

How governmental policies in the areas of education and digitalisation affect the Roma community in Northeastern Bulgaria?

Bachelor project



Petar Tsonev (S4136160)

Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen

Supervisor: dr. Philippe Hanna

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Summary

This study investigates the effects of governmental policy in the areas of education and digitalisation on the Roma community in Northeastern Bulgaria. This was a mixed method study, employing in-depth, semi-structured interviews and a specifically designed questionnaire. However, the main conclusions were drawn by juxtaposing qualitative data provided by the interviews and quantitative data obtained through the surveys. The study showcased that members of Bulgarian society support the need for integration and inclusion of the Roma community into mainstream society. Education proved to be the main tool identified to ease this process. However, the Bulgarian educational system was found to be unfit to support the needs of marginalised communities. Several measures are proposed in order to deal with this issue. Moreover, the process of digitalisation in Bulgaria has been shown to be lagging behind, despite the increasing number of initiatives. Lastly, this study indicated that the Bulgarian society tends to recognise and value the skills of members of the Roma community. Nonetheless, there is a lack of governmental effort to foster the economic and social prospects of these skills.

1. Introduction

The cultural relations between different groups of people across the globe are a fascinating subject. There are multiple people groups existing on our planet with their own unique languages, traditions, customs and religions. Some groups that are physically separated by oceans can have similar cultures and rituals, while, alternatively, people separated by mere kilometres can have drastically different cultural identities. Such close existence of vastly different groups is what creates intriguing cultural dilemmas. Adding to that fact, in the past few centuries the idea of single nation states has developed rapidly and has become prevalent. This means that each slice of land has to belong to one particular nation state. However, this creates a situation of power imbalance where certain groups find themselves living in a nation state that does not correspond to them culturally. This paper is going to investigate one such example – the Roma community living in the country of Bulgaria.

The Roma form the second largest ethnic minority in Bulgaria – 4.9% of the country's population (National Statistical Institute, 2011). Historically, this community has been the subject of discrimination and abuse. The report of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) (2014) describes the extent of this discrimination. The Roma, along with other minorities, are abused and slandered on the Internet and in the media. The report even sheds light on a purposeful campaign of the media to label the Roma as a demographic threat to the nation. There

are numerous acts of physical violence against the Roma reported every year. Moreover, and perhaps most importantly for the purpose of this research, ECRI reports a pronounced anti-Roma discourse in Bulgarian politics where different nationalistic parties have systematically linked Roma with criminal activity. However, the report also suggests that positive developments are happening with the introduction of a National Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS) in March 2012. Nonetheless, some of its goals, like the formation of a National Roma Platform, have not been reached because the Bulgarian government found it unnecessary to further pursue them (Integro Association, 2017).

The interest of this paper is to investigate how certain policies of the Bulgarian government impact the Roma community. Light will be shone in particular on the areas of education and digitalisation. The ultimate aim is to fill a literature gap concerning the experience of Roma people in Bulgaria.

2. Theoretical framework

One of the main inspirations and underpinnings of this research is the concept of social impact assessment (SIA). SIA found its initial starting point in the early 1970s. Then it was primarily used as a regulatory tool. However, as with all professional practices, SIA and the understanding of it has evolved. Most important of these understandings is that in order to manage social impacts, it is important to address social issues from the very beginning of a project, long before regulatory approval is needed (Vanclay et al., 2015). These principles can be applied also for the impacts and effects of governmental policies, not only infrastructure projects. Policies can also have a significant impact on people's lives and should be the subject of some form of assessment and stakeholder consultation.

Hanna et al. (2016) showcase that it is important to consider the culture and traditional practices of Indigenous groups when SIA is being done. This can bring a deeper understanding of the community that is going to be impacted. In this way, better mitigation solutions can be found, especially when considering minority and marginalised groups in a society.

As already established, the Roma community in Bulgaria is struggling with systematic discrimination and abuse. Unfortunately, this is not the case only in Bulgaria. Throughout European history the community has suffered from severe poverty and systematic exclusion. In the past few decades, the period of transition from communism in Eastern and Central Europe has created an incredibly dire situation for the Roma – low levels of education and lack of professional skills, compounded by discrimination (Ringold et al., 2005). In Slovakia, the opinion of the general public

is that governmental policy is struggling to deal with the problems of Roma integration. This leads to further marginalisation of the Roma community. One of the proposed measures to combat this are specific educational policies with the aim to improve the accessibility to education for Roma children. However, such pro inclusion policies can be counterproductive because of the negative societal constructions of the Roma that are already embedded in them. (Miškolci et al., 2017). Therefore, because of their perceived importance in promoting integration, educational policies will be one of the policy areas investigated in this paper.

Moreover, the importance of digitalisation is increasing rapidly. Van Deursen et al. (2017) describe how digital exclusion is compound and sequential in nature. The results of their study argue that the more existing offline resources an individual has, ranging from social to economic capital, the more the Internet delivers and further integrates the individual into society, and, in turn, the fewer offline resources a person possesses, the less value the Internet has. This suggests that the Internet is a magnifier of existing offline inequalities. For those who are marginalised in important domains, this means that they can be further marginalised by technology. Therefore, it has also been decided to investigate the effects of digitalisation policies on the Roma community.

Furthermore, it is going to be investigated how government policies in these areas can also help to uncover the hidden community assets of the Roma community in Bulgaria. Salemink (2016) presents a framework of how these assets can be unlocked by understanding the current economic situation of Roma communities in the Netherlands. The community assets described in the paper are the need for independence, the sense of community, the trading culture, the role of family arts and crafts. However, it is also described that there might be possible conflict between integration and community building in regards to work with Roma people because the capitalisation on these hidden assets can lead to further exposure and reproduction of differences between the Roma traveller community and the settled society.

3. Research problem

Based on this theoretical framework, the clear aim of this study was established – examining the policy approach of the Bulgarian government towards the Roma community. It was decided that in order to narrow down the research scope, the main data collection has to be concentrated in the northeastern part of the country. Thus the following research question emerged: *“How governmental policies in the areas of education and digitalisation affect the Roma community in Northeastern Bulgaria?”*.

Four further sub questions were formulated with the aim of uncovering different aspects of the research question:

- *How governmental policies in the areas of education and digitalisation influence exclusion and integration of minority groups?*
- *What are the outcomes of Bulgarian educational policies for the Roma community in the northeastern part of the country?*
- *In what way do digitisation policies influence the inequalities experienced by the Roma in the northeastern part of Bulgaria?*
- *How can governmental policy be improved in order to foster the hidden community assets of the Roma community?*

4. Methodology

4.1. Hypothesis

Firstly, this study will aim to uncover whether there are targeted policies in the areas of education and digitalisation specifically towards the Roma community. Furthermore, the effects of the policy approach in the field of education will be identified. It is important to understand whether such policies contribute more to the inclusion of the Roma people in mainstream society, or to their exclusion and alienation. Moreover, it is important to uncover how digital inequalities contribute to further social exclusion, both online and offline in the context of the Bulgarian society. Additionally, in other European countries with sizable Roma populations, public opinion towards the Roma people has shown to be quite negative (Miškolci et al., 2017). This hypothesis will be tested in the context of mainstream Bulgarian society. Finally, it will be investigated if the government is actively trying to foster the community assets of the Roma through its policies (Salemink, 2016).

4.2. Data collection

A mixed method approach was chosen for the carrying out of this research. However, the qualitative data collected was chosen to be the main tool for investigation, based on the nature of the research question and subquestions.

Firstly, an interview guide was developed for collecting qualitative data (Appendix A). Interviews were semi-structured with the guide only serving as the base of the talk, not as a strict guideline. A

friendly, laid-back atmosphere was envisioned as the perfect setting for the interview, especially with members of the Roma community. The questions tackled a different range of topics concerning the research subquestions. However, two different guides were developed for different stakeholders. The first one was for representatives of institutions (usually of Bulgarian ethnicity), with some introductory questions, followed by a deep dive into the importance of education and digitalisation, the policy approach of national and regional governments in those areas and the meaning of hidden community assets. Alternatively, there were specific interview guides for members of the Roma community (and other minorities) with more personal questions regarding their personal experience with social exclusion, the educational system, going into the digital age and the appreciation of their hidden talents.

A big city in the Severoiztochen region (Figure 1) was chosen as the main location for finding interviewees. This region was selected due to its high percentage of people from minority groups, particularly that of the Roma (NSI, 2011). However, the task of finding participants proved more daunting than expected, with many of the educational and municipal institutions in the city being unresponsive or unavailable for an interview. Ultimately, nine interviewees agreed to participate in a talk (Table 1). With some, contact was established through personal connections. Others were contacted by people that were already interviewed. The interviewees included two leaders of integration projects - one in the city and one in a village, one health mediator working in a village, four educational mediators – two working in the city and two working in different villages, and finally, one principal and one vice-principal, both of rural schools. The shortest interview lasted just under 10 minutes, while the longest – almost an hour. They were all carried out in Bulgarian. The transcripts for Participants 6, 7, 8, 9 are incomplete because of the duration of these talks and the inclusion of many personal stories and experiences not relevant to this study.

