	12/10/04
School 4	Preparatory class: No TAs: No	Principal 4	15/10/04
School 5	Preparatory class: No TAs: Yes (Romani)	Principal 5 *TA 2	18/10/04 19/10/04
School 6	Preparatory class: No TAs: Yes (non-Romani)	Counsellor 1	20/10/04

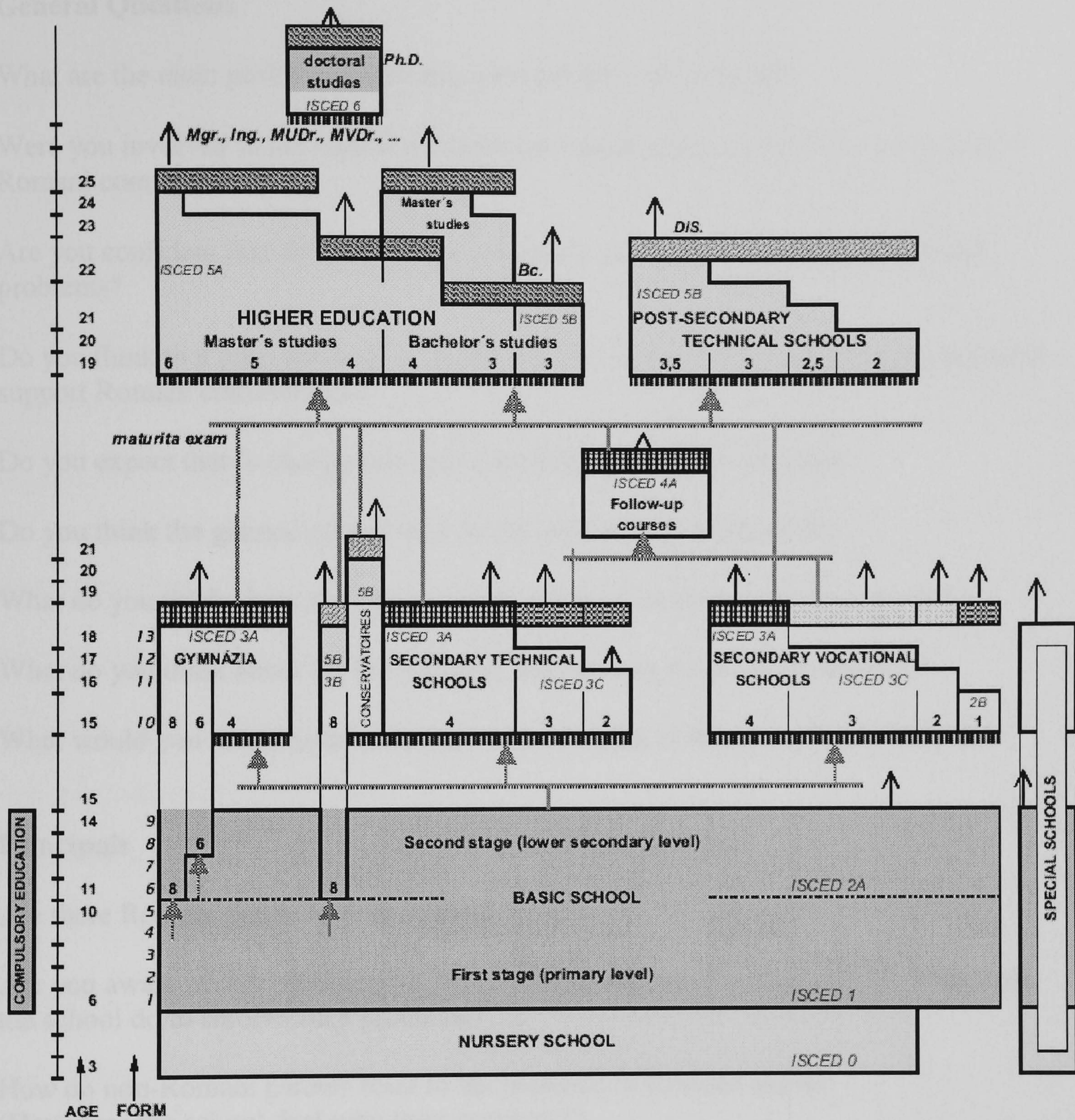
Ostrava: Mainstream schools

Code	Description	Respondent	Date
School 7	Preparatory class: Yes TAs: Yes (Romani)	Principal 7 * TA 9 Teacher 1	17/03/05 29/03/05 29/03/05
School 8	Preparatory class: Yes TAs: Yes (Romani)	Principal 10 * TA 4 * TA 10	23/03/05 23/03/05 13/04/05
School 9	Preparatory class: No TAs: Yes (Romani)	* TA 5	23/03/05
School 10	Preparatory class: Yes TAs: Yes (Romani)	Deputy Principal 1 Teacher 2	04/04/05 06/04/05
School 11	Preparatory class: Yes TAs: Yes (Romani)	Principal 11 * TA 11 * TA 12	26/04/05 26/04/05 26/04/05

