



FACT SHEETS ON HUNGARY

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS BUDAPEST, 2004 • www.kum.hu

GYPSIES/ROMA* IN HUNGARY

According to estimates, there are some 12 million Roma people living around the world. The European Gypsy population, thought to amount to at least 8 million people, includes communities of various sizes in almost every state in Europe. Around 70 per cent of the European Gypsy population lives in Central and Eastern Europe, and in some countries in the region their share of the overall population exceeds 5 per cent. In terms of estimated figures for the number of Gypsies resident in 38 European countries, Hungary lies in the fourth place, after Romania, Bulgaria and Spain.

The Gypsy population forms the largest ethnic minority in Hungary, with authoritative estimates putting their number at between 400,000 and 600,000.

Demographic change in Hungary is characterised by an ageing, falling population while the number of people of Gypsy origin is rising and the age composition of the Gypsy population is much younger than that of the overall population.

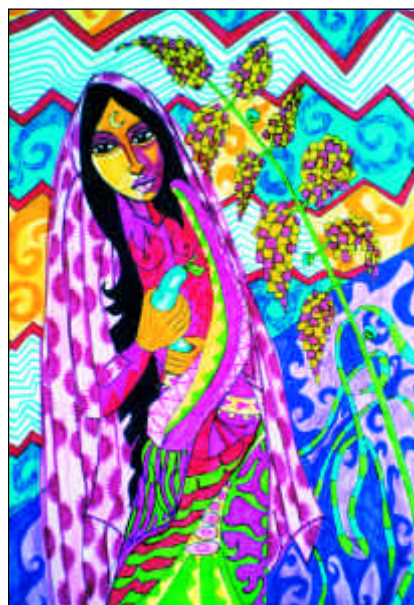
The Roma live all over the country in an uneven distribution. Roma people live in around 2,000 of Hungary's 3,200 settlements. With

regard to regional distribution, census data suggest the highest concentrations are in the regions of Northern Hungary and the

Northern Alföld (Great Hungarian Plain). Although the proportion of Roma living in towns and cities has increased considerably in comparison to the 1970's, the majority still live in villages (60 per cent) and, within this category, in the most disadvantaged small rural settlements.

Social position - a historical review

Linguistic research suggests that the Roma's ancestors arrived in the territory of today's India during migration waves in the second millennium BC. Gypsy tribes left India in the 9th and 10th centuries as a result of Muslim attacks in areas they inhabited. The name of this



The paintings of Magda Szécsi painter, writer and poet

* Both terms are used in this publication. The custom in Hungary is for members of this ethnic minority to define themselves as Roma or Gypsy.

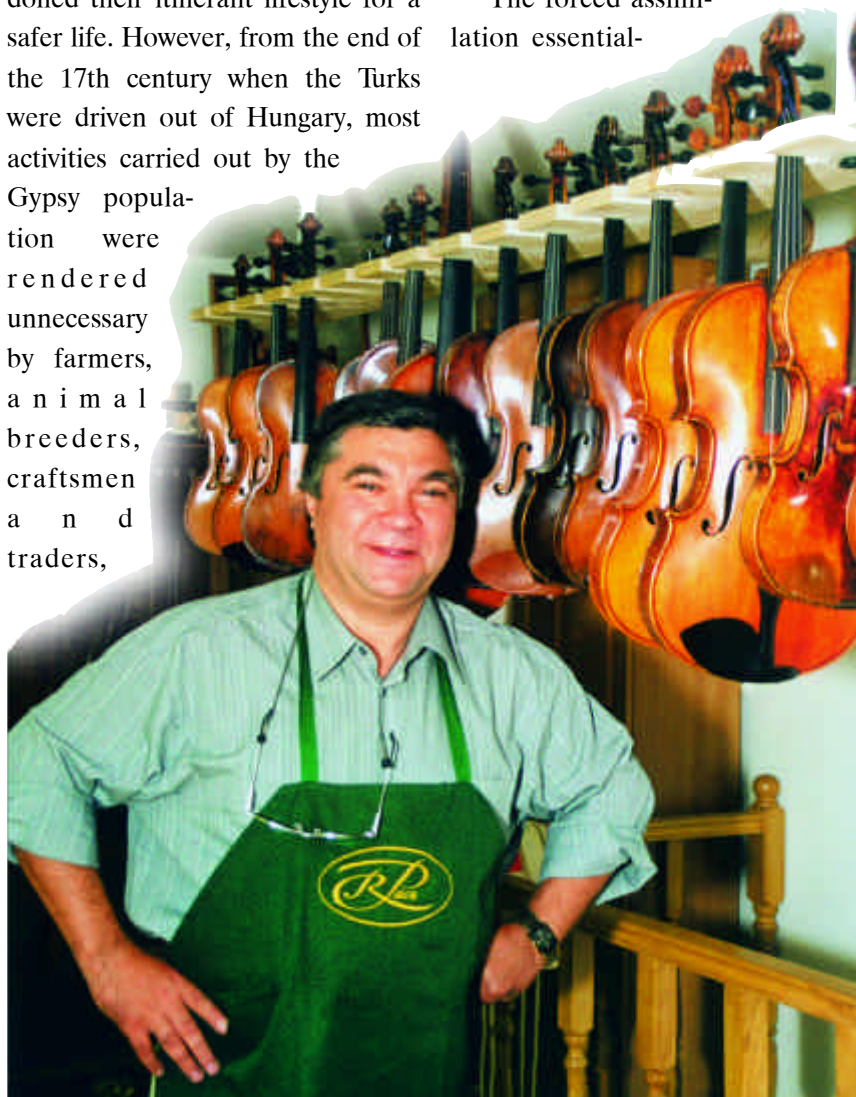
ethnic group developed in the course of migrations, starting with the Greek word '*atsinganos*', meaning 'heretic sect', and later coming into the Latin language as '*cingarus*', into German as '*Zigeuner*' and Hungarian as '*cigány*'.