Bulgaria with the Severoizotchen region

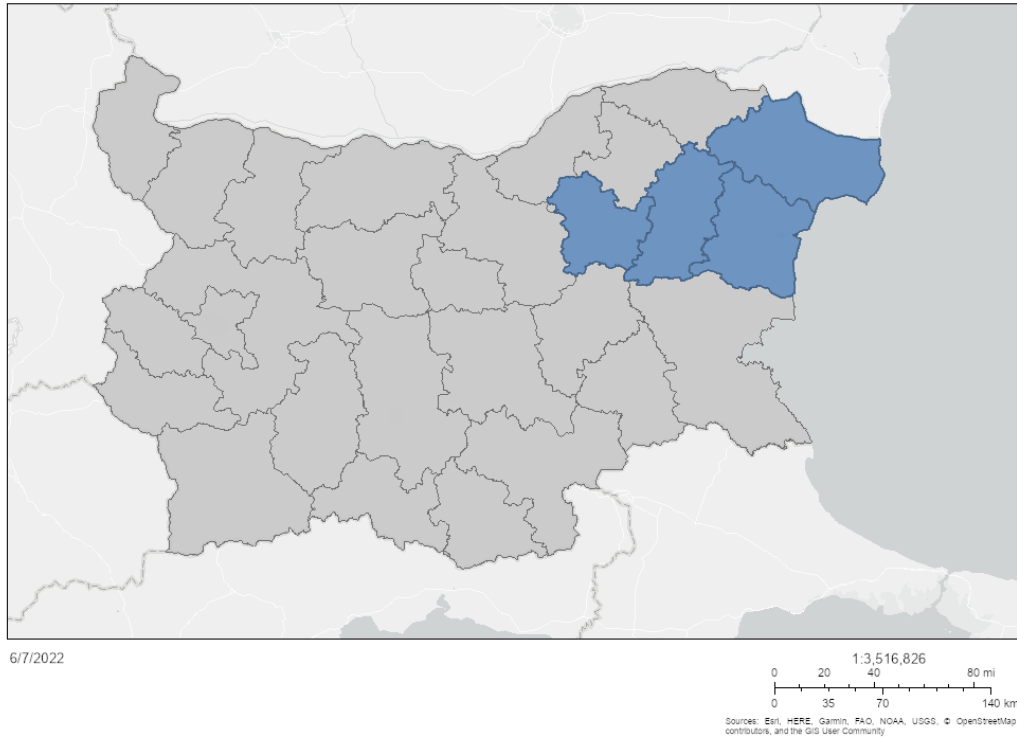


Figure 1: Map highlighting the Severoizotchen region

Role	Location	Ethnicity	Gender
Project leader	Village 1	Bulgarian	Female
Health mediator	Village 1	Turkish	Female
Project leader	City	Bulgarian	Female
Educational mediator 1	City	Roma	Male
Educational mediator 2	City	Turkish	Female
Educational mediator	Village 2	Roma	Female
Vice-principal	Village 2	Bulgarian	Female
Principal	Village 3	Bulgarian	Female
Educational mediator	Village 3	Bulgarian	Female

Table 1: Summary of interviewees

Furthermore, a questionnaire was prepared in order to gauge the general public opinion of the Bulgarian society regarding marginalised communities (Appendix B). The questions cover people's opinion of social exclusion, effectiveness of the educational system, importance of digitalisation and appreciation of the talent of people from marginalised communities.

The questionnaire was spread using a mixture of convenience and voluntary sampling techniques. Ultimately, 61 responses were collected. Respondents came from all over the country, not only from the Northeast. Furthermore, there were even respondents who are Bulgarian citizens but live abroad.

The average mean age of the sample was 35,4 - considerably lower in comparison to the national average of 44 (NSI, 2021a). However, this bias can be explained by the large numbers of students in the sample since they were an easily approachable target group. Moreover, the sample contains mainly people of Bulgarian ethnicity – 90.2 %, compared to the national percentage of 84.8% (NSI, 2011). The respondents who indicated Turkish ethnicity constituted 6.6%. Unfortunately, only 3.3% identified as Roma. However, this is comparable to the national percentage of 4.9% (NSI, 2011).

4.3. Data Analysis

Initially, the main themes identified from the interviews were singled out during discussions on the topic with close family and friends, while keeping the identity of the respondents anonymous. This was used to create the coding tree for further analysis. The codes used were placed in 6 groups – education, work, digitalisation, social factors, hidden community assets, geographical factors. The software ATLAS.ti was used to identify quotations. The analysis in the software was carried out in Bulgarian using the untranslated transcripts of the interviews. Afterwards, the selected quotations were translated by the researcher with specific care on preserving the meaning of the quote.

The questionnaire data was analysed using SPSS. However, no statistical tests were run as the data was not suitable for any. Nonetheless, frequency tables were produced to showcase the most common answers on each question.

4.4. Research Ethics

This research presented multiple ethical challenges. Firstly, it was important to consider the role of the researcher as an outsider to the Roma community. The Roma have long-standing traditions that are drastically different from those of mainstream society. This provided a challenge related to

understanding the culture of the group and remaining respectful towards it during the collection of data.

Moreover, there are significant power relations in play. As a student in a foreign university, the researcher had to recognise his role in relation to the Roma community. One third of the group is unemployed, while more than half live in relative or extreme poverty (NSI, 2021b). Being aware of these issues was extremely important for the success of the research process.

In addition, all necessary measures were undertaken to protect the anonymity of the interviewees. All personal or geographical names are edited out of the transcripts. Besides that, every participant gave their written consent to participate in the research project and was informed thoroughly about their rights. The example consent form in English and the signed consent forms in Bulgarian are present in Appendix D.

Finally, it is important to recognise the language barrier and the issues it presents. Firstly, not all of the interviewees had Bulgarian as their mother tongue. This provided difficulties during some interviews, due to the lack of interpreters present. Furthermore, it proved challenging to retain the exact sense and emotions expressed while translating the quotes from the respondents. This has to be taken into account when interpreting the meaning of quotes.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. Getting to know Roma identity

One of the primary tasks before engaging in research was to understand what constituted being a Roma person. However, this proved to be difficult. Particularly in Bulgaria, the Roma have arrived in different times and from different origin points. There are currently a multitude of different Roma groups with different customs and traditions living in the country (Amalipe, n.d.). The biggest group is the *Yerli*, coming from the Turkish word for 'local'. They are divided between the *Dasikane* Roma (who are also called 'Bulgarian Gypsies' and adhere to Christianity) and the *Horahane* Roma (the largest Roma group in the country, who are culturally Muslim and mostly speak the Romani language with stronger or weaker Turkish influence). The *Horahane* generally identify as Turkish and want to shake off the 'Roma' label. However, neither the Turkish nor the Bulgarian communities accept that. Other groups include the *Kaldarashi* who are referred to as 'Serbian Gypsies', 'Hungarian Gypsies' or 'Austrian Gypsies' since they migrated through that region. They are Christian but have preserved Roma traditions and norms the best and follow them

to this day. Furthermore, the *Rudari* arrived at a similar time as the *Kaldarashi*. However, they carry a distinct Romanian identity and speak an old version of the Romanian language. They generally do not identify as part of the larger Roma community. Lastly, the *Millet* are Muslim and have a distinct Turkish self-identity, as they had a preferential treatment in the times when the Ottoman Empire ruled the region. However, they have multiple legendary and mythical stories that attribute their ancestry either as a tribe accompanying the Bulgar tribe when they migrated to the Balkan peninsula or as stemming from Arab tribes (Amalipe, n.d.).

Grasping the complexity of Roma identity is a challenging task. Even for some members of the Roma community themselves, such as this interviewee:

“This is a very tough question. Specifically for me. How do I self-identify... In principle, I grew up in Bulgaria. My mother and my father are meant to be Roma. My grandfather is a mix between Bulgarian and Roma [...] So, what do I self-identify as? I would rather say Roma. Because that is what was imposed on me”. (Mediator 1, male, city).

On the other hand, some participants had a clearer vision and understanding of their identity.

“From the Millet. I am from the Millet.” (Mediator, female, Village 2).

Furthermore, the interviews further on showed the undesirability of the label 'Roma'. One participant identified herself as Turkish, even though there is not a reported Turkish community in her place of residence, but rather a Roma one. Moreover, some respondents reflected on the challenges being Roma brings:

“... my experience is that in Bulgaria when you say you are Roma for example, you are not very welcomed by society. Even though I have a Bachelor's degree, I am not very well received.” (Mediator 1, Male, city)

The fact that all groups of Roma people are placed under a collective label (usually mostly associated with members and traits of the *Horahane*), is troublesome for understanding the complex issues regarding Roma integration, and minority integration in general. During the fieldwork some

of the respondents shared stories showcasing the differences between Roma groups within the region, even in small villages, and between regions.

“The difference between Gypsies (here referring to the Horahane) and Kopanari (referring to a subgroup of the Rudari) is that... Firstly, they have a different religion. The former are Christian, the other ones are Muslim. The other thing is, I think from my experience, they do not have such a big difference in traditions. For example, family, kids. I think both groups marry off their children young. But the way of thinking is different for the Kopanari, in comparison to the Turks (here referring to the Horahane still). They seem to not be so closed and are not following the traditions too strictly, in contrast to the Muslims and their religion. [...] They [the Kopanari] are more open to new things, while the others [the Gypsies/Horahane] are homogenous as an ethnicity.” (Mediator, female, Village 3).

“We had a conference in a different city [...] There I met incredibly educated Roma people with two-three university degrees. Very smart, very creative. Maybe in the region itself... I would say that our region does not have such educated Roma people.” (Mediator 2, female, city).

However, while clearly the differences between groups in the first quote were of an ethnic and cultural nature, it proved tougher to find the cause of the seemingly lesser interest in education for Roma in the studied region. All the respondents asked were aware of this fact. Nonetheless, they could not provide an explanation for it.

5.2. Exploring the opinion on social exclusion

After gaining some needed understanding of the Roma identity (or the lack of one such collective identity), the next step was to identify people’s understanding of social exclusion and its causes. All the respondents were asked if they think there are socially excluded groups in Bulgaria. The answers proved to be somewhat divisive. Some of the respondents were more willing to rather place the blame on the Roma themselves while others identified other sources of exclusion.

“Socially excluded, no. All of them have rights, they are equal members of society. It is different though, when they exclude themselves because of illiteracy, because of poverty...” (Project leader, female, Village 1).

“Ah, to some extent, yes. There is social exclusion in Bulgaria and it is something that can not be prevented in any way.”

No matter what is done?