Remedial special schools

Code	Description	Respondent	Date
RS School 1 South Bohemia	Preparatory class: No TAs: Yes (Romani)	Principal 6	13/10/04
RS School 2 Ostrava	Preparatory class: Yes TAs: Yes (Romani)	Principal 8 * TA 6 * TA 7 * TA 8	16/03/05 28/03/05 28/03/05 28/03/05
RS School 3 Ostrava	Preparatory class: No TAs: Yes (Romani)	Principal 9	18/03/05

APPENDIX 3: STRUCTURE OF THE CZECH EDUCATION SYSTEM⁵¹



Explanations:

- final exam
- final exam + apprenticeship certificate
- maturita exam
- absolutorium
- final state exam, rigorous state exam, doctoral state exam
- next educational level
- practise

⁵¹ Source: Ministry of Education 2001a: 104

APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW SCENARIO - EDUCATION

General Questions

What are the main problems regarding education for local Roma?

Were you involved in the consultation process about reforms to aid the integration of Romani communities?

Are you confident that the government's policies are targeting the most important problems?

Do you think that pressure from Brussels/ the EU played a role in developing policy to support Romani communities?

Do you expect that to change now that membership has been attained?

Do you think the general public believes the reforms are worthwhile?

What do you think about the system of evaluating children for special schools?

What do you think about the collection of data relating to race and ethnicity?

What would you recommend to improve the situation of Romani school children?

Principals

Are there Romani pupils in your school?

Are you aware of any problems between Romani and non-Romani pupils? What does the school do to resolve such problems?

How do non-Romani parents react to the presence of Romani pupils?
(How does the school deal with their concerns?)

How would you describe relations with Romani parents?

(What have you done to improve relations with Romani parents?)

Does your school have preparatory classes or Romani assistants?

If the school has preparatory classes or Romani assistants:

Why did you decide to introduce these reforms?

Do you think it makes a difference if the classroom assistant is Romani or not?

Do you expect more Roma to complete their education in your school as a result of the

reforms implemented?

What do you think about preparatory classes? Are they successful?

How do staff feel about the reforms?

If the school has no preparatory classes or Romani assistants:

Why did you decide not to introduce the reforms?

What do you know about the reforms?

Do you know how to get financial assistance to implement the reforms?

Are you satisfied that teachers get enough information and are qualified enough to teach the new multicultural curriculum? What kind of training did you receive? Who organised the courses?

Teaching Assistants

How long have you been working here?

What kind of training was provided before you started?

Are you happy with your relationship with the other teaching staff?

Is your role well defined?

Tell me what you do every day

Do you think it makes a difference whether the assistant is Romani or not?

How did parents (both Romani and non-Romani) react to your appointment?

Have you noticed changes in how Romani pupils cope in school since you started?

What impact does the inclusion of Romani pupils in a class have on the standard of learning in the whole class?

Do you expect more Romani pupils to complete their education in your school as a result of the reforms implemented?

Teachers

Are there Romani assistants working in your school?

Have you ever worked with a Romani assistant?

If yes: How was the experience?

If no: What do you think about the idea? Would you like to have such an experience?

Do you think it makes a difference if the classroom assistant is Romani or not?

What do you think about the reforms? Are they successful?

What do the other teachers think about the reforms?

Are you aware of problems between Romani and non-Romani children? How does the school deal with such problems?

Do you think more Romani pupils will remain at school thanks to the reforms?

If there are no Romani assistants or preparatory classes in the school:

How much do you know about the reforms implemented in other schools?

What do you think about the reforms? Would you like to try something similar in your class?

How do you include multicultural education in your lessons?

Education authorities

Tell me about the policies you are implementing to improve the situation of Roma in the education system

How were policy initiatives developed?

Many ideas such as the preparatory classes and Romani teaching assistants were first piloted by NGOs. How much consultation is there between schools, NGOs and local authorities?

Do the decisions generally come from Prague or is there much input and interpretation at the local level?