They first appeared in Hungary in the 14th and 15th centuries fleeing the conquering Turks in the Balkans. A significant number migrated further to West European countries. Since they were thought to be Egyptian pilgrims in some places, they are still known by the term gypsy in these areas today. This race with an alien culture and unfamiliar with agricultural production was soon expelled and deported from Western Europe, sometimes brutally. Some tribes managed to hold onto homes in the Mediterranean region but the majority retreated to Central and Eastern Europe.

Between the 15th and 17th centuries during the wars fought against the Turkish conquerors Gypsies played a considerable role in Hungarian society. Constant military preparation and the lack of craftsmen provided opportunity to work. Fortification and construction works, metalwork, weapons' production and maintenance, horse trading, postal services, wood carving and blacksmithing at a rate cheaper than that of the guilds' craftsmen enabled them to make a living and were important activities for the country. Some Gypsy groups were even granted privileges, first under King Sigismund (1387-1437) and King Matthias (1458-1490), right up to the beginning of the 18th century.

Many landlords made efforts to provide permanent home to 'compa-

nies' in order to acquire their services. Around this time a lot of Gypsy family communities abandoned their itinerant lifestyle for a safer life. However, from the end of the 17th century when the Turks were driven out of Hungary, most activities carried out by the Gypsy population were rendered unnecessary by farmers, animal breeders, craftsmen and traders,



Pál Rác violin builder

who had begun to settle in Hungary. In the mid-18th century Maria Theresa (1740-1780) and Joseph II (1780-1790) dealt with the Gypsy question by the contradictory methods of enlightened absolutism. Maria Theresa enacted a decree prohibiting the use of the name 'Gypsy' and requiring the terms 'new peasant' and 'new Hungarian' to be used instead. She later placed restrictions on Gypsy marriages, and ordered children to be taken away from Gypsy parents, so that they could be raised in 'bourgeois or

peasant' families. Finally Joseph II even prohibited use of the Gypsy language in 1783.

The forced assimilation essential-

ly proved successful - in the 19th and 20th centuries the vast majority of the Gypsy population, who had settled hundreds of years earlier and held onto their customs and culture for a long time, gave up, even forgetting their native language and assimilating in Hungarian society. A significant number worked as blacksmiths, wood-carvers, nail makers and makers of sun-dried bricks which activities provided a living for 100,000 Roma and their families at the end of the 19th century.

However, the best opportunity for social advance was through music - in 1893, Hungary had around 17,000 registered Gypsy musicians.

A new wave of Gypsy immigration occurred in the second half of the 19th century, following the emancipation of peasants and capitalist development. The arrival from the east and south of Gypsies who had held onto their traditions and language and mostly continued their itinerant lifestyle led to many conflicts. As a result of this wave of new settlers, a census of the country's Gypsy population was ordered. According to the 1893 census, which is one of the most important documents in the history of Hungarian Gypsies, 280,000 Gypsies lived in Hungary at that time.