“No matter what’s done. Social exclusion, it does not happen between people who live together. Everything comes from that ‘for some we can, for others we can not’ in the country. [It comes] from above.” (Vice-principal, female, Village 2).

Furthermore, the questionnaire administered did not provide a clear answer. However, the majority of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that there are marginalised groups in Bulgaria (Figure 2).

There are ethnic groups that are marginalised in Bulgaria

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	1	1,6	1,6	1,6
	Disagree	12	19,7	19,7	21,3
	Neutral	8	13,1	13,1	34,4
	Agree	30	49,2	49,2	83,6
	Strongly agree	10	16,4	16,4	100,0
	Total	61	100,0	100,0	

Figure 2: Frequency table for the question on the existence of marginalised groups in Bulgaria

With this established, it was noteworthy to investigate what caused this marginalisation. Some of the respondents pointed out the mentality of Roma people as one of the key factors for exclusion. In summation, the Roma tend to be aware only of the short-term and because of this, education is not really a virtue for them.

“There are such groups of people in Bulgaria who are left on a primitive level. What do I mean by primitive? They are only looking to satisfy their basic needs. That is how they raise their kids...” (Principal, female, Village 3).

“... They live for that, today he has to turn 18, get a driver’s licence and drive a BMW 3. That is our ‘ideal’ life. [...] None of them say ‘I want to study, to become this and that and to work’ [...] 5% of the kids here want that. All others say ‘I wanna get the licence, buy a BMW or an Audi’.” (Vice-principal, female, Village 2).

However, during the talks the behaviour of the dominant group in society was also identified as contributing to the exclusion process.

“It is two-sided. It is true that the majority ethnicity, at least for our country, has a disparaging behaviour towards the minority ethnicity. Disparaging maybe because of their traditions, habits or, more so, because of their attitude towards life.” (Principal, female, Village 3).

Based on the theoretical background, this outcome was expected. No matter how much the minority community is isolating itself, it is almost never solely responsible. The majority group has contributions to the exclusion process, whether they are direct or indirect. However, an unexpected outcome from the interviews was that further factors were uncovered – urbanisation and general depopulation.

“In general, in my line of work, such situations of social exclusion, specifically in my experience, arise usually in remote and small settlements where the access to services is limited” (Project leader, female, city).

“When I have contact with my colleagues, they say the situation is similar in other villages. The villages are left with a predominantly Roma population and they can not integrate, even if they wanted to. There is no competition. They are in their own community.” (Principal, female, Village 3).

5.3. Should there be an effort towards integration?

Integration of minority communities is a complicated process. There is a fine line between integration and assimilation. Sibley (1998) puts forth the notion of the need to carefully approach the process of integration and the research on the topic. Without cultural contextualisation, integration can just lead to more policing and control. It is argued that “some people are on the edge because that is where they want to be” (Sibley, 1998, p. 99).

The question of whether the government should try its utmost to integrate marginalised groups was presented in the questionnaire. The vast majority - almost three quarters, of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement (Figure 3).

The government should try its utmost to integrate those groups into the mainstream society

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	2	3,3	3,3	3,3
	Disagree	2	3,3	3,3	6,6
	Neutral	13	21,3	21,3	27,9
	Agree	29	47,5	47,5	75,4
	Strongly agree	15	24,6	24,6	100,0
Total		61	100,0	100,0	

Figure 3. Frequency table on the question whether the government should try its utmost to integrate marginalised groups.

Furthermore, during the interview, participants were asked whether we should strive to integrate excluded groups or leave them to be ‘happy in their own way’. The respondents agreed that an effort should be made to present the option of a different way of living and reach a hand out, and whoever was willing would take it.

“We are breaking apart a society, the way it exists, and we say ‘No, you are not gonna live [that way], you are gonna live like us.’ But it’s for their well-being. Because I do not want them to be an easily manipulated mass.” (Project leader, female, city).

“I am trying to help my Roma community to see the light, to change their worldview, to get out of the environment they are in...” (Mediator 1, male, city).

Considering that integration of marginalised groups, in particular the Roma, was looked upon favourably, the next step is to identify the key drivers of the integration process. The theoretical background suggests that education and digitalisation can be two areas which can be crucial in driving integration. However, during the interviews, education emerged as the sole most important factor. All respondents to the questionnaire, except one, agreed or strongly agreed that education is really the key (Figure 4).

Education is key for the integration of a marginalised community

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	1	1,6	1,6	1,6
	Agree	17	27,9	27,9	29,5
	Strongly Agree	43	70,5	70,5	100,0
	Total	61	100,0	100,0	

Figure 4. Frequency table on the question whether education is key for the integration of a marginalised community.

5.4. Is the Bulgarian education system fit to spearhead integration?

Education was generally accepted by both the literature and the opinion of respondents as a key factor in integration. Therefore, it had to be investigated whether the Bulgarian educational system is prepared and suited to bear the weight of this responsibility.

The respondents of the questionnaire were asked if the educational system of Bulgaria is suited to the needs of marginalised communities. The answer was not as clear, and opinions were varied. However, the majority of people disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement (Figure 5).

The education system of Bulgaria is suited to the needs of marginalised communities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	5	8,2	8,2	8,2
	Disagree	34	55,7	55,7	63,9
	Neutral	5	8,2	8,2	72,1
	Agree	15	24,6	24,6	96,7
	Strongly Agree	2	3,3	3,3	100,0
	Total	61	100,0	100,0	

Figure 5. Frequency table on the question if the educational system of Bulgaria is suited to the needs of marginalised communities

During the interviews several problems were identified. Firstly, the lack of children in rural schools was pointed out as a major inhibitor of the proper educational process. This can be tied to the depopulation of rural regions and the general pull towards urban centres.

“In my opinion, in the school there are combined classes. Can you imagine first and fourth grade studying together? [...] It happens so, that there are no kids in the villages and some sort of groups are formed, just so the school exists, just so the kindergarten exists...” (Project leader, female, Village 1).

Furthermore, the language barrier was identified as another deterrent. In some cases, it created problems big enough for the child to lose interest and drop out of school. Both rural schools had a teaching staff with a predominantly Bulgarian ethnic background who did not speak or understand the language of the Roma children. However, this is a challenge even for staff with the knowledge of both Bulgarian and Turkish, as pointed out by this participant:

“I mean, the language is a massive barrier in this community. It is a massive problem. [...] They are wandering between their mother tongue and Bulgarian which they have to learn [at the age of 4 already] (the respondent previously worked at a kindergarten). It [the child] does not understand you. It cries. [...] At kindergarten, you have to teach them things that they might need to learn already in first grade.” (Mediator 2, female, city).

A further issue identified which not many people are aware of is the fact that Bulgarian children automatically pass grades 1 through 4, with no option to repeat a year in case the knowledge amassed is insufficient to continue. The principal of the school in Village 3 presented this as a major issue. Children are going through the school system while remaining illiterate. This causes them to lose interest in school by the time they reach 5th grade and leads, directly or indirectly, to their eventual drop-out from the system before completing secondary education.

5.5. Policy recommendations for education

Several policy recommendations have been developed on the grounds of the investigated issues. However, firstly, it is greatly important to emphasise the role of mediators in the process of integration in education and mainstream society. Mediators help children understand the educational process, visit homes and discuss the value of education with parents, among many other responsibilities. This quote from one mediator sums up their worth and importance, and why the government should support the employment of such a professional in every school attended by Roma children.

“... One day I was cleaning and a box fell right in front of me. I opened it and what did I see? I saw the cards that little kids had written for me. With little hearts on them. [her name], we want to be like you!” (Mediator, female, Village 2)

Moreover, it is important to ensure that all children have a convenient opportunity, both socially and spatially, to go to school. The project leader from the city pointed out that classes with a relatively small number of children should be allowed in villages to avoid school closures or the formation of combined classes. She acknowledged that the initial costs of running a school with a low amount of students will not be small. However, it can be viewed as an investment in the future, since by remaining uneducated the children of today will most likely end up being the recipients of welfare aid in the future.

Furthermore, the staff in both rural schools shared that the amount of administrative red tape in the educational system has increased dramatically in recent years. This has started to provide a distraction from the staff's actual work with children. There were multiple calls for finding a solution to this.

“It is something horrible right now. [...] The bad thing is that we are going around, going around the world, we come back and we come up with a document of 300-400 pages. ‘Read it, do it!’. What are we doing? What should we do? [...] We do not want to write! We want to work! We want cooperation! What if there is a strategy written?” (Vice-principal, female, Village 2).

Finally, the language differences were identified as a major ‘spanner in the works’ for the smooth integration of Roma children in education. The creation of multilingual schools can provide some solution to the problem. Currently, Bulgarian is being taught as a first language in every school in the country, regardless of the ethnic background of students. However, the addition of programmes that provide Bulgarian as a foreign language can be immensely beneficial for bridging the linguistic divide and allow Roma children to effectively learn Bulgarian. This can, in turn, ensure that children will effectively pass through the educational system.

5.6. What about digitalisation?

Digitalisation was identified in the literature as a key supporting factor to integration. However, this was not confirmed by the interviews. Despite the fact that almost three quarters of respondents to

the questionnaire agreed or strongly agreed that being digitally connected to the rest of society is crucial, the interviews showed that digitalisation might still be taking its ‘baby steps’ in the country.

“I think that things are still in a very early stage. And in this case such a horror like a world pandemic has had a positive effect. [...] We seem to realise and value more the need for digitalisation everywhere. Even in remote locations. But there is little that has actually been achieved. There are still a lot of places which do not have internet access, including cell service reception.” (Project leader, female, city).

