

The new collection of articles, dealing with the Roma issues is dedicated to the anniversary of Dr. Adam Bartosz. For more than 40 years Dr. Bartosz - a Polish ethnologist, historian and museum worker was doing research and publishing scientific articles on Roma in Poland. From 1980 until 2012 he was the Director of the Regional Museum in Tarnow, Poland and he established the permanent Roma Museum in Poland one of the few Museums on Roma in Europe.

He was the organizer of many cultural and social events strengthening the sense of identity of Polish Roma and promoting cultural diversity, including the "International Roma Remembrance Rolling Stock". All his activities throughout the years were also object of his publications. In 2008 he established the journal "Studia Romologica", and he is the editor in chief. His contribution to the field of Romani ethnography and ethnology is especially important.

PRESERVING THE ROMA MEMORIES

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FESTSCHRIFT IN HONOR OF DR. ADAM BARTOSZ

*Hristo Kyuchukov,  
Elena Marushiakova  
& Vesselin Popov (eds.)*

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## CIGANOS, FAMILIES AND SOCIAL POLICIES IN PORTUGAL: WHAT HAS CHANGED IN THE CIGANOS ATTITUDE TOWARDS SCHOOL?

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The purpose of this article is to present and discuss the main impacts of the Portuguese public policies in the area of Ciganos education in Portugal, since 25 April 1974 until 2014. Therefore, diversified information was analysed and processed through collection and analysis of legal and other documents about these policies, especially those that have had a greater impact on Ciganos, and even through mapping of ongoing projects of local and social support in the Lisbon and Porto metropolitan areas, where the empirical research is being performed. In other phase, interviews to technicians, project coordinators and local institutions were conducted, but also to Ciganos persons and families.

The purpose of using various techniques of data collection is to capture the reality experienced by Ciganos individuals and families, namely the lines of continuity and of social change, particularly in the area of education, through the triangulation between the speeches of privileged informants and scientific knowledge already consolidated in these matters. It is presented a critical and reflexive reading on the policy orientations and the achieved social rights and on the speeches and current practices in the studied territories, focusing on what has changed in the school trajectories of Ciganos, in terms of continuity, success and permanence.

**Keywords:** Ciganos/Gypsies, public policies, social inequalities, education

### Introduction

In the first decade of this century the ‘Ciganos/Gypsies issue’<sup>46</sup>, became a central topic to European political debates. However, in Portugal<sup>47</sup>, until recently, the political and public discussions remained residual and at the margins of other European Member States’ efforts, pending between

<sup>46</sup> In Portugal, the usual term used is Ciganos and this word could be translated as Gypsies or Roma.

<sup>47</sup> Portugal lived a democratic revolution on 25 April 1974.

invisibility in society and in public policies and stereotyped negative representations. Such negative imagery helps explaining why Ciganos are still the largest rejected minority in Portugal (Silva *et al.* 2008).

More recently, along with an intensification of the official discourse on the social integration of Ciganos/Gypsies in Europe, the 'integration' of Portuguese Ciganos began to take on an unprecedented centrality in the national context, finally culminating in the establishment of a National Strategy for the integration of the '*Comunidades Ciganas*' ('Roma Communities') in 2013 (Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 25/2013 of 27 March), this time following a direct request from the European Union to its Member States (European Parliament 2011).

There are not quantitative and cross-sectional studies at national level that allow us to know the situation and the access of Ciganos to education, housing, employment, health, justice and social security, as well as to evaluate the implementation of the social policies previously mentioned.

From here, this article aims to critically analyse the changes and continuities that recently took place and also for the last ten years in Portugal in terms of success and continuity of schooling of Ciganos, men and women. Presently, Ciganos men and women, still do not complete compulsory education of 12 years (being too far away from this goal) or acquire the necessary skills to integrate into the labour market (Mendes *et al.* 2014). Based on a literature review about policies, programmes and projects active in the last decade, of which evidence suggests having influence in the increase of Ciganos educational qualifications in Portugal, and on recent research findings obtained under a two-year research project conducted by the authors in the Lisbon and Porto metropolitan areas, which involved fieldwork conducted in the neighbourhoods marked by a high concentration of Portuguese Ciganos families, inside urban areas, school ethnographies and in-depth interviews with Ciganos, and with individual and institutional stakeholders who worked in the territories where Ciganos families and persons lived, it aims to critically analyse the persistence of social regularities by associating Portuguese Ciganos to low education qualifications and the persistence of high school absenteeism and dropout rates. It intends to contextualise the Portuguese case in a wider European education policy targeting Ciganos.