The divisions in Hungary's Gypsy population developed in the early 20th century. The largest group, who arrived earlier and lost their language and culture, are known as the 'Romungro' or Hungarian (Gypsy) people distinguish themselves from the rest of the Gypsy population today. The vast majority of the sec-

ond group arrived from Romanian land in the second half of the 19th century. They speak the Gypsy language, and are called 'Vlach Gypsies' by virtue of their origin. There is also a third, smaller group, the 'Beas' Gypsies, who mainly settled in South-West Hungary and speak archaic Romanian-language dialects. A low level of Gypsy immigration continued right up to the outbreak of the Second World War.

Prior to the German occupation of March 19, 1944, decrees on policing and epidemics that were used to repress the Gypsy population of some 200,000, were primarily directed against itinerant groups. From spring 1944 however, 'resolving the Gypsy question' lead to genocide. At least 5,000 people were killed in the Roma holocaust, but there are estimates of as many as 30,000 victims.

The democratic era between 1945 and 1948 brought about positive changes in the relationship between the Gypsy population and the rest of society. However, in economic terms the position of the Gypsy population deteriorated as a result of the reallo-

cation of large estates, which effectively involved a loss of employment opportunities on the part of the Gypsy population. The majority were left out of the land reform program, although many had previously made a living from agricultural work. Employment levels improved during the reconstruction after the Second World War and later in the course of forced industrialisation but the vast majority were able to find only unskilled jobs.

The Cultural Federation of Gypsies in Hungary was founded on the model of other nationalities' federations in 1957 with the objective of creating and renewing original Gypsy literature, music and other art forms, and assisting in preserving the ancient language. The Deed of Foundation also contained a general requirement to improve job creation, schooling, health care and living conditions. In effect the aim of the foundation was to have the minority status for Gypsies accepted but the authorities viewed it with suspicion. Therefore the activities of the federation were limited to dealing with individual complaints which showed the need for an organisation for the protection of Roma interests. Yet the federation only lasted until 1961.

A decree issued in 1961 by the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party declared the fundamental principles of Gypsy policy for the next few decades. The decree described the Gypsy question as a social problem rather than a minority issue: *'Policy directed at the Gypsy population shall start from the principle that despite certain ethnographical characteristics they do not constitute a nationality.'* *'Many people see this as a minority issue and recommend*



Ferenc Snétberger guitarist

developing the 'Gypsy language' and setting up Gypsy-language schools and colleges, Gypsy agricultural cooperatives, etc. These views are not only mistaken but also harmful as they preserve the segregation of Gypsies and slow down their integration into society.' The decree reflected the communist party's attempts at assimilation expressed in the form of 'social crisis management'.

After a long wait the first reliable data on Gypsies' living conditions were provided by the nationwide research conducted in 1971. 320,000 Roma were living in Hungary in 1971. 71 per cent were native Hungarian speakers, 21 per cent spoke the Gypsy language as their mother tongue, and almost 8 per cent were Romanian speakers. Two thirds of the Gypsy population lived in settlements on the outskirts of towns and villages. As a result of industrialisation in the 1950's and 1960's 85 per cent of Gypsy men of working age were in employment by 1971. Although a political decision was taken to accelerate the removal of Gypsy settlements, separate residential areas inhabited only by Gypsies were still established through the construction of new homes with a lower level of comfort. The state home construction program slowed down in the 80's, and eventually came to an end without having resolved the housing problems of the Gypsy population.

In 1971 around 60 per cent of Gypsy children attended nursery school, 50 per cent had already completed primary schooling. An increasing number of these children were learning a trade, and the numbers attending secondary schools were also rising. However, Gypsy children were often taught in separ-

ate classes, or subjected to special education in view of their 'handicap'. The first generation of Gypsy intellectuals appeared and achieved success primarily in arts and folk culture. Alongside these positive changes direct and indirect prejudice remained with the means of mass communication maintaining the stereotype of the work-shy and criminal Roma.

This progress, which started spectacularly but was laid on unstable foundations, collapsed during the social and political changes of 1990. The construction industry and mining, providing employment for most of the Gypsies, fell into crisis.



László Gargya police sergeant-major

And Gypsies, who were largely employed as unskilled workers and carried out tasks requiring the lowest level of expertise, were the first to be made redundant at privatised companies. Within a short space of time the majority of Gypsy families had fallen back to the level of previous decades. Their lack of education continually reduced their chances for employment and, moreover, prejudice against the Gypsy population was gaining strength among certain social groups. In the

first half of the 1990's the incidence of discrimination increased in the field of education, employment and access to housing. Gypsies living in Hungary became targets of attacks by anti-democratic groups emerging at this time. The Gypsy population began to get organized and underwent a political awakening at around the time of the social and political changes. In the first parliamentary cycle after 1990 three representatives openly admitted their Gypsy origin. There was a heartening increase in the number of Gypsy civilian organisations with 96 officially registered organizations by the end of 1991. Although their operation was often hindered by financial difficulties the number of civil Roma organizations rose to 260 by 2001.