Van Deursen et al. (2017) showcased the compound and sequential nature of digital exclusion and how it mimics real life limitations and isolation. However, it was interesting to discover that members of the Roma community tend to be avid users of new technology

“They always have the device. Always... They might not have a place to sleep but they will always have either an iPhone or a tablet or... And the iPhone is not cheap at all... If they can have it but don't have a bed, there is something happening...” (Mediator, female, Village 3)

The interviews, however, showed that despite owning the necessary devices, some Roma people can still remain illiterate. This inhibits their opportunity to meaningfully make use of and browse around the digital space. Therefore, they are still in danger of being digitally excluded, in spite of possessing the necessary material predispositions. This led to the consideration if the government is making any meaningful effort to counteract the processes of exclusion in the digital space.

The questionnaire results showed that the respondents generally believe that the government is not doing enough (Figure 6).

The government is making enough effort to try to bridge the digital divide amongst marginalised communities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	8	13,1	13,1	13,1
	Disagree	24	39,3	39,3	52,5
	Neutral	15	24,6	24,6	77,0
	Agree	13	21,3	21,3	98,4
	Strongly Agree	1	1,6	1,6	100,0
	Total	61	100,0	100,0	

Figure 6. Frequency table on the effort of the government to bridge the digital divide

Nonetheless, the interviews provided more depth on the subject. None of the respondents were able to identify any clear digitalisation policies which take into account marginalised communities. The project leader from the city stated that the only work they do regarding digitalisation is teaching children how to use the Internet safely. She thought there was no real directed action. On the other hand, the staff at the village school reported that on the surface it seemed that the government is making enough effort to digitalise education. However, this is not really the case since the government projects only provide the material means, but no tangible knowledge on how to use the devices.

“We have devices given to us by the Ministry of Education. [...] But then we have found devices in pawn shops, some broken, some locked and unusable. [...] If a person has not been taught to drive a car, you can not put them in a car and let them drive down the highway. It just doesn't work. [...] We should first teach them at school. And then when they already know how to operate the device, then they can take it home.”

(Principle, female, Village 3).

5.7. Policy recommendations to make digitalisation more effective

In respondents' opinion to both the questionnaire and the interview questions the government approach towards digitalisation has shown to be flawed. Firstly, there needs to be more accountability for projects that are carried out. This would make the projects more effective and prevent any waste of money, as it might occur now with purchases of devices which are later broken or lost. Furthermore, the principal of the school in Village 3 suggested that the teaching staff should also be more in touch with newer technology. In light of this, it is recommended that the government puts more effort into actively training teaching staff in the usage of digital technology

in a manner that ensures practical skills rather than theoretical knowledge. Lastly, the project leader in the city had an interesting suggestion of how digitalisation can provide a helping hand in the education of children in remote communities:

“Wherever we can not support a whole school, [...] I imagine it is a lot easier to support reliable internet access. And, yes, we can have mobile schools, if you want to call them that. It can be one specialist who knows that today he has to go to two addresses. Or in the town hall. The town halls are big, the community centres also. We have the buildings. There is a resource of buildings in the villages. [...] In my opinion, the digitalisation can help and we can reap bigger benefits from this form of education...” (Project leader, female, city).

5.8. Hidden community assets and talents

Finally, in light of the apparent exclusion of the Roma community and widespread support for integration, it was investigated if people recognised and valued the talents and skills that members of the Roma community possess. Due to the isolation of the community some of these talents can remain hidden. However, that turned out not to be the case. Around three quarters of the respondents to the questionnaire agreed or strongly agreed that members of marginalised communities possess skills that can be valuable for mainstream society (Figure 7). Furthermore, no respondent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the claim that they value the skills of such people (Figure 8).

Members of marginalised communities possess skills that can be economically valuable for the mainstream society

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	1	1,6	1,6	1,6
	Disagree	6	9,8	9,8	11,5
	Neutral	8	13,1	13,1	24,6
	Agree	34	55,7	55,7	80,3
	Strongly Agree	12	19,7	19,7	100,0
	Total	61	100,0	100,0	

Figure 7. Frequency table on the skills of members of marginalised communities

I value the skills of such people

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	9	14,8	14,8	14,8
	Agree	36	59,0	59,0	73,8
	Strongly Agree	16	26,2	26,2	100,0
	Total	61	100,0	100,0	

Figure 8. Frequency table on the question of whether or not these skills are valued by the respondent

Moreover, during the interviews traditional and modern skills of the members of the Roma community were uncovered. All interviews touched upon the prowess of Roma people in music and dancing. The two members of the Roma community interviewed had a talent in that area themselves – mediator 1 from the city is a musician and has travelled around Europe and the mediator from Village 2 is also performing as a singer and dancer. Mediator 1 also acknowledged that there are a lot of self-taught mechanics or electricians in the Roma community.

Despite all of this, there was a general feeling that the government is not trying to foster and promote these skills and the economic opportunity they present. However, there were a few suggestions how things can be made better.

“Yes, I think that scholarships would help to some extent. I would imagine there are already some. But I am a person who works in the field, I work with young people, and I have heard from only one colleague that such programmes exist. They are not massively popular – scholarships for minority groups [...]. However, I am not entirely sure a scholarship programme can fix the entire issue. In reality, we are talking about a complex work with the family as well. [...]. But in general, the scholarships can be beneficial...” (Project leader, female, city).

6. Conclusions

Cultural differences are a fascinating subject that is important almost universally. A majority of countries around the world are not culturally homogeneous. Therefore, they have to deal with a host of issues related to integration and understanding cultural diversity. One such country is Bulgaria. The Roma community there specifically struggles with systematic discrimination and is marginalised.

Understanding Roma identity is one of the first steps towards bridging societal divides. However, this group tends to not have a homogeneous identity and care needs to be taken when addressing this community.

Based upon data obtained during this research, it became evident that integration is important in order to increase a community's quality of life. Education was identified as the key factor for this process. Unfortunately, the Bulgarian educational system was found to have many institutional woes that make it unsuitable for the needs of marginalised communities. This paper has presented a multitude of policy recommendations to counter this issue. Firstly, the government should encourage the employment of mediators in educational institutions to help members of the Roma community understand the importance of education. Furthermore, it is important to ensure that Roma children will have convenient access to education and feel included in the educational process. Additionally, the reduction of administrative red tape has been pointed out as a measure to ease the work of school staff. Finally, the introduction of programmes which enable children to study Bulgarian as a foreign language can be a tool to alleviate perceived language barriers.

Moreover, digitalisation was determined to be an area where the country is still lacking. It has been recommended that government projects should not only provide material equipment but also tacit knowledge of how the different technological devices should be used correctly.

Lastly, this study has shown that the Bulgarian society tends to recognise and value the skills and abilities of marginalised communities. However, the government is not making enough steps in order to unlock the full potential of these communities.

There are also possibilities for future research to be conducted on this topic. In particular, the subject of regional disparities when concerning the susceptibility of members of the Roma community to education is of great interest. During the study, it was identified that Roma people in the Severoiztochen region tend to attend school less and be less educated as compared to other regions. Furthermore, another topic for possible future research is the effect of urbanisation and depopulation on the exclusion of the Roma community. Some of the participants pointed out that the rural settlements in the region have become occupied by mostly Roma people, which was thought to provide challenges for inclusion into mainstream society and access to education.

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Appendix A – Interview guide

Mainstream society stakeholders

Introduction

- Are you familiar with the concept of social exclusion?
- In your opinion, are there socially excluded groups in Bulgaria? Which?
- Do you think it is needed for marginalised communities to be integrated?

Importance of education and digitalisation

- In your opinion, how can the government ease the process of integration of these communities?
- In what way can education and digitalisation be crucial for integration in your opinion?

Educational policies

- Are you familiar with the municipality's educational policies? In what direction have they been steered in the past decade?
- Are there any particular measures taken in order to stimulate the integration of the Roma community? What goals do they aim to achieve?
- What is your personal opinion about these policies? Are they achieving the desired goals?
- Are you aware of the national educational policies? Is the municipality approach based on the national one? What are major difference?
- What would you change in the municipal approach in order to foster integration?
-

Digitalisation policies

- Are you familiar with the characteristics of digital exclusion?
- Are the municipalities' digitalisation policies effective in combating digital exclusion? What are some main points?
- How is the issue of Roma integration tackled with these policies? Are there any particular measures taken?
- Do you personally find these policies effective? What do you think can be done to improve them?
- Are there any noticeable difference when the municipal and national approach are compared? If so, what are they?

Hidden community assets

- Do you think the Bulgarian society values the skills of the Roma?
- Do you think the authorities value the traditional skills of the Roma community? Do they try to capitalise on them and foster them?
- What about more contemporary skills? Do you believe members of the Roma community have hidden talents that can contribute economically to society? How can these abilities be capitalised on?
- Is the municipality attempting to capture the hidden talents of marginalised communities like the Roma? In what way?

Roma stakeholders

Introduction

- Do you identify as Roma?
- What is it like being a Roma?
- What is your opinion of the perceptions of others?
- Do you feel excluded from society or just in the right place?

Education

- How was school for you?
- What is your opinion of the system? What happened when you were in school
- What were the problems? If you stopped going, why?

Digitalisation

- Do you use smartphones, computers? Do you have internet connection to your house? If so, why not? Do you watch television?
- Do you think these devices are a crucial part of everyday life? In what way do you think they (can) make your life better?
- Do you wish you were on social media more? With what goal?

Hidden community assets

- What are you good at doing? Do you have any particular skill?