#### Research pathways: methodological notes

The methodology adopted is qualitative and combines several techniques: documentary analysis, institutional interviews and interviews to Ciganos in order to collect information about multiple experiences and life paths regarding the impact of the social policy measures. Taking this into account and aiming to cover and analyse the main impacts of public policies in

education, we have adopted several strategical methodologies: i) mapping and characterisation of the institutions, services and ongoing social intervention projects in the Lisbon and Porto metropolitan areas. ii) we performed 36 interviews between November 2013 and March 2014, 18 in each of the territories addressed, such as Private Welfare Institutions, Local Authorities, Groups of Schools, Local Development Associations and other NGOs. As a result of the interviews to socio-institutional actors (NGOs, public services, churches, mediators, Ciganos representatives) that we have always considered as key interlocutors due to their intervention experience, knowledge and territorial proximity, we were able to map and characterise, on a preliminary basis, the Ciganos population and its living conditions, namely if Ciganos lives in well-identified communities or in big groups or in small groups or even isolated in areas where mainly live non-Ciganos population (Rughinis, 2010 p.360-361), the constraints and opportunities of integration and some of its basic characteristics.

It is estimated that the Ciganos population covered by the local projects, in which technicians and coordinators were interviewed, is approximately 1,500 persons in the Porto Metropolitan Area and 6,200 in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area. The role of the institutions in solving the problems of the Ciganos population is especially mediation – namely in the connection, facilitation and streamlining of the access to several services – health, education, housing, social security, among others, most of the time helping to read the information officially published. Several statements point out the role of strategic manipulation exercised by the social integration income (RSI), since this requires the fulfilment of certain requirements and obligations and at the same time influences the behaviour of Ciganos.

In a third moment, iii) 72 semi-structured interviews were conducted to Ciganos, 36 interviews in each area, in 6 selected territories where Ciganos live and there are ongoing local intervention projects. These interviews were conducted to 52 women and to 34 men in 3 neighborhoods of the Lisbon Area (2 May, Casal do Silva and Quinta da Fonte) and the Porto Metropolitan Area (neighbourhoods of Biquinha, Cerco do Porto and Lagarteiro). The selection of these places was based on several factors: the ease of approach to the field due to the fact of having previous knowledge and contacts in the field: the presence of public policies and diversified measures; the presence of a significant number of Ciganos individuals and families; the existence of projects in the territory (e.g.: programme 'Escolhas'); the choice for diversified residence areas, type of housing, environment and location and the reference of these territories in the *Media* news. The script of these semi-structured interviews focused on issues regarding school trajectories, taking into account gender issues, relationship between school and families, support and incentives for education, importance of the projects and social policy

measures related to permanence, return, success and continuity of the Ciganos in school.

#### **Public policies with relevance in terms of impact on Ciganos: since 25 April 1974 until 2014**

The public policy measures are universal, so there are no specific measures in accordance with the social and cultural origins of individual citizens. The right to education, enshrined in the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic, and a fair and effective equality in school access and success (articles 73 to 77) has a central importance in the Portuguese society. In this context, the Framework Law of the Education System (*Lei de Bases do Sistema Educativo*) (Act No. 46/86 of 14 October) established the general framework of the current educational system and defends a universal, compulsory and free primary education. As a result of this educational reform, it was established the obligation of frequency of the primary education until the 9th year of schooling or up to 15 years old. Later, the Act No. 85/2009 of 27 August established the fulfilment of schooling up to the 12th year of schooling and extended the age up to 18 years old, as well as the universality of pre-school education for children from the age of 5.