How much autonomy do you have when it comes to implementing policies?

How do you ensure that schools implement the policies?

To what extent did pressure from Brussels/ the EU play a role in developing policy?

Do you expect that to change now that membership has been attained?

What do you think about the collection of data relating to race and ethnicity?

What would you identify as the main problems/ concerns for the education of Romani children?

Do you think government policies are targeting the most important problems?

Do you think the general public believes that these pro-Romani policies are worthwhile?

Teacher/principal in remedial special school

I am aware that the collection of personal data based on race or ethnicity is not allowed but often it is claimed that a disproportionate number of pupils in special schools are Roma. Do you think your experiences confirm this assumption?

How is it decided that a child should be in a remedial special school?

What do you think about the system of evaluating children for remedial special schools?

What do you know about changes to the evaluation process in the last 5 years?

I have heard that Romani parents want their children to go to special schools, even if they don't have learning difficulties. Is this true? Why is this so?

Are Romani parents aware of the differences between special schools and mainstream schools?

Do you have preparatory classes or Romani teaching assistants in your school?

Why did you decide (not) to introduce these reforms?

What do you know about these reforms?

Do you know how to get financial assistance for such reforms?

Do you think the reforms could be successful?

How many students are transferred back to ordinary primary schools?

Will that become more common thanks to the reforms?

Educational psychologist

How is a remedial special school different to a mainstream school?

What has changed under the new school law?

How is it decided whether a child should attend a remedial special school or a general school?

Do you use a standardised test for all children or do you have culturally specific tests?

How is it decided whether there is an intellectual handicap or problems with language or behaviour?

Why is there a disproportionately high number of Romani pupils in special schools?

I have heard that Romani parents want their children to go to special schools, even if they don't have learning difficulties. Is this true? Why is this so?

Are Romani parents aware of the differences between special schools and mainstream schools?

If you believe a child should go to a special school, what do you say to convince the parents that this is the best decision?

If a child in a special school wants to be transferred back to a mainstream school, what role do you play in the process?

Will that become more common thanks to the reforms?

Do you know anything about the special schools court case in Strasbourg?

(European Roma Rights Centre brought Czech Government to court claiming that the assessment procedures for remedial special schools in Ostrava were racially biased because a disproportionate number of Romani children attend remedial special schools in the city.)

APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW SCENARIO – EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL WELFARE

General questions

What would you identify as the main problems/ concerns regarding unemployment in Romani communities?

Are you confident that the government's policies are targeting the most important problems?

Were you involved in any policy consultation processes?

To what extent did pressure from Brussels/ the EU play a role in developing policy towards Romani communities?

Do you expect that to change now that membership has been attained?

Do you think specific programmes to support Roma are necessary?

Do you think employers will respect anti-discrimination laws?

How can the laws be enforced?

Would general programmes targeting poverty and deprivation be just as effective?

What would you recommend to improve Romani integration?

What would you propose to resolve the problem of unemployment in the Romani community?

Department of Social Affairs and Employment Office Officials

What are the most challenging tasks for the department of social affairs in region X or city X?

Is the Romani issue the main priority or do you have bigger more important problems?

What are the differences between national policy and regional or city policy regarding social policy for Romani communities?

How are policies financed in the region/city?

Tell me about the policies you are implementing to resolve the problem of unemployment.

How were policy initiatives developed?

How do you get financial assistance for such reforms?

Do you favour specific programmes to help unemployed Roma or a general policy to help all who are unemployed? Why?

Do non-Roma from socially disadvantaged backgrounds have the same problems as Roma or do Roma have different, particular problems?

Do the decisions generally come from Prague? Is there much input and interpretation at the local level?

How much autonomy do you have when it comes to implementing policies?

How do the central authorities ensure that policies are implemented?

Do you think the general public believes that these pro-Romani policies are worthwhile?

I am aware that the collection of personal data based on race or ethnicity is not allowed but often it is claimed that Roma are disproportionately dependent on social welfare support because they are unemployed. Do you think your experiences confirm this assumption?

Do you think racism is a problem when Roma seek employment?

Do you know of any cases where Romani jobseekers were discriminated against because of their ethnicity? What was the outcome?

What can you do to remove racism from the workplace, if it exists there?

How do you propose to enforce anti-discrimination legislation?

What do you think about the collection of data relating to race and ethnicity?

NGO or Romani Advisor/Coordinator

(Advisor/Coordinator only)

How long are you working here?

What kind of training was provided before you started?