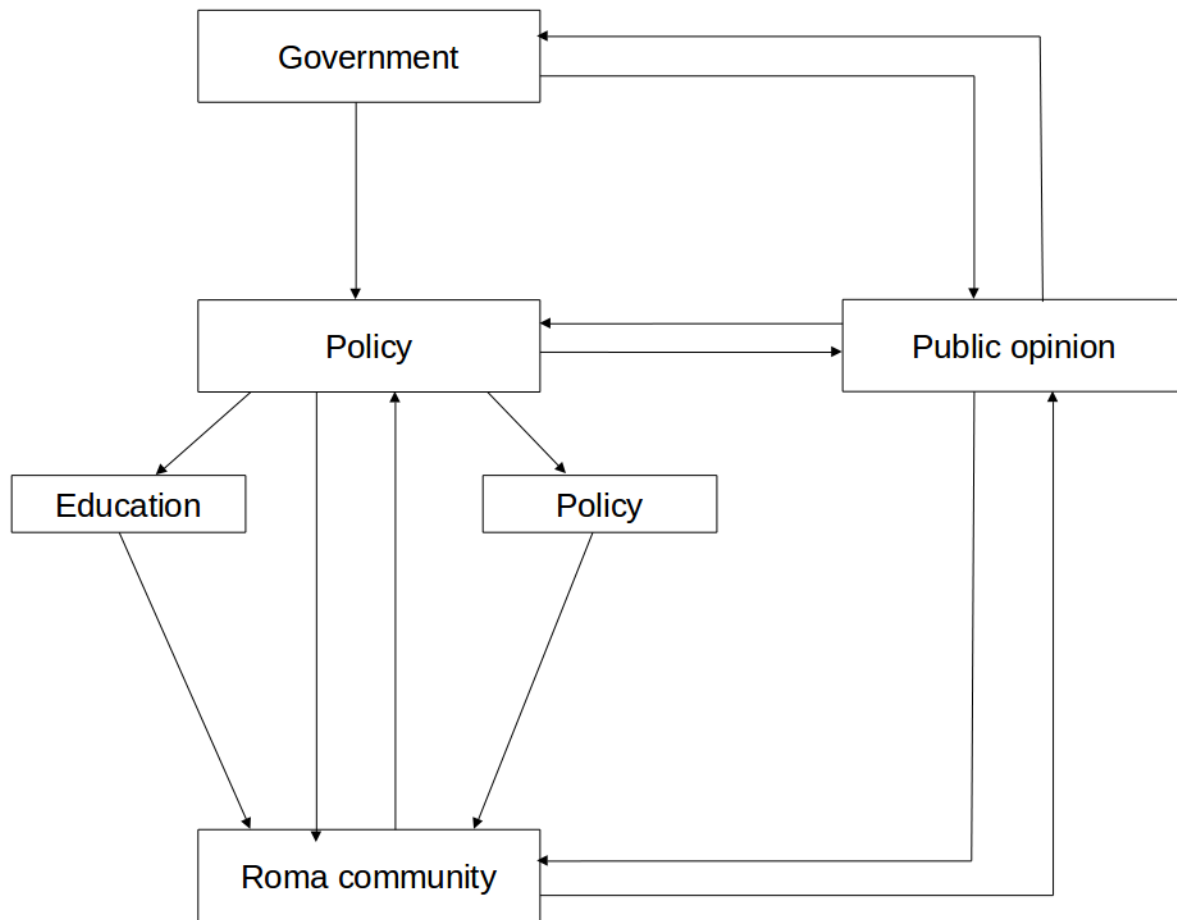
- Did you acquire that skill from going to school or another education facility or are you self-thought?
- Have you been getting any recognition for your skill? If so, what exactly?

Appendix B – Questionnaire

The questionnaire will include several questions:

- What is your ethnicity – Bulgarian, Turkish, Roma, Other
- Age
- There are ethnic groups that are marginalised in Bulgaria - strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree
- The government should try its utmost to integrate those groups into the mainstream society - strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree
- Education is key for the integration of a marginalised community - strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree
- The education system of Bulgaria is suited to the needs of marginalised communities - strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree
- The high drop rates of students from marginalised communities is their own fault - strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree
- It is crucial to be connected to the rest of society digitally - strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree
- The government is making enough effort to try to bridge the digital divide amongst marginalised communities - strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree
- Members of marginalised communities possess skills that can be economically valuable for the mainstream society - strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree
- I value the skills of such people - strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree

Appendix C - Conceptual model



Conceptual Model

The conceptual model is based on the main theoretical underpinnings. It has been presented below. The model showcases the connection between the government and policy creation. However, there is a complex relationship between the mainstream public opinion, policies and the experience of the Roma community. They all impact one another to a different level.

Appendix D

Appendix D1 - Original consent form in English

University of Groningen, Faculty of Spatial Sciences

Project Title: How the educational and digitalisation policies of the Bulgarian government affect the Roma community?

Contact Researcher: Petar Tsonev

Bachelor of Human Geography and Planning Student, Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen

Email: p.tsonev@student.rug.nl; Mobile phone: +359 88 24 20 320

Description: The aim of this study is to examine the policy approach of the Bulgarian government towards the Roma community. During this study, you will be asked to answer some question about this topic in the setting of a semi-structured interview. The interview is designed to last approximately 1 hour. However, if needed, the talk can last as long as the participant would like in case they want to expand on the topic. Furthermore, if there are any questions you do not feel comfortable with answering, feel free to indicate this and the interview will continue with the next question.

All the information will be anonymised and kept in such a way that it would not be possible to identify you. The data will be saved in a secure place and it will not be kept after the completion of the research project. Moreover, if you wish, it is possible to review the final transcript of the interview before it is used in the project.

If you have any comments or complaints about this research, feel free to contact my supervisor, dr. Philippe Hanna on p.hanna@rug.nl.

Participant's agreement:

I am aware that I am participating voluntarily in this study. If, for any reason, at any time, I wish for the interview to be stopped, I may request this without having to give an explanation. I understand the intent and purpose of the study and what my participation entails.

I am aware that the data will be used for the preparation of a Bachelor project thesis. I understand that my personal identity will not be revealed, unless I specifically allow it. I grant permission for the use of this information for the research purpose.

.....
Participant's name	Participant's signature
.....
Interviewer's signature	Date

Университет Гронинген, Факултет Spatial Sciences

Тема на проекта: Как политиката на българското правителство в областта на образованието и дигитализацията повлиява на ромската общност?

За контакт: Петър Цонев

Студент в бакалавърската програма „География на населението и планиране“, Факултет Spatial Sciences, Университет Гронинген, Нидерландия

Имейл: p.tsonev@student.rug.nl

Описание: Целта на това проучване е да изследва подхода на българското правителството към ромската общност в сферите на образованието и дигитализацията. По време на това проучване ще бъдат проведени полу-структурирани интервюта, включващи въпроси по главната тема. Планирано е интервюто да продължи не повече от 1 час. Въпреки това, при нужда, разговорът може да бъде удължен, ако желаете да споделите повече по темата. Освен това, ако има въпроси, на които не искате да отговорите, може да дадете знак за това по всяко време и интервюто ще продължи със следващия въпрос.

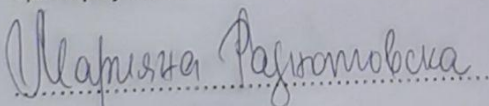
Цялата информация ще бъде приведена в анонимен вид и ще бъде съхранявана по начин, не позволяващ идентифицирането Ви. Данните Ви ще бъдат запазени на сигурно място и ще бъдат изтрити след края на проучването. Също така, ако желаете, ще имате възможността да разгледате крайния транскрипт на интервюто преди той да бъде използван в проекта.

Ако имате някакви коментари или въпроси, може да се обърнете към ръководителя ми – д-р Филип Ханна чрез имейла p.hanna@rug.nl

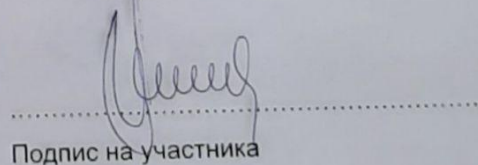
Съгласие на участника:

Наясно съм с това, че участвам доброволно в това проучване. Ако по някаква причина, в какъвто и да е момент, бих пожелал/а интервюто да бъде прекратено, мога да поискам това без да предоставям основателна причина. Разбирам идеята и замисъла на проучването и какво означава да участвам в него.

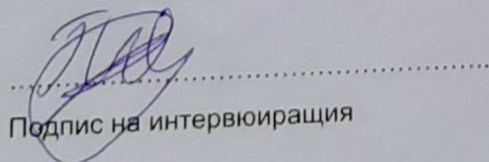
Запознат/а съм с факта, че информацията ще бъде използвана за създаването на бакалавърска теза. Разбирам, че моите лични данни няма да бъдат разкрити, освен ако не дам недвусмисленото си съгласие за това. Позволявам информацията да бъде използвана с цел проучване.



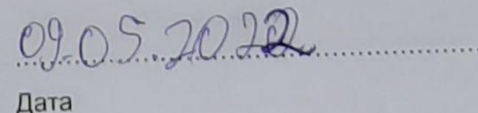
Име на участника



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Подпис на интервюиращия



Дата

Appendix D3 - Participant 2

Университет Гронинген, Факултет Spatial Sciences

Тема на проекта: Как политиката на българското правителство в областта на образованието и дигитализацията повлиява на ромската общност?

За контакт: Петър Цонев

Студент в бакалавърската програма „География на населението и планиране“, Факултет Spatial Sciences, Университет Гронинген, Нидерландия

Имейл: p.tsonev@student.rug.nl

Описание: Целта на това проучване е да изследва подхода на българското правителството към ромската общност в сферите на образованието и дигитализацията. По време на това проучване **ще** бъдат проведени полу-структурирани интервюта, включващи въпроси по главната тема. Планирано **е** интервюто да продължи не повече от 1 час. Въпреки това, при нужда, разговорът може да бъде удължен, ако желаете да споделите повече по темата. Освен това, ако има въпроси, на които не искате да отговорите, може да дадете знак за това по **всяко** време и интервюто ще продължи със следващия въпрос.