In terms of educational support measures, we highlight, in particular, the Educational Territories of Priority Intervention Programmes (TEIP) and the Integrated Programme for Education and Training (PIEF), created in 1996 and 1999, respectively. Currently, it is in force the TEIP3, under the authority of the Ministry for Education and Science, which is guided by the central objectives of educational success promotion, combat of indiscipline, early school leaving and absenteeism, educational guidance and qualified transition from school to active living, and of coordination between school, family and community. Under the joint supervision of the Ministry for Solidarity, Employment and Social Security, the PIEF is a measure of exception trying to favour the compliance with the compulsory school for minors and school and professional qualification of minors aged 16 years or over, in a situation of exploitation of child labour, namely, that conclude employment contracts.

The programme 'Escolhas' also deserves attention, which appeared in its 1st generation in 2001, it is now in its 6th generation (2016-2018). The main objective of this programme is to promote the social inclusion of children and youths from the most vulnerable socio-economic contexts, with a view to equal opportunities and the strengthening of social cohesion. This measure and the more important actions developed is the promotion of school inclusion and non-formal education, due to its impact on Ciganos youngsters and families (Calado 2014: 73).

In terms of housing, the state invested financially in specific actions of relocation in social housing of controlled costs (built or acquired), specially the Special Relocation Programme (PER), which began in 1993. Within this public housing policy many Ciganos families have been rehoused all over the country, almost always in a concentrated form, with superficial knowledge about their ways of life and without taking into account certain specificities (Pereira & Rebelo 2013).

Another important area of public policies refers to the social protection of citizens. In this respect, it should be noted the minimum income guarantee (RMG) that was created in 1996, applied from 1997 onwards, and replaced in 2003 by the social integration income (RSI). These social policy measures to fight poverty are intended to support people or families who find themselves in a situation of serious economic distress and at risk of social exclusion; they are subject to a provision of cash, for satisfaction of basic needs, and an insertion programme that encourages social, professional and community integration. Although there is no available data at national level on the number of Ciganos beneficiaries, those that are available do not reveal exactly this situation (Branco, 2003). In 2008, the Social Security Institution revealed that 3.9% of Ciganos families were beneficiaries (5,275 out of 428,131) (Parliamentary Committee, 2008); other sources attest that 35.9% of Ciganos in active age received the social integration income (Santos *et al.*, 2009). Recently, the national study on Ciganos communities reveals that in 6,089 Ciganos (forming households) 33.5% have as main source of income the social integration income (Mendes *et al.*, 2014: 185).

#### **Theoretical framework**

In Portugal, estimates suggest that there are about 40,000 to 60,000 Portuguese Ciganos citizens (ACIDI 2013) and although these numbers vary according to the sources and the theoretical and methodological procedures used, it is consensual that it is a small population number compared to other European countries. Nevertheless, the living conditions and challenges experienced by Portuguese Ciganos are close to others, particularly in terms of the analytical axes often referred: education, employment and vocational training, housing, health, but also in terms of the discrimination they are subject to and the ignorance about their plural ways of life (ERRC/NÚMENA 2007; FRA 2012). According to European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA 2012) and the World Bank (2014), Ciganos are affected by social and economic vulnerability, which reflects a complex set of interrelated factors. For the World Bank, a remarkable gap between a Cigano family and an average European family increases every day. As a fact, the majority of Portuguese Ciganos now lives in major urban areas, even though there is a persistent

social representation that associates the 'Cigano's way of life' with 'nomadism' (Castro 2012, Mendes & Magano 2013, Mendes *et al.* 2014). The wave of scientific works produced from the 90's until the present prevailing qualitative and micro studies located in very specific geographical areas, has contributed to a better understanding of Portuguese citizens who identify themselves as Ciganos (Mendes & Magano 2013), making evident the plurality of ways of living, the exclusions and tensions experienced, the complexity of intra and inter-ethnic relations (Afonso *et al.* 2012, Mendes & Magano 2013) and also the changes and continuities between generations and those who are considered by other Ciganos as living a life as 'Senhores' ('Gentlemen') (Magano 2014). The national study (Mendes *et al.* 2014) corroborates most of the findings already referred by previous research but it has also exposed the harsh reality still lived by Ciganos and the deep inequalities between Portuguese Ciganos and non-Ciganos. The data collected show the existence of strong contrasts at the level of school education between Ciganos and non-Ciganos and between Ciganos men and women. Thus, among the 1,599 respondents, about 1/3 of the respondents does not exceed the primary education or never attended school and only 2.8% has finished secondary and higher education (Mendes *et al.*, 2014)<sup>48</sup>. In the European context, school segregation and other forms of discrimination are also common. There are exclusion dynamics from the moment Ciganos are in school: classification procedures are generated and Ciganos are moved to special education (disabilities) and there is a reduced presence in higher education (IRS 2008).