Is your role well defined?

Tell me what you do every day

NGO Representatives and Romani Advisor/Coordinator

How does your organisation help the local Roma?

How many Roma make use of the services you offer?

How do you make Romani citizens aware of your organisation/role and its aims?

Do you have links with other Romani organisations?

How do you distinguish between Romani and non-Romani citizens?

What do you think about the collection of data relating to race and ethnicity?

How would you describe relations between the Romani and Czech communities in this city?

What is the situation now? Are Roma still optimistic that their situation will improve or have they already lost hope?

Do you think your organisation has a good working relationship with the local and national government? Is that important?

What do the authorities do to support you?

Do you think the Romani Advisor plays an important role?

Do you think the Advisor should come from the Romani community?

What would you identify as the main problems/ concerns for the education of Romani children?

What do you think about government policies to help Romani children at school?

Do you know of any schools where the reforms are being implemented?

Have schools contacted you for help or advice regarding these reforms?

Do you think it makes a difference whether the assistant is Roma or not?

Do you know anything about the case brought by the ERRC to the EHCR in Strasbourg?

I have heard that Romani parents want their children to go to special schools, even if they don't have learning difficulties. Is this true? Why is this so?

Are Romani parents aware of the differences between special schools and mainstream schools?

Are many Roma in city X unemployed?

What kind of work do those Roma who have jobs do?

What would you identify as the main problems/ concerns regarding unemployment in Roma communities?

What does the Employment Office do to help Roma find employment?

What would you propose to improve the situation?

Do you think racism is a problem when Roma seek employment?

Do you know of any cases where clients or members of your organisation were discriminated against because of their ethnicity? What was the outcome?

What can you/ your organisation do to remove racism from the workplace, if it exists there?

Other measures suggested include increasing the minimum wage or reducing social welfare payments to encourage people to work. What do you think about these ideas?

Have many Roma from this area left to work in other EU countries?

What do you know about their experiences? Will they remain there or come home again? Do they say life is better elsewhere?

Employers

How many employees do you have?

Are there Romani employees working here?

How long have you employed Roma?

What kind of work do they do?

What kind of qualifications do they need?

Are you happy with them and with the standard of their work?

Will they be able to remain working here after the training programme ends?

Are you aware of any problems between Romani and non-Romani employees?

Do you think racism is a problem when Roma seek employment?

What do you think of the legislation banning discrimination?

APPENDIX 6: SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

I am writing my doctoral dissertation about the measures which the Czech government has introduced to improve the situation of Roma in the Czech Republic. I am interested teachers' opinions of this issue. Please answer my questions frankly so that I can get a clear understanding of the actual situation. Thank you. Laura Cashman (Tel: ...)

1. What are the main problems with regard to education in the Romani community?

2. Are you confident that the government policies address the most important problems which concern the Romani community?

3. Have you ever worked with a Romani Teaching Assistant?

If yes: How was the experience?

If no: What do you think about this idea? Would you like to get involved?

4. Are you satisfied that you received enough information and that you are sufficiently qualified to teach the new multicultural education curriculum? What training have you received? Who organised these courses?

5. How do you include multicultural education into your lessons?

6. What do you think of the system for assessing children who are placed in remedial special schools?

7. What would you recommend to improve the situation of Romani pupils in schools?

If you would like me to contact you to discuss these issues further please provide your name and contact details.

APPENDIX 7: PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION RESULTS 1992 - 2006

1992 Parliamentary Elections to the Czech National Council

Turnout: 85.08%

PARTY/GROUPING	% VOTES	SEATS
ODS-KDS - Civic Democratic Party – Christian Democratic Party (Občanská demokratická strana – Křesťanskodemokratická strana)	29.73	76
LB - Left Bloc (Levý blok)	14.05	35
ČSSD - Czechoslovak Party of Social Democracy (Československá strana sociální demokracie)	6.53	16
LSU - Liberal Social Union (Liberálně sociální unie)	6.52	16
KDU – ČSL- Christian Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People's Party (Křesťanská a demokratická unie – Československá lidová strana)	6.28	15
SPR-RSČ - Rally for the Republic-Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (Sdružení pro republiku - Republikánská strana Československa)	5.98	14
ODA - Civic Democratic Alliance (Občanská demokratická aliance)	5.93	14
HSD-SMS - Movement for Self-Governing Democracy-Society for Moravia and Silesia (Hnutí za samosprávnou demokracii-Společnost pro Moravu a Slezsko)	5.87	14
Other parties	19.0	0
Total	100	200