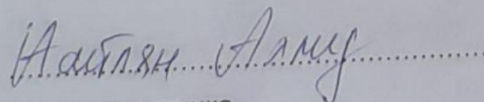
Цялата информация **ще** бъде приведена в анонимен вид и ще бъде съхранявана по начин, не позволяващ идентифицирането **Ви**. Данните Ви ще бъдат запазени на сигурно място и ще бъдат изтрити след края на проучването. Също така, **ако** желаете, **ще** имате възможността да разгледате крайния транскрипт на интервюто преди той да бъде използван в проекта.

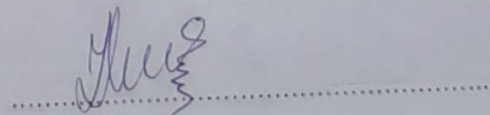
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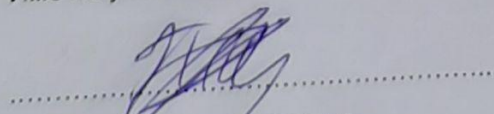
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Запознат/а съм с факта, **че** информацията **ще** бъде използвана за създаването на бакалавърска теза. Разбирам, **че** моите лични данни няма да бъдат разкрити, освен ако не дам недвусмисленото си съгласие за това. Позволявам информацията да бъде използвана с цел проучване.


Име на участника


Подпис на участника


Подпис на интервюиращия

09.05.18г.
Дата

Appendix D4 - Participant 3

Университет Гронинген, Факултет Spatial Sciences

Тема на проекта: Как политиката на българското правителство в областта на образованието и дигитализацията повлиява на ромската общност?

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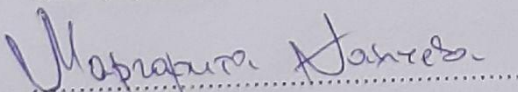
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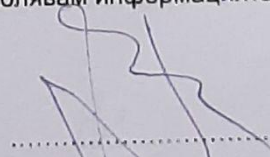
Съгласие на участника:

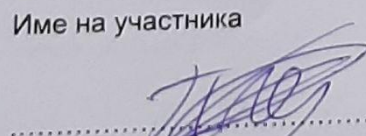
Наясно съм с това, че участвам доброволно в това проучване. Ако по някаква причина, в какъвто и да е момент, бих пожелал/а интервюто да бъде прекратено, мога да поискам това без да предоставям основателна причина. Разбирам идеята и замисъла на проучването и какво означава да участвам в него.

Запознат/а съм с факта, че информацията ще бъде използвана за създаването на бакалавърска теза. Разбирам, че моите лични данни няма да бъдат разкрити, освен ако не дам недвусмисленото си съгласие за това. Позволявам информацията да бъде използвана с цел проучване.



Име на участника


Подпис на участника


Подпис на интервюиращия

10.05.2020
Дата

Appendix D5 - Participant 4

Университет Гронинген, Факултет Spatial Sciences

Тема на проекта: Как политиката на българското правителство в областта на образованието и дигитализацията повлиява на ромската общност?

За контакт: Петър Цонев

Студент в бакалавърската програма „География на населението и планиране“, Факултет Spatial Sciences, Университет Гронинген, Нидерландия

Имейл: p.tsonev@student.rug.nl

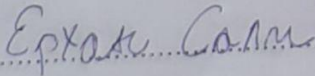
Описание: Целта на това проучване е да изследва подхода на българското правителството към ромската общност в сферите на образованието и дигитализацията. По време на това проучване ще бъдат проведени полу-структурирани интервюта, включващи въпроси по главната тема. Планирано е интервюто да продължи не повече от 1 час. Въпреки това, при нужда, разговорът може да бъде удължен, ако желаете да споделите повече по темата. Освен това, ако има въпроси, на които не искате да отговорите, може да дадете знак за това по всяко време и интервюто ще продължи със следващия въпрос.

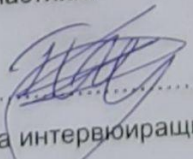
Цялата информация ще бъде приведена в анонимен вид и ще бъде съхранявана по начин, непозволяващ идентифицирането Ви. Данните Ви ще бъдат запазени на сигурно място и ще бъдат изтрити след края на проучването. Също така, ако желаете, ще имате възможността да разгледате крайния транскрипт на интервюто преди той да бъде използван в проекта. Ако имате някакви коментари или въпроси, може да се обърнете към ръководителя ми – д-р Филип Ханна чрез имейла p.hanna@rug.nl

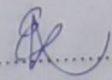
Съгласие на участника:

Наясно съм с това, че участвам доброволно в това проучване. Ако по някаква причина, в какъвто и да е момент, бих пожелал/а интервюто да бъде прекратено, мога да поискам това без да предоставям основателна причина. Разбирам идеята и замисъла на проучването и какво означава да участвам в него.

Запознат/а съм с факта, че информацията ще бъде използвана за създаването на бакалавърска теза. Разбирам, че моите лични данни няма да бъдат разкрити, освен ако не дам недвусмисленото си съгласие за това. Позволявам информацията да бъде използвана с цел проучване.


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Име на участника


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Подпис на интервюиращия


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Подпис на участника

10.05.2022
.....
Дата

Appendix D6 - Participant 5

Университет Гронинген, Факултет Spatial Sciences

Тема на проекта: **Как политиката на българското правителство в областта на образованието и дигитализацията повлиява на ромската общност?**

За контакт: Петър Цонев

Студент в бакалавърската програма „География на населението и планиране“, Факултет Spatial Sciences, Университет Гронинген, Нидерландия

Имейл: p.tsonev@student.rug.nl

Описание: Целта на това проучване е да изследва подхода на българското правителството към ромската общност в сферите на образованието и дигитализацията. По време на това проучване **ще** бъдат проведени полу-структурирани интервюта, включващи въпроси по главната тема. Планирано **е** интервюто да продължи **не** повече от 1 час. Въпреки това, при нужда, разговорът може **да** бъде удължен, **ако** желаете **да** споделите повече по темата. Освен това, ако има въпроси, на които не искате да отговорите, може **да** дадете знак за това по всяко време и интервюто ще продължи със следващия въпрос.

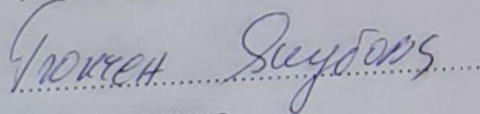
Цялата информация **ще** бъде приведена в анонимен **вид** и **ще** бъде съхранявана по начин, непозволяващ идентифицирането Ви. Данните Ви **ще** бъдат запазени на сигурно място и **ще** бъдат изтрети след края на проучването. Също така, **ако** желаете, **ще** имате възможността да разгледате крайния транскрипт на интервюто преди той да бъде използван в проекта.

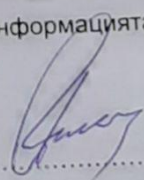
Ако имате някакви коментари **или** въпроси, може да се обърнете към ръководителя ми – д-р Филип Ханна **чрез** имейла p.hanna@rug.nl

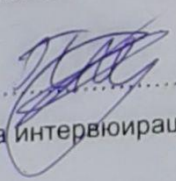
Съгласие на участника:

Наясно съм с това, **че** участвам доброволно в **това** проучване. Ако по някаква причина, в какъвто и **да** е момент, бих пожелал/а интервюто да бъде прекратено, **мога** да поискам това без да предоставям основателна причина. **Разбирам** идеята и замисъла на проучването и какво означава да **участвам** в него.

Запознат/а съм с факта, **че** информацията **ще** бъде използвана за създаването на бакалавърска теза. **Разбирам, че** моите лични данни **няма да** бъдат разкрити, освен ако не дам недвусмисленото си съгласие за това. **Позволявам** информацията да бъде използвана с цел проучване.


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Име на участника


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Подпис на участника


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Подпис на интервюиращия

10.05.2022
.....
Дата

Appendix D7 - Participant 6

Университет Гронинген, Факултет Spatial Sciences

Тема на проекта: Как политиката на българското правителство в областта на образованието и дигитализацията повлиява на ромската общност?

За контакт: Петър Цонев

Студент в бакалавърската програма „География на населението и планиране“, Факултет Spatial Sciences, Университет Гронинген, Нидерландия

Имейл: p.isonev@student.rug.nl

Описание: Целта на това проучване е да изследва подхода на българското правителството към ромската общност в сферите на образованието и дигитализацията. По време на това проучване ще бъдат проведени полу-структурирани интервюта, включващи въпроси по главната тема. Планирано е интервюто да продължи не повече от 1 час. Въпреки това, при нужда, разговорът може да бъде удължен, ако желаете да споделите повече по темата. Освен това, ако има въпроси, на които не искате да отговорите, може да дадете знак за това по всяко време и интервюто ще продължи със следващия въпрос.

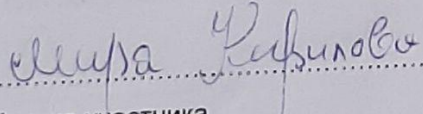
Цялата информация ще бъде приведена в анонимен вид и ще бъде съхранявана по начин, непозволяващ идентифицирането Ви. Данните Ви ще бъдат запазени на сигурно място и ще бъдат изтрити след края на проучването. Също така, ако желаете, ще имате възможността да разгледате крайния транскрипт на интервюто преди той да бъде използван в проекта.

Ако имате някакви коментари или въпроси, може да се обърнете към ръководителя ми – д-р Филип Ханна чрез имейла p.hanna@rug.nl

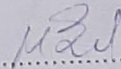
Съгласие на участника:

Наясно съм с това, че участвам доброволно в това проучване. Ако по някаква причина, в какъвто и да е момент, бих пожелал/а интервюто да бъде прекратено, мога да поискам това без да предоставям основателна причина. Разбирам идеята и замисъла на проучването и какво означава да участвам в него.

Запознат/а съм с факта, че информацията ще бъде използвана за създаването на бакалавърска теза. Разбирам, че моите лични данни няма да бъдат разкрити, освен ако не дам недвусмисленото си съгласие за това. Позволявам информацията да бъде използвана с цел проучване.