The characterisation achieved reinforces, in a way, some of the stereotypes often used towards Ciganos, especially when viewed in a linear and deterministic way: the prevalence of low levels of schooling and high absenteeism rates (starting in primary education), high school dropout in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year of education, particularly for girls, evidence of strong gender inequalities and a high dependence on social policy measures, namely, the *Social Integration Income* ('RSI') and other family allowances. Nevertheless, the study shows important ongoing changes and its impacts in various dimensions of Ciganos lives in Portugal, such as a growing interest in schooling, an improvement of the relationship between the school and the families, a reduction of absenteeism and school dropout rates through RSI policy and a higher presence in nurseries and kindergartens. Furthermore, it is important to mention the increasing participation of women in literacy courses (Mendes *et al.* 2014). The increase of education qualifications is related to trajectories of social mobility in the Portuguese society (Almeida *et al.* 1993)

<sup>48</sup> General data about the Portuguese society show that in 2014: 8.9% could not read or write; 19.2% had finished secondary education and 16.5% higher education. See <http://www.pordata.pt/Portugal>, accessed on 6 May, 2016.

and it is known that socialisation through schooling promotes learning of citizenship rights (Vala *et al.* 1999). Yet, and in the European sphere, Ciganos are often perceived as the most disadvantaged minority in Europe. However, it should be mentioned that the Ciganos are not the only ethnic minority that experiences educational deprivation. Many ethnic and language minorities all over the world face similar disadvantages (for an overview, see UNESCO 2010: 149-153). Even though the patterns of educational exclusion of different ethnic minorities vary, the structural drivers, underlying these processes, might be similar for such heterogeneous groups as migrants, indigenous people and Gypsies/Roma'. (Brüggemann 2012: 10-11).

### **Policies and projects: what are the effects on the schooling of Portuguese Ciganos**

The territories are considered as places where you can find all the everyday problems, although its areas of intervention are restricted and specific. The participation of Ciganos in the services and projects is generally high and the opinions expressed are mainly positive; these are strongly influenced by the creation and consolidation of trust relationships with the technicians. Social Security, in general, and the institutions and technical managers of the social integration income, in particular, in the case of Ciganos, take on the centrality of the possibilities of social protection. Although this is the main allowance referred to in relation to Ciganos, the Social Security supports to motherhood, child allowance, supplementary child allowance in the case of disabilities and also some pensions were also mentioned. In turn, the receipt of unemployment benefits was barely mentioned for this population: cases of workers who have paid social security contributions are rare, whether on the part of self-employed workers and employees. One of the implications of contracting inherent to the insertion plan signed for the receipt of the social integration income is the need for registration at the public employment office, which causes a high number of Ciganos to have the formal status of unemployed (Marçano 2011).

Currently, in the both Metropolitan Areas most Ciganos families live in public housing and a residual number is in leased houses of private market or has purchased a house. To address the processes of relocation under the Special Relocation Programme, the respondents had the opportunity to express its disagreement concerning practices of concentration and segregation of Roma people: in the same blocks and in the worst places of the quarters (without exits, or without access to commercial premises or transport, for example).

In general, Ciganos that the respondents know are characterised by low schooling levels and high rates of absenteeism and drop-outs, on the 1st and

2nd cycle of primary education, respectively, but, currently, almost all children are integrated in the 1st cycle. The main explanatory causes of school leaving identified were the centrality of Cigano marriage, which takes place at very early ages, the extreme concern with the education of girls and the inherent social control, especially since the age of menarche, as well as the successive failures registered in 1st cycle, leading to an inability of Ciganos youngsters to adapt to classes in which they are placed in the transition to the 2nd cycle due to the advanced age when compared to the other colleagues (Mendes 2007; Magano 2010; Nicolau 2010). In turn, the weak results and the consequent educational failure result from the primary socialisation, the cognitive stimulation in deficit, the poor language resources, the lack of motivation for learning, the absence of expectations regarding school – often reinforced by the unawareness of Ciganos who effectively have completed the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade (low number of cases identified in the two metropolitan areas) or even enrolled in higher education (in the Lisbon Area for example, the known cases of Ciganos who attend the University are children of father or mother who are non-Cigano).