Governmental political efforts

After the social and political changes the first democratically elected parliament and government faced up to the requirement for immediate action concerning the issue of ethnic minorities including the unsolved problems of the Roma which had been squeezed into the background for decades. The constitution and laws proclaimed full equal rights but difficulties arose in practical enforcement. Direct governmental action seemed to be urgent since masses of the Roma lost their jobs as a result of the economic restructuring and privatisation that followed the social and political changes. The Roma were the biggest losers in the accelerated modernisation of the 1990s and the new economic environment. Solidarity diminished while intolerance and indifference

towards other people's problems gained ground. Political decision-makers realised that there was no chance of dealing with the situation without special state assistance promoting the social integration of the Roma.

Legislation and new institutions

The government led by the late József Antall (1932-1993) established a new, nationwide institution as early as 1990 - the **Office for National and Ethnic Minorities'** (ONEM), the primary task of which was to prepare government decisions on minorities' policy, coordinate and set out the fundamental principles for policies towards minorities. The ONEM was charged with the task of regularly monitoring the situation of ethnic minorities, making analyses and maintaining contacts with representatives of ethnic minorities. From the mid-1990s onwards the office played a decisive role in working out short and medium-term programs affecting the Gypsy population. A separate vice-president has coordinated Roma affairs within the office since 1998.

The most important measure affecting ethnic minorities is **Act LXXVII of 1993 on the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities**, which regulates the institutional framework and was adopted by parliament by a majority of 96 per cent. In a manner unique in Europe, this Act grants individual and collective rights to the 13 minorities recognized in Hungary, including the Roma, allowing for personal autonomy and the establishment of local or nationwide self-governing bodies. The minority self-government bodies were granted the right to decide,

within the scope of their powers, on establishing, taking over and maintaining institutions especially in the field of local education, the written and electronic media, preserving traditions and cultural matters.

The Minorities Act is of historical importance for the Gypsy population in Hungary as it was the first measure to recognise this group of people as an ethnic minority thereby assuring, apart from individual rights, the opportunity for Gypsies to organize collectively and set up local and nationwide minority self-governments. In 1994 and 1995 477 local Gypsy self-government bodies were established. The share of minorities



Péter Lakatos Greek Catholic priest

is indicated by the fact that the other 12 national minorities had established a combined total of 261 local bodies by this time. In Budapest, the district minority self-governing bodies established the Budapest Gypsy Minority Self-Government by means of indirect elections, and founded the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government (NGMS) with 53 representatives.

As a result of the second minority self-government elections held in 1998 there was a significant increase

in the number of local Gypsy self-governing bodies, with successful elections in 764 settlements, though the establishment of the Budapest self-government failed due to internal conflicts. Some 3,000 Roma participated in the work of the minority bodies in this cycle.

As a result of the third elections in 2002 Gypsy minority governments were formed in 998 settlements, namely in around every third settlement nationwide, and the Budapest body was re-established.

The NGMS, formed for the third time in spring 2003, represents the Gypsy population at the national level and voices opinions on all issues affecting the Roma as a partner to the parliament and the government.

The Minorities Act makes provision for public service programming, languages of recognised minorities, opportunities for establishing cultural institutions, legal foundations for minority schooling and education, the rights of minorities to be represented in parliament, and the institution of a parliamentary commissioner for minority rights.

Experience over more than a decade since the Minorities Act was adopted and other legal regulations on minorities entered legal effect suggest that amendments to and clarification of certain legal provisions is essential to making the system operate more efficiently.

With regard to being a member of a minority, the Act starts from the principle of voluntary identification, relying on self-assessment and not requiring a register of electors to be drawn up. However, the problem of legitimacy arises in the election of minority self-governing bodies from the fact that in the absence of accur-

ate data not only members of the given minority are entitled to vote for minority candidates but any other resident of the settlement with voting rights. For this reason several people including the minorities' ombudsman have proposed the introduction of some form of electoral registration and the clarification of membership of a community as preconditions for the exercise of minority community rights, and pressed for changes in the legal regulations on minority elections.