Име на участника


Подпис на интервюиращия


Подпис на участника

11.05.2022
Дата

Appendix D8 - Participant 7

Университет Гронинген, Факултет Spatial Sciences

Тема на проекта: Как политиката на българското правителство в областта на образованието и дигитализацията повлиява на ромската общност?

За контакт: Петър Цонев

Студент в бакалавърската програма „География на населението и планиране“, Факултет Spatial Sciences, Университет Гронинген, Нидерландия

Имейл: p.tsonev@student.rug.nl

Описание: Целта на това проучване е да изследва подхода на българското правителството към ромската общност в сферите на образованието и дигитализацията. По време на това проучване ще бъдат проведени полу-структурирани интервюта, включващи въпроси по главната тема. Планирано е интервюто да продължи не повече от 1 час. Въпреки това, при нужда, разговорът може да бъде удължен, ако желаете да споделите повече по темата. Освен това, ако има въпроси, на които не искате да отговорите, може да дадете знак за това по всяко време и интервюто ще продължи със следващия въпрос.

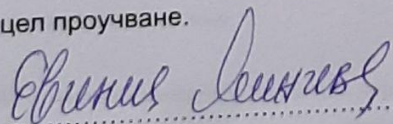
Цялата информация ще бъде приведена в анонимен вид и ще бъде съхранявана по начин, непозволяващ идентифицирането Ви. Данните Ви ще бъдат запазени на сигурно място и ще бъдат изтрити след края на проучването. Също така, ако желаете, ще имате възможността да разгледате крайния транскрипт на интервюто преди той да бъде използван в проекта.

Ако имате някакви коментари или въпроси, може да се обърнете към ръководителя ми – д-р Филип Ханна чрез имейла p.hanna@rug.nl

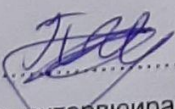
Съгласие на участника:

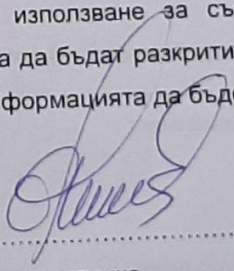
Наясно съм с това, че участвам доброволно в това проучване. Ако по някаква причина, в какъвто и да е момент, бих пожелал/а интервюто да бъде прекратено, мога да поискам това без да предоставям основателна причина. Разбирам идеята и замисъла на проучването и какво означава да участвам в него.

Запознат/а съм с факта, че информацията ще бъде използвана за създаването на бакалавърска теза. Разбирам, че моите лични данни няма да бъдат разкрити, освен ако не дам недвусмисленото си съгласие за това. Позволявам информацията да бъде използвана с цел проучване.



Име на участника


Подпис на интервюиращия


Подпис на участника

11.05.2022г.
Дата

Appendix D9 - Participant 8

Университет Гронинген, Факултет Spatial Sciences

Тема на проекта: Как политиката на българското правителство в областта на образованието и дигитализацията повлиява на ромската общност?

За контакт: Петър Цонев

Студент в бакалавърската програма „География на населението и планиране“, Факултет Spatial Sciences, Университет Гронинген, Нидерландия

Имейл: p.tsonev@student.rug.nl

Описание: Целта на това проучване е да изследва подхода на българското правителството към ромската общност в сферите на образованието и дигитализацията. По време на това проучване ще бъдат проведени полу-структурирани интервюта, включващи въпроси по главната тема. Планирано е интервюто да продължи не повече от 1 час. Въпреки това, при нужда, разговорът може да бъде удължен, ако желаете да споделите повече по темата. Освен това, ако има въпроси, на които не искате да отговорите, може да дадете знак за това по всяко време и интервюто ще продължи със следващия въпрос.

Цялата информация ще бъде приведена в анонимен вид и ще бъде съхранявана по начин, непозволяващ идентифицирането Ви. Данните Ви ще бъдат запазени на сигурно място и ще бъдат изтрити след края на проучването. Също така, ако желаете, ще имате възможността да разгледате крайния транскрипт на интервюто преди той да бъде използван в проекта.

Ако имате някакви коментари или въпроси, може да се обърнете към ръководителя ми – д-р Филип Ханна чрез имейла p.hanna@rug.nl

Съгласие на участника:

Наясно съм с това, че участвам доброволно в това проучване. Ако по някаква причина, в какъвто и да е момент, бих пожелал/а интервюто да бъде прекратено, мога да поискам това без да предоставям основателна причина. Разбирам идеята и замисъла на проучването и какво означава да участвам в него.

Запознат/а съм с факта, че информацията ще бъде използвана за създаването на бакалавърска теза. Разбирам, че моите лични данни няма да бъдат разкрити, освен ако не дам недвусмисленото си съгласие за това. Позволявам информацията да бъде използвана с цел проучване.

Снежана Иванова
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Име на участника

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Подпис на интервюиращия

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Подпис на участника

12.05.2022 г.
.....
Дата

Appendix D10 - Participant 9

Университет Гронинген, Факултет Spatial Sciences

Тема на проекта: Как политиката на българското правителство в областта на образованието и дигитализацията повлиява на ромската общност?

За контакт: Петър Цонев

Студент в бакалавърската програма „География на населението и планиране“, Факултет Spatial Sciences, Университет Гронинген, Нидерландия

Имейл: p.tsonev@student.rug.nl

Описание: Целта на това проучване е да изследва подхода на българското правителството към ромската общност в сферите на образованието и дигитализацията. По време на това проучване ще бъдат проведени полу-структурирани интервюта, включващи въпроси по главната тема. Планирано е интервюто да продължи не повече от 1 час. Въпреки това, при нужда, разговорът може да бъде удължен, ако желаете да споделите повече по темата. Освен това, ако има въпроси, на които не искате да отговорите, може да дадете знак за това по всяко време и интервюто ще продължи със следващия въпрос.

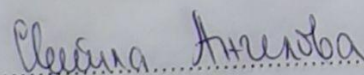
Цялата информация ще бъде приведена в анонимен вид и ще бъде съхранявана по начин, непозволяващ идентифицирането Ви. Данните Ви ще бъдат запазени на сигурно място и ще бъдат изтрити след края на проучването. Също така, ако желаете, ще имате възможността да разгледате крайния транскрипт на интервюто преди той да бъде използван в проекта.

Ако имате някакви коментари или въпроси, може да се обърнете към ръководителя ми – д-р Филип Ханна чрез имейла p.hanna@rug.nl

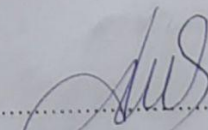
Съгласие на участника:

Наясно съм с това, че участвам доброволно в това проучване. Ако по някаква причина, в какъвто и да е момент, бих пожелал/а интервюто да бъде прекратено, мога да поискам това без да предоставям основателна причина. Разбирам идеята и замисъла на проучването и какво означава да участвам в него.

Запознат/а съм с факта, че информацията ще бъде използвана за създаването на бакалавърска теза. Разбирам, че моите лични данни няма да бъдат разкрити, освен ако не дам недвусмисленото си съгласие за това. Позволявам информацията да бъде използвана с цел проучване.



Име на участника


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Подпис на участника


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Подпис на интервюиращия

12.05.2022г.
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Дата

Appendix E

Appendix E1 - Interview transcript with Participant 1 - Project leader in Village 1, female, Bulgarian ethnicity

Interviewer: Are you familiar with the idea of so-called social exclusion?

Participant: Social exclusion, in the sense of part of the community? In general from society?

Interviewer: Yes, in general from society?

Participant: This is the contingent we work with, in general. So yes.

Interviewer: Yes, because this is one of the main concepts that pop up a lot in the literature on the subject, and that's why I ask first if the person I'm talking to is familiar. And accordingly, in your opinion, are there ethnic groups in Bulgaria that are socially excluded?

Participant: Socially excluded, no. Everyone has rights, they are equal members of society. Another is the moment when they exclude themselves due to illiteracy, poverty, and do not isolate themselves so much, but look for all possible means of subsistence, and, in general, go to work abroad, where wages are higher. Despite being illiterate, they manage to do it somehow. The strange thing is, really, that when they are in another country, they follow the rules and manage to cope better with their lives.

Interviewer: And whether it comes from themselves or from the way the rules are followed elsewhere.

Participant: Rather than the way laws and rules are applied.

Interviewer: Yes, yes. Because often this situation happens a little in the same vein as chicken and the egg - which comes first. One cycle is formed at one time.

Participant: Placed in another environment, to put it simply, placed in another environment, they manage to work, they manage to support themselves with the means they earn. And them, and raise their children.

Interviewer: And do you think that by this logic, that here in Bulgaria a little more effort should be made to reach this level of... to be able to fully integrate them into society?

Participant: Oh, there is definitely a lot to work on in Bulgaria on this issue

Interviewer: Like?

Participant: First let's take an employer. He avoids taking workers from minorities so that there are no problems, to put it mildly. If he has problems, why do he have problems, because the laws and rules are not followed. No rules have been imposed to such an extent that everything is observed and settled. In Germany, for example, if he allows himself to steal something, right...

Interviewer:... this specific person...

Participant: Yes. He knows there that he is subject to very severe sanctions and so on, while here they go unpunished. Our police catch them and release them, as we like to say, and they can afford whatever they want to do.

Interviewer: How can we, for example, from a slightly higher level, the government, facilitate this process? Do you have any ideas?

Participant: Employers should be encouraged to hire minority workers. In some way, in some programs, to encourage these people to be at work.

Interviewer: Yes, and maybe you should watch for these programs whether the money really goes for it or...

Participant: Absolutely! That's it. It has a lot of projects and so on. We all hear. There is some money circulating, but really to the end users...

Interviewer: Not enough.

Participant: Between us.

Interviewer: Then, in addition to encouraging employers from this point of view, from a business point of view, how do you think education can play a role in this process?