In what concern the relation that Ciganos establish with school, it's possible to find gender inequalities, which, according to the respondents, is due to the roles traditionally assigned to Ciganos women. The girls, in general, leave school earlier than boys (Mendes 2007; Magano 2010; Nicolau 2010).

For a large number of representatives of the institutions interviewed, the disadvantaged situation that marks Ciganos /school relationship is due to the lack of positive aspirations and expectations towards school. Usually, the social factors associated with ethnicity are the arguments for this type of explanation, the tradition and the need to preserve Ciganos values. The UNDP/World Bank/EC Regional Gypsy/Roma Survey also shows significant differences in aspirations between Gypsy/Roma and non-Gypsy/Roma. One should however not conclude that differences are mainly caused by culture' (Brüggemann 2012: 50).

However, some signs of attitude and behaviour changing regarding gender relations in the analysed territories are visible, albeit gradually. Such learning opportunities over life (Gomes, 2013) are often stimulated by the RSI teams and are very important for the improvement of living conditions of the Gypsies, and, in particular, of Ciganos women, as the education, training and qualification may enable the integration in the labour market and social mobility as well as boost the abandonment of the traditional way of life (Magano 2010).

However, there still are some obstacles, such as the fact that men do not permit women to leave the neighbourhood, that require innovative and proximity solutions, in particular through the promotion of education and/or

training in their areas of residence, in partnership with accredited entities for this purpose.

The respondents point out even the relationship between the school appreciation by the parents and the tendency for the school success of children, while confirming that the parents continue to hold low expectations as to the influence of school on the employability of Ciganos. It is also important to add that closed schools in poor and spatially segregated neighbourhood's normally present unfavourable results. Moreover, the discontinuity in terms of projects and local intervention measures turn out to produce and to reinforce structural social inequalities.

Strangely, some of the professionals reproduce stereotypes traditionally associated with Ciganos, often homogenising and essentialist, which link almost always the perspective of poverty with social exclusion (Bastos *et al.* 2007; Magano 2010; Mendes 2012).

There are some areas where the covered path has positive signs, such as health, housing or education – even if only in the first cycles of primary education – these, however, emphasise negatively the central issues of employment and, more transversely, of prejudice, as preventing integration and full participation of Ciganos in several spheres of social life.

The reinforcement of the focus on education and training courses for the 2nd cycle of primary education; the creation of school models and expectations adjusted to Ciganos children and youngsters, for example through the knowledge of reference Ciganos youngsters and adults integrated in schools or in the labour market; the implementation of measures for protected employment; the appreciation of Ciganos history and culture, through the promotion of activities aimed at society in general. Interviewees showed lack of knowledge about some social policy measures in spite of working in institutions deployed on the ground. For example, although they have already heard about the national strategy for the integration of Ciganos communities, they are unaware of its content and specific strategies, i.e. there is not a thorough understanding of the document and targets.

### **Portuguese Ciganos: what has changed in and towards school**

Some generational changes were observed in what concerns valuing school, in contrast with the past, these changes are related to the fact that many parents with children attending classes are themselves educated and that they have dedicated a greater follow-up to their children's educational background. The future of their children is perceived in a different light, putting in perspective the possibility of pursuing a career choice and taking into consideration the expectation of economic stability, the social mobility through work, the value

of school as a mean of achieving a 'good job' and not as an end (better education).

Another interesting aspect is the fact that none of the Ciganos interviewed with more education (secondary school and university) attended only the regular education, i.e., even in cases of further school education this reality is due largely to the influence of public policy, educational character or social protection reflected in educational background options professionally oriented in the case of the male interviewed.

Abajo and Carrasco (2004) point other elements beyond institutional ones and that are also relevant to explain the school success of Ciganos population: the existence of personal continuity projects; the individual undertaking and the pursuit for favourable conditions to the implementation of such projects; the capacity to negotiate with family, community and the peer pressures; the social competences and support by the peers.