In March 2004 the government put forward a bill with regard to the election of minority self-government representatives and the amendment of certain acts on national and ethnic minorities. The bill, which is on the agenda of Parliament, introduces the register of minority voters, re-regulates the duties, the sphere of authority of minority self-governments and numerous issues related to their operation and financing (founding and maintaining institutions, the relationship between the self-governing bodies of settlements and minorities, protecting the native language, etc.).

The assurance of parliamentary representation for minorities has been one great failing of the legislature although there are some representatives belonging to ethnic minorities in parliament who were admitted from individual constituencies or from party lists. Drafts have been completed on the parliamentary representation for minorities, and agreement on such drafts is in progress.

Compared to the priorities of other minorities' self-governing bodies, improving the social and employment situation is more urgent for the Gypsy population than enforcing

cultural rights. Some governmental agencies involve minority self-governments in implementing programs in this area. A good example is the practice of county job centres carrying out targeted labour market programs. The social integration of the Roma also imposes a considerable burden on civilians and civil organizations.

Despite initial difficulties and operational errors, the minority self-government model has produced some reassuring values and results. In terms of the future, one important experience is that the minority self-governing bodies are most successful in areas where their activities are based on civil organization, and on minority activities that existed earlier. Positive experiences show that the minority self-government system has contributed to the consolidation of national and ethnic minorities and enlivened the minorities' community life. The ability of the Gypsy population to enforce its interests has clearly improved. The operation of Gypsy minority self-governments promotes the social integration of the Gypsy population and regular dialogue and co-operation between the Roma and non-Roma population.

Over the past few years the minority self-government system has confirmed its right to exist because it is a viable and effective way of enforcing interests, which assures the participation of minorities in local and national issues affecting them. Those who belong to a minority have started accepting their identity with a greater degree of awareness and openness. This is reflected in the census data of 2001 showing that in 1990 142,683 people claimed to be

Gypsy while a decade later this figure had reached 189,984, although this is still below the estimated actual size of the Gypsy population. The answers given to questions first posed in 2001 about language use and attachment to cultural values also confirm acceptance of identity by the Roma, with



some 50,000 having designated a Gypsy language (Romany or Beas) as their native language in the 2001 census, and 130,000 having declared commitment to the Roma cultural values and traditions.

An important legal regulation directly affecting the position of the Gypsy population in Hungary is Act LXXIX of 1993 on Public Education, which was amended in 1996 and 2003 to provide the national and local minority self-governing bodies with the opportunity of founding and maintaining educational institutions, and which defined the fight against segregation in schools as an objective.

Act LIX of 1993 on the Parliamentary Commissioner for National and Ethnic Minority

Rights is a law of particular significance for the Gypsy population. It is the responsibility of the minorities' ombudsman, as defined in the constitution, to investigate or ensure the investigation of any abuses of constitutional rights brought to his/her attention, and to initiate general or individual measures to remedy such



László Kosztics wood-carver

abuse. Based on the events of recent years and the ombudsman's parliamentary reports, we can conclude that the establishment of the institution was justified and absolutely essential. This activity is indispensable to a state founded on the rule of law.

Governmental measures

Following the establishment of the minorities' institutional system in 1995, individual and experimental programmes launched with the support of government agencies and Hungarian and international civil organisations, such as the establishment of the Gandhi Secondary School in Pécs, which

has acquired an international reputation, were replaced by specific governmental programmes

seeking to resolve the deteriorating position of the Gypsy population. The Roma policy of governments in office since the social and political changes has been characterised in part by efforts to **promote social integration** and to resolve the social problems arising from deprivation and partly by particular emphasis on **preserving the identity, cultural values and language of the Gypsy population.**

The short-term program adopted in 1995 defined the requirement to draw up a medium-term program to provide additional governmental funds through a comprehensive approach. The government set up the Gypsy Affairs Coordination Council and created the Public

Foundation for Gypsies in Hungary (PFGH), which is still in operation today with the objective of coordinating the work of ministries and agencies with nationwide powers, and of supporting efforts to promote equal opportunities. Based on resolutions issued in 1995 the first **medium-term package of measures** [Government Decree 1093/1997] reviewed and specified the necessary tasks for social integration of the Gypsy population. This contained measures to be implemented in 1997 and 1998, including in the area of education and culture, further developments in child protection and tuition fees' subsidy, prevention of educational segregation, further development and expansion of regional programs to nurture talent (e.g. the Gandhi Secondary School and College), and the establishment of colleges to nurture talent.