Source: University of Essex (2002) Database: Project on Political Transformation and the Electoral Process in Post-Communist Europe, Czech Republic

<<http://www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/database/indexElections.asp?country=CZECH+REPUBLIC&election=cz92nationalCouncil>> (06/01/06)

Government formed: ODS-KDS, ODA and KDU-CSL

42% VOTES = 105 OF 200 SEATS

1996 Parliamentary Elections to the Chamber of Deputies

Turnout: 76.29%

PARTY/GROUPING	% VOTES	SEATS
ODS - Civic Democratic Party (Občanská demokratická strana)	29.62	68
ČSSD - Czech Social Democratic Party (Česká strana sociálně demokratická)	26.44	61
KSČM - Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy)	10.33	22
KDU – ČSL- Christian Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People's Party (Křesťanská a demokratická unie – Československá lidová strana)	8.08	18
SPR-RSČ - Rally for the Republic-Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (Sdružení pro republiku - Republikánská strana Československa)	8.01	18
ODA - Civic Democratic Alliance (Občanská demokratická aliance)	6.36	13
Other parties	11.16	0
Total	100	200

SOURCE: University of Essex (2002) Database: Project on Political Transformation and the Electoral Process in Post-Communist Europe, Czech Republic

<<http://www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/database/indexElections.asp?opt=leg&country=CZECH+REPUBLIC&election=cz96chamberDeputies&legislation=&topic=&print=true>> (06/01/06)

Government formed: ODS, KDU-CSL and ODA:
44.1% VOTES = 99 OF 200 SEATS

1998 Parliamentary Elections to the Chamber of Deputies
Turnout: 73.86%

PARTY/GROUPING	% VOTES	SEATS
ČSSD - Czech Social Democratic Party (Česká strana sociálně demokratická)	32.31	74
ODS - Civic Democratic Party-Christian Democratic Party (Občanská demokratická strana)	27.74	63
KSČM - Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy)	11.03	24
KDU – ČSL- Christian Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People's Party (Křesťanská a demokratická unie – Československá lidová strana)	9	20
US - Freedom Union (Unie svobody)	8.6	19
Other parties	11.32	0
Total	100	200

Source: University of Essex (2002) Database: Project on Political Transformation and the Electoral Process in Post-Communist Europe, Czech Republic
<<http://www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/database/indexElections.asp?country=CZECH+REPUBLIC&election=cz98chamberDeputies>> (06/01/06)

Government formed: CSSD
32% VOTES = 74 OF 200 SEATS (Minority government tolerated by ODS)

2002 Parliamentary Elections to the Chamber of Deputies
Voter turnout 57.9%*

PARTY/GROUPING	% VOTES	SEATS
ČSSD - Czech Social Democratic Party (Česká strana sociálně demokratická)	30.2	70
ODS - Civic Democratic Party (Občanská demokratická strana)	24.47	58
KSČM - Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy)	18.51	41
KOALICE KDU-ČSL, US-DEU - Coalition of Christian Democratic Union - Czech People's Party and Freedom Union - Democratic Union	14.27	31
Other parties	12.55	0
Total	100	200

Source: University of Essex (2002) Database: Project on Political Transformation and the Electoral Process in Post-Communist Europe, Czech Republic

<<http://www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/database/indexElections.asp?country= CZECH+REPUBLIC&election=cz2002>> (06/01/06)

* Source: http://www.idea.int/vt/country_view.cfm?CountryCode=CZ

Government formed: CSSD and KOALICE
42.75% VOTES = 101 OF 200 SEATS

2006 Parliamentary Elections to the Chamber of Deputies
Turnout: 64.47%

PARTY/GROUPING	% VOTES	SEATS
ODS - Civic Democratic Party (Občanská demokratická strana)	35.38	81
ČSSD - Czech Social Democratic Party (Česká strana sociálně demokratická)	32.32	74
KSČM - Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy)	12.81	26
KDU – ČSL- Christian Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People's Party (Křesťanská a demokratická unie – Československá lidová strana)	7.22	13
Strana zelených – Green Party	8.01	6
Other parties	4.26	0
Total	100	200

SOURCE: Czech Statistical office (CSO) (2006b) *Election Server*

<<http://www.volby.cz/pls/ps2006/ps2?xjazyk=EN>> (15/11/06)

Government formed: ODS, KDU-ČSL and Green Party
50.61% VOTES = 100 OF 200 SEATS
(Coalition approved through abstention of 2 MPs belonging to ČSSD)

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