Between the interviewees remains the tendency to value school as a way of achieving a different job that allows them to have a better life than their parents. The continuity in school is seen as a way of access employment. Together, schooling and employment are seen as way of social mobility where the valorisation of school continuity and the access to employment are directly linked.

To effective schooling contribute the social supports, whether by the importance of the support of school employees or local projects, individually and that, in a way, is revealed by the way how education is done: the combination of several methods between regular education and alternative teaching proposals. Most of the time continuity occurred by stages as opportunities arise, which reveals the connections with public policies in which individuals and families are involved.

Practically all Ciganos contacted, even if they cannot read and write, attended at least once some kind of training course - respondents of all ages and territories, mostly within the scope of Employment and Educational Training Institute (IEFP) and Social Integration Income (RSI). Expressions of discontent are also frequent regarding the proposals submitted, i.e., dissatisfaction with the type of course, broad variety, short duration, below or above their skills, lack of variety in training proposals, etc.

Another negative tendency suggested is the concentration of Cigano in the same course/type of course. The main reasons highlighted for the presence in the school/training system are the motivation to learn how to read and write/learn more, increase schooling; to maintain a social revenue (RSI), to learn how to use a tool like for example, a computer; an issue directly related to economic existence (food allowance, transportation). Cases have been reported of Ciganos with different professional and academic skills that are

placed in the same class in courses of basic skills which reflects homogeneous and graded ways of treatment.

For technicians and some teachers, participation of Ciganos families in school is still lower than that of non-Ciganos families although an increase of interest is recorded: it is perceived that right know children go to school at adequate ages and that the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of primary education is a widespread reality. There is also an increase of frequency in nurseries and kindergartens and study support.

Another relevant aspect highlighted as a difficulty is the non-continuation of the teaching body which eliminates their preparation to work in these environments. Performing an outreach educational work is important and possible through convenience and mutual understanding. For that, it would be important to stay in school longer in order to create conditions to get to know the children and their families and also to develop teaching materials and appropriate approaches.

Solutions found by schools with Ciganos children and youngsters tend to concentrate Ciganos students in the same classes of regular school (mostly in the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of primary education) and in specific educational activities (e.g. alternative curricular paths). These classes purpose have, as a general rule, worst results and greater teaching difficulties. Ciganos students often get to second grade without the necessary skills to succeed in a new educational cycle of schooling.

Institutional players highlight the incapacity of schools to ensure that students do not miss school from the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle of primary education. In this 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle of primary education there are some significant changes to children and youths and for the families: distant schools, increased number of teachers for different fields, i.e., teachers lost the importance shown in the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of primary education. Subjects and learning contents became more complex and there is no advance preparation, difficulties tend to accumulate. To overcome the situation, it is suggested to work in partnerships between territory institutions.

On the other hand, in Ciganos speeches there is a valuing of the skills gained in the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of primary education, namely reading and writing, which are essential to some reading functions and to take the driver licence. Some fears remain in what concerns school ('insecurity') and school environment, mostly in territories with higher conflict history or with high presence of immigrant population, but there is a very positive distinction regarding schools of 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of primary education.

The reasons for early school drop-out are almost related with assumed centrality for marriage and preservation of woman's 'purity'; it is difficult to accept the teaching of certain curricular contents (e.g.: related to reproduction). However, we are witnessing differentiation in what concerns

support in continuity of school from parents, according with gender. Girls are not encouraged to continue school from certain age (menarche) and year of schooling (variable). For the boys the situation is different, they have the possibility to decide, which constitutes an individual option of the young men.

Generally, early marriage and birth of children disrupt schooling and continuity in school; from that point this happens only through vocational/training courses in cases where they are beneficiaries from social protection and are compelled to have said courses.

Even in cases of schooling extension we notice some degree of disenchantment due to lack of opportunity that persist even with the increase of schooling: also those who have more schooling years have more difficulties of inclusion in the labour market and they feel discriminated. It is almost always considered an effort of the students and their families which does not reflect in new opportunities.

There is almost always a positive image about the teachers. Nevertheless, concrete reports persist of situations of discrimination in some territories and schools with a few boards and teachers.

Families experience difficulties in supporting home schooling for lack of knowledge for that follow-up and also for lack of space to study due to the household size: having many people at home and the noise do not allow them to meet study conditions.