In order to improve employment and living conditions, measures were taken to demolish some Gypsy settlements, develop employment programs or extend existing programs, integrate Gypsy students into the specialist-training scheme, and support agricultural activities. In the social field, the government set up a crisis management, so-called 'vis major' fund, and launched comprehensive crisis management programs in settlements where disadvantaged strata including the Gypsy population, represent a significant share of the population.

In the context of action against discrimination, awareness of the Gypsy population has been built into police training.

The second part of the package of measures set out the principles for tasks to be determined later. This relates to tasks such as

promoting higher education studies for Gypsy students, the requirement to support cultural institutions, defining the role of minority self-governments in fighting unemployment, extending the network of screening and care to improve the state of health of the Gypsy population, supporting offices protecting rights and developing a realistic Gypsy image in the public service media.

The government that entered office in 1998 reviewed the medium-term package of measures and added to it in a context of continuity. The concepts in Government Decree 1047/1999 essentially followed on from the 1997 objectives but priority was given to tasks related to education and culture. Content development was designated as the objective for primary education (in addition to regular nursery school attendance and a reduction in truancy numbers), for secondary and higher education the highlighted aim was avoidance of drop-out (colleges and scholarships), while in terms of culture the development of a public system of cultural institutions organized at group level and further training of experts were emphasized. In the field of employment, requirements were set out for assisting the long-term and career starter unemployed, and organising public works and non-profit programs. The government also set the objective of compiling a comprehensive regional development plan to improve infrastructure in run-down residential areas.

The Gypsy Inter-Ministerial Committee was set up in 1999 to ensure co-ordination between government agencies and monitor the implementation of the medium-term program. Within the frame-

work of the package of measures, the ministries have allocated increasing year-on-year sums to implement their tasks (HUF 4.85 billion in 2000, HUF 5.2 billion in 2001, HUF 7.4 billion in 2002).

Pursuant to the 1999 Government Decree a decision was taken on drawing up a **long-term strategy for social**



A new generation of gypsy band leaders is growing up

and minorities' policy and a three-level governmental program. On this basis:

- specific programs and projects appear in the annual plans of action of the relevant portfolios;
- governmental cycles' 3-4-year tasks are specified in the medium-term package of measures;
- principles and comprehensive objectives covering 20-25 years are designated in the long-term strategy.

The strategy, in the form of a parliamentary resolution, would serve as a guideline spanning parliamentary electoral cycles to achieve objectives

related to the social integration of the Gypsy population and founded on the agreement of society at large. In addition to social solidarity, partnership (with Gypsy involvement), subsidiarity and decentralisation (solving local problems at a local level), the necessity to preserve and cultivate the values of the Gypsy culture is defined as a basic principle. Another requirement is the development of legal regulations prohibiting discrimination, openness, transparency and the need for a comprehensive multifaceted approach to the issue. The strategy requires a separate fund to provide regular financing as a material condition for program implementation.

The strategy defined three sector priorities attached to the ministries for actual improvement in living conditions of the Roma - improving education, employment and family welfare conditions. Furthermore, the program defines the prevention of social and political exclusion of the Roma and strengthening their social and political role as general priorities.

The long-term strategy has been completed and the draft version should have been submitted to parliament before the end of 2002. This failed to take place due to the change of government, but the government headed by Péter Medgyessy has put the issue back on the agenda.

The latest medium-term package of measures adopted in March 2004 (Government Decree 1021/2004) is in full harmony with the previous one with regard to necessary governmental steps for the sake of the social integration of the Roma. The novelty of the program is the introduction of a monitoring system for

the tight control of the use of financial resources.

From the viewpoint of the Gypsy population's protection of rights, great importance has been attached to the **Anti-Discrimination Legal Advice Network**, which was set up in 2001 by the Ministry of Justice, the Office for National and Ethnic Minorities and the National Gypsy Self-Government Body, and currently operates 27 offices nationwide. Lawyers in the offices provide free legal advice in cases where clients suffered grievance as a result of their Roma origin. The free service, in addition to legal consulting, extends to editing petitions and representing clients before courts and other authorities. Experience shows that the network satisfies a significant demand though only a fraction of the applications are related to discrimination.

2002: Increasing participation in Hungary's political and community life

2002 produced major changes in the political role of the Roma. The Roma question appeared in the parliamentary election campaign of spring 2002, and politicians who accepted their Roma origin were included on the party lists both on the left and right wings of the political spectrum. Four such politicians made it into parliament. In autumn 2002 local Gypsy minority self-governing bodies were elected in 998 settlements, and some 4,000 Roma are actively involved in the work of these bodies. In the local authority elections 545 Roma local government representatives and 4 Roma mayors were elected to serve settlement local governments.

Roma policy has also been re-defined at governmental level, with the government coming into office in the summer of 2002 defining the promotion of equal social opportunities for the Roma as a priority task. Major organisational changes have taken place in this respect, Roma affairs have been placed back under the direct control of the Prime Minister's Office, and a political undersecretary has been appointed for Roma affairs, with an associated Office for Roma Affairs. A political undersecretary with Roma origins has been appointed for the first time in Hungarian political life. Strategically important Roma political issues related to social integration and improving the social position of the Gypsy population have been subjected to the supervision and control of the undersecretary and the Office for Roma Affairs while the ONEM continues to deal with tasks



'Romaniade' performed by the Talentum Gypsy Band and the Győr Ballet lead by Iván Markó

arising from the status of the Roma minority, primarily those related to the minority self-government system, cultural autonomy and general enforcement of rights specified in the Minorities Act of 1993.

The Council for Roma Affairs, a consultation body consisting of independent Roma and non-Roma, as well as other highly regarded experts and presided over by the Prime Minister, has been set up, and is charged with expressing opinions on strategic issues and formulating guidelines on behalf of the government.

Implementation of a concept, under which as many Roma-origin experts as possible join the ranks of civil servants at the ministries, has already begun. Ministerial commissioners have started work at the Ministry of Education and at the Ministry of National Cultural Heritage. With the appointment of a Minister for Equal Opportunities (without portfolio) in May 2003 and with the establishment of the Government Office for Equal Opportunities in January 2004 the scope of government agencies dealing specifically with improving the position of the Roma was further extended.

In January 2004 the **Equal Treatment and the Promotion of Equal Opportunities Act (Act CXXV of 2003)** came into force. In compliance with EU legal regulations the act introduces a stronger system of sanctions aimed at eradicating discrimination.

Education

Education is a key area from the point of view of creating equal opportunities for the Roma. Presently 90

per cent of young Roma complete primary school education, and 85 per cent of those completing primary school go on to study in some form of secondary institution. In recent years the proportion of Roma students at secondary school institutions providing a school-leaving certificate has

extension of the college network, which has already begun, will further improve progress in education.

The success of nursery and school education, which forms the basis of equal opportunities for the Gypsy population, depends largely on the professional quality of teach-



Students of the primary school in Hernád Street, Budapest

risen from 9 to 15 per cent. One unfavourable factor, however, is that most young Roma acquire qualifications in professions where there is a little chance of finding employment. There is great underachievement in higher education, as just 0.3 per cent of the Gypsy population holds a university or college degree.

The Ministry of Education and public foundations supporting national and ethnic minorities assist young Gypsies by means of a scholarship system. In recent years there has been a sharp increase in the number of scholarships, from 750 in 1998, to 12,000 in 2001, and 19,000 in 2003. With subsidy from the education ministry, several higher education institutions run preparatory courses to improve the chances of young Roma gaining admission. The

er training and further training. With subsidy from the education ministry, several higher education institutions have introduced the teaching of Romology within the framework of faculty, special college or individual programs.

The work of the Ministry of Education's commissioner for the integration of disadvantaged children, including Roma children, has contributed to a new approach to teaching Roma children in the public education system from academic year 2003/2004. So-called "catch-up" education, which has been preferred so far and resulted in segregation, has been replaced by an approach focussing on developing abilities and integrative education (Roma and non-Roma students in one class), where the

purpose is to provide a common education at an identical level for children in different social and cultural positions. The 1999 amendment to the Public Education Act tightened up the system for control of 'auxiliary' schools, while the 2003 amendment provides for the elimination of the segregating phenomena of 'auxiliary' education, and anti-discrimination elements have been added to ensure the success of disadvantaged school students.

Experiments at creating the opportunity for new initiatives to develop Gypsy culture give us reason for hope. Alongside the Gandhi Secondary School in Pécs, which now has a Europe-wide reputation, schools in Szolnok, Mánfa and Ózd are worth noting. A layer of well-trained young Gypsy intellectuals is taking shape, albeit slowly.

Civil organization and culture

Besides the Roma minority self-governments, Roma civil and legal protection organizations play an active role in Hungarian domestic politics. The best-known organizations are the Forum of Gypsy Organisations in Hungary, the National Federation of Gypsy Organisations, the Roma Civil Law Foundation, the Roma Parliament and Lungo Drom.