As a way to lessen difficulties in learning and the relationship between school and families and that of the families with school, mediators could be an effective option. There are known cases of performance of some school mediators and that presence is much valued for attenuating some of the major recurring problems.

The idea that enjoying school does not always mean enjoying classes does not deserve reservations. Youngster's like to hang out in school but do not have much interest in classes. Parents do not feel responsible for their son's skipping school; this is seen as a school responsibility. In contrast, the attendance to local projects is valued, like the project 'Escolhas', among others, that allow access to school support and recreational activities.

### Final remarks

Some social policies introduced in Portugal in the last 40 years (since implementation of democracy) have effectively contributed for the improvement of life conditions of Portuguese Ciganos. However, there are significant differences between the life conditions of the Portuguese Ciganos and the Portuguese population in general, persisting the old ways of social inequity expressed in poverty, poor housing conditions, low educational levels, difficulties of access to the labour market, uncertain incomes and

sometimes dependency on social incomes, witnessed imprisonment in poverty, to Wacquant (2014) sense. But Ciganos still show notable levels of disadvantage in respect to the other national citizens, mostly in access and permanence in school, in access to vocational training, access to employment and housing (formal market), access to public services and justice. A way of fighting and defuse this phenomenon is to promote positive school environments, without conflicts in school and in the neighbourhood so that the families feel safe, especially in what concerns the girls. The presence of a Cigano mediator in schools is highly appreciated by the technicians, teachers and parents but his/her job has to be much more than to address emergency situations; he or she has to have conditions to develop an effective work in social and cultural mediation. Other proposals are: to have a greater involvement of families in school/participation in school activities, participation in meetings; inclusion of children and youths in 'mixed' classes (avoid concentration of Ciganos students in the same classes, continuous training of teachers - use of certified Ciganos mediators, stability of the teachers (greater residence time in the territories and greater knowledge of the families), continuity of interventions (continuity of projects, implementations of good practice and working in partnership).

The impacts of schooling in professional life are still seen by Ciganos as not significant regarding the expectations raised, which can be due to racism and discrimination issues. They are still very below the training average, despite being significantly higher than that of their parents, but they are always highly conditioned to the labour market and when they access it, they almost always get the most disqualified jobs. In fact, the universalism of Portugal's public policies has not had the desired effects in terms of reducing the levels of poverty, exclusion, discrimination and racism, in what Ciganos are concerned.

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## "AMARE MULE": FUNERAL CEREMONIES AMONG ROMA IN BULGARIA

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The paper presents some observations among Roma communities in Bulgaria and their funeral ceremonies. Most Roma communities speak about their dead and they speak about them with pride and honor. The Roma believe that the soul of the dead stays with them and they help and protect the family members. To talk to the dead person among the Roma communities and to "make him/her proud" with the achievement of the children and grandchildren is natural. In most Roma groups (Muslim and Orthodox Christians) the belongings of the dead person are given away to close friends and relatives. There is no tradition that the belongings of the dead should be burned.

**Key words:** funeral, ceremony, beliefs,

### Introduction

To write this paper I was provoked by the way funeral ceremonies among different Roma groups have been organized, especially in a time of Coronavirus crises, which started in the first months of the year 2020. There are cases of dead Roma, caused by the virus Covid-19. A Bulgarian Muslim Roma friend told me about a case of their relative, who died in a hospital in Bulgaria, due to the infection from the virus and he expressed his sorrow that his relative was not buried according to Muslim customs. The body of the dead person was not washed by a Muslim priest in a mosque, as should be done, according to the Muslim rituals. The relatives could not attend the funeral. They could observe everything, but from a distance. The body was buried in a plastic bag. In some countries the bodies were cremated, which is also against the Roma religion traditions. All those cases put the Roma in a new situation when they speak about the dead person, and discuss the way s/he died and was buried; something which was previously described in the literature as impossible to imagine, and non-existent (Williams 1993).

The customs and rituals related to the dead vary among different Roma communities. In his book P. Williams (1993), in describing the dead among the group of Manush in France, explains that after the funeral all the belongings of the dead person should be burned, because the relatives do not want to talk about the dead anymore. Sometimes they keep one object which belongs to the dead person but just one or two objects – not more. The author