As a result of subsidies from the government, public foundations and the EU, a system of Gypsy Community Houses has been constructed to provide scope for implementing cultural, educational and employment programs. The Ministry of National Cultural Heritage and the Public Foundation for Minorities, by means of funds available via ten-

ders, support Gypsy organisations and minority self-governing bodies in organizing cultural events, tradition-preserving programs and introducing and publishing Gypsy literature, fine arts, music, folklore and other branches of arts. The demand for Roma Community Houses to be connected up to the Internet arose in 1997, and the Roma Centre has partly fulfilled this demand by launching a website at www.romacentrum.hu. In 2003 Romaweb was launched through the Roma Social Integration Phare Programme providing citizens with regular and up-to-date information, and continual and mutual exchange of information between Gypsy minority self-governments, Roma organisations, governmental and social organisations. The Phare Office, founded in the Office for National and Ethnic Minorities, started its activities in 2000, and one of its key elements was the information provision project.

Media and publications

In the current system of budgetary subsidies of minorities' culture, there are no financial resources that would allow for minorities to regularly operate radio or TV channels or programs based on the nationalities having access to favourable frequencies.

The independent 24-hour broadcaster **Rádió ©** was launched upon a civil initiative in 2001, and as a commercial station it submitted an application for an individual frequency to the National Radio and Television Body (NRTB). Following experimental transmissions, the NRTB board of trustees granted broadcasting rights to the radio station for 7 years.

The Roma minority's written press receives subsidy from the Public Foundation for National and Ethnic Minorities in Hungary (PFNEM). The PFNEM provides financial cover to all ethnic minority groups for the budget of at least one national paper, but the largest minority, the Gypsy population, has the opportunity for several papers to be subsidized (Lungo Drom, Világunk, Amaro Drom, Kethano Drom). The Public Foundation invites tenders for producing and operating local minority media and cable TV program, but experience shows that they are only able to support 10 per cent of demand in this system.

The time content for "Gypsy magazine", broadcast on public service Hungarian TV, is 26 minutes a week and since 2000 Hungarian Television has screened 'Gypsy forum' for 52 minutes every quarter of a year. These are supplemented by magazine programmes about nationalities targeting Hungarian-speaking viewers, the television shows 'Együtt'(Together), which are broadcast in Hungarian every two weeks, for 52 and 26 minutes. Hungarian Radio (and the regional studios) broadcast programmes for Gypsies for 180 minutes a week.

New tasks in the wake of EU accession

Hungary's first years of EU membership after 1 May 2004 will be associated with difficulties in adapting for the entire society. These difficulties will obviously affect disadvantaged groups, and primarily the Roma, to a greater extent. Therefore the government will have to face a greater degree of

responsibility for protecting such disadvantaged groups from possible shocks.

Hungary has made efforts to utilize resources available under pre-accession funds to finance the social integration of the Roma. In addition to PHARE projects for vocational training run by the Ministry of Education, the Office for Roma Affairs of the Prime Minister's Office is implementing a Roma Social Integration Phare program.

As full member of the EU Hungary may acquire nearly 8 000 million HUF for development from the EU's Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund between 2004 and 2008. The government is committed to providing assistance to - Roma and non-Roma - enterprises, local governments and civil organizations, among others, by running information campaigns and special training programs so that they can successfully compete for financial resources available within the framework of the National Development Plan.

The Roma issue on the agenda of European international fora

According to the official figures of the European Commission, EU enlargement will increase the number of European citizens speaking minority languages in the Union from 40 million to 46 million. Even by moderate estimates enlargement will raise the number of Roma living in the EU by 1,300,000 by the year 2004. European political opinion is increasingly coming to recognise that the social integration of Roma communities cannot be resolved merely by means of national governmental efforts, but that international initiatives are

also required. This explains why the Roma issue is coming into the spotlight more and more at European international fora.

There are currently three initiatives running parallel to each other. Following an initiative from Finland, the Council of Europe is making efforts to establish a European Forum for the Roma, which would perform consultative functions to the Council as an international, democratic and representative body for Roma communities in

of government. The OSCE Council of Ministers adopted the Action Plan at its meeting in Maastricht on December 1 and 2, 2003. The third initiative refers to 9 countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The World Bank and the Open Society Institute (OSI) are planning to launch a project entitled 'the Decade of Roma Integration' in

2 0 0 5 ,
which,
among
others,
will
start



First love free of all prejudices

European countries. The OSCE has worked out a Roma Action Plan, which specifies in detail the tasks required to create social integration and equal opportunities for the Roma people, covering all spheres

educational and training programs funded by the Roma Educational Fund yet to be established.

Photos by Gyula Nyári