Participant: Oh, it has to start there first. That's where you have to start. I think that at this stage the state is stimulating education in some way, and now kindergartens have become free, which is a plus for poor families. The child is there all day, fed, follows the rules, observes order, norms of behaviour, learns to communicate with other children, etc. I think this is starting to be done, but it is a very long process. Very difficult and long process.

Interviewer: Education is the first step.

Participant: Because these children who are starting kindergarten today are their parents, we are talking about groups in society that are permanently neglected, uneducated. Their parents are illiterate, it's about early marriages, large families. Education is of no value and it will be very difficult in this group to create any value to appreciate this actually.

Interviewer: Can any other values that different communities have be used to make them more receptive to the way our system, education, works or?

Participant: Again, this is a very difficult process. Mediators play a huge role. I think the first steps have already been taken. There are many such mediators. And health mediators, educational mediators who get involved in the community and manage to motivate their parents to some extent to attend school, at least to be literate.

Interviewer: Yes. Do you have any idea here in the region, say in [a big city in NE Bulgaria], in [the region around this city], whether there is any more specific approach to education as a policy or everything comes from above?

Participant: There is nothing more specific. So, every school has its own rules, insofar as they observe internal order, etc. But in general, things are coming down from above.

Interviewer: Do you think it would be more effective if there was a more localised approach?

Participant: Oh, of course. Then the implementation will be monitored in a completely different way and the goals will be different and therefore more easily accessible, because for example in a school at the end of the world you can not set goals and objectives that you set for a school in the city centre, where the elite goes, right, the children of the elite of society. The elite in quotes, of

course. Children in the most recent, ruined village and children with a more developed intellectual status cannot study one material at a time.

Interviewer: It's already there...

Participant: It's not [inaudible] either. What is... First, the mother tongue is not Bulgarian. It is very difficult to teach any material, because first we have to start from there. First grade, they don't understand what they are being told, they can't communicate. And to compare such a child with a child who is... To teach the same material... This is my personal opinion, of course, that's what I think.

Interviewer: That's what I want to hear in general.

Participant: But in order to achieve any results, one must approach, individually to the community, needs, shortcomings, etc.

Interviewer: More focused.

Participant: That's right, yes.

Interviewer: Are there any norms that come, say, even from a higher level, national, for example, the European Union, etc., which must also be monitored, which hinder this regional orientation?

Participant: I can't say, I'm not familiar. I have no idea.

Interviewer: And in general, your opinion on this, we touched on here and there whether they succeed in some things or not, but as a generalised, comprehensive answer to education, do you think that what is being done now is effective?

Participant: No. Many children leave school illiterate.

Interviewer: Even if they stay in school?

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: Even if...

Participant: Raising teachers' salaries does not solve the problem.

Interviewer: Was teaching a language other than Bulgarian a rather hot topic at one time, the so-called mother tongue...?

Participant: I do not think that this will increase the quality of education if they study in Romani. Or in some other language there. In my opinion, there are merged classes in the schools in the villages. How do you think they study first and fourth grade together?

Interviewer: I can't imagine it.

Participant: I also can't imagine it, but it's a fact.

Interviewer: A bit like in the old-time schools.

Participant: So it happens that there are no children in the villages and some groups are formed just to have the school, just to have the kindergarten. But these are completely different topics of conversation.

Interviewer: Yes. It's a bit different from the other main part that I want to see, as an opportunity to make some change or see what impact it has on the steps that are being taken to digitise. And is there another, is there another, apart from social exclusion, there is also the so-called digital exclusion. I don't know if you are...

Participant: What does digital exclusion mean?

Interviewer: Well, when people don't have access to the Internet, to smartphones, to the Internet. But not only in a physical, material sense, because for example you can have a laptop, but if you don't, you can do it, use it meaningfully. Are any efforts being made? There are theories that various authors have written that the more a community is isolated from society as a whole, the more it isolates itself digitally. And then digital isolation isolates them even more and a vicious circle spins.

Participant: Well, yes, it makes sense.

Interviewer: Is there any work? Do you know there is any work on this...

Participant: Well, I know that the children who were online in the winter were asked by the schools for information on whether everyone had devices to conduct their education. So we were at home at

such a time that my son broke his laptop, broke his tablet, and he really had nothing to study. And we said we don't have a computer or a laptop right now. And that's how things remained. "Do you have?" "We don't." "Well, well, we're just asking." And so it happened that we bought it so he could study. Because, right, we can afford it. There are people who just, just give an example of how they were just interested in whether we have or not. Indeed, families who do not have the opportunity have obviously been left without. "Don't you have one?" - "We don't have" - "Well, he won't study." So judge what is being done - statistics.

Interviewer: More or less, yes. Or marking an activity.

Participant: Absolutely, yes.

Interviewer: Do you think that if some effort is made, let's say, for example, we hope that there will be no problems with Covid, for example, but can this idea of distance learning be used on this very issue with mixed classes? When there are not enough children in one school, do you think it would be effective to work in this direction?

Participant: How will you work with them online? How will a teacher work with both first and fourth grade online?

Interviewer: I had... Rather make from different villages children who are in the first grade to form such a class that is...

Participant: Who should do it? This is very complicated.

Interviewer: It is ambitious.

Participant: It can't happen. So...

Interviewer: Because there is no desire, or because there is no money, or both?

Participant: Both.

Interviewer: The last questions are not so much about governments and things like that. There is another theory, another concept of so-called skills, which remain a bit hidden in the community. In

your opinion, does our society value any such skills in the majority? Do we have any idea about them, or do they really remain hidden?

Participant: Rather, they remain hidden.

Interviewer: And if an effort is made, would it be economically positive to encourage these things in some way?

Participant: We need to go back to education. So only hidden talents and so on without things will not work. Because education and inclusion in society is compliance with rules, norms of behaviour. But if there aren't these things, whatever talents, whatever they show as

Interviewer: The works will not be received.

Participant: Things will not work out, because they will not be accepted by society, whatever they have as ... Who will do it? This is very complicated.

Interviewer: Skills?

Participant: Skills, yes. Personal. We are back again ...

Interviewer: In summary, the key is education.

Participant: Yes.

*Appendix E2 - Interview transcript with Participant 2 - Health mediator in Village 1, female,
Turkish ethnicity*

Interviewer: That first question is, I already said that... If it's okay for you to say, how do you define yourself ethnically? As part of... as a Bulgarian, Roma, Turkish ...

Participant: Yes

Interviewer: Everything? Or?

Participant: No. Like a Turk. Yes.

Interviewer: Do you feel anything... What do you think about the opinion of the other ethnic communities in Bulgaria to...

Participant: Everyone decides for themselves. It doesn't matter to me who, what. Everyone can talk differently.

Interviewer: Everyone decides.

Participant: Everyone has an opinion, yes.

Interviewer: Doesn't matter much to you?

Participant: No no.

Interviewer: Do you feel isolated in any way from the wider society or?

Participant: No.

Interviewer: Do you feel like part of a more closed community or is everything normal?

Participant: Well, according to... It depends.

Interviewer: Depends on what?

Participant: The circumstances. Where. With whom. In what way.

Interviewer: Where are you?

Participant: Yes, communication from people.

Interviewer: Are they more open?

Participant: Yes. It depends on their self-esteem.

Interviewer: From the language they speak or?

Participant: Well, it depends on how they talk to me.

Interviewer: Way - you mean like...?

Participant: Some people are, there are, more arrogant. Trying...

Interviewer: ... To impose themselves.

Participant: Yes, something like that, yes.

Interviewer: First as an explanatory part - did you go to school?

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: How did you feel during...

Participant: Well, we didn't split up. We did not separate.

Interviewer: Is everything normal?

Participant: Everything was, yes, normal. We did not separate. For example, whether it was Roma or Bulgarians... No. We were united.

Interviewer: Do you think the system... What do you think about the system?

Participant: Well, the time I was studying was completely different. It's a lot more now...

Interviewer: Better or worse?

Participant: Better.

Interviewer: In terms of what they learn? From the point of view of teachers? Or in terms of how the different groups in the school interact? What do you think?

Participant: It is better for studying. However, I have some doubt about the interactions. It wasn't like that before, but now a lot of kids are splitting up. They are divided, for example: "They are Roma, aren't they, leave them."

Interviewer: "They are what they are. Leave them alone".

Participant: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: Just like, to orientate myself just for the time - How long ago you were.... From when to when is the change?

Participant: I do not know the change.

Interviewer: When were you at school? How many years ago approximately?

Interviewer 2: Meaning, sorry, the awkward question - are you 30 now?

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: That is, in about 10 years there has been a change in human relationships.

Participant: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: Were there any problems for you at school?

Participant: Problems, no.

Interviewer: Is it convenient to ask if you graduated?

Participant: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: Okay. And everything was okay.

Participant: Well, difficulties, like any student, are normal. But something... I think it is normal for every student who goes through this stage to have difficulties. It already depends on the person himself, on the student himself.

Interviewer: How long do you want to fight for this?

Participant: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: I guess you use smartphones, computers?

Participant: Yes, they are already trendy.

Interviewer: Yes. Do you have internet at home?

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: Television?

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you think that these things are already an indispensable part of the day? You can't see yourself without them.

Participant: No, I think the problem of the students, a little is coming, a little is a problem.

Interviewer: For students?

Participant: This is a problem for the students, now that it reminds me. This is the biggest problem for current students, I can say that they can not do without these things.

Interviewer: As a recent student, I quite agree. And for you personally? Do you need it or not?

Participant: It depends. Some of them are needed, some of them are not, but I still use them.

Interviewer: How do you think they make your life easier?

Participant: Easier, somewhat for work, but for the rest...

Interviewer: A little waste of time.

Participant: A little waste of time, yes.

Interviewer: Would you like to use these social networks more? Facebook, other...

Participant: Well, no.

Interviewer: For example, to connect with someone?

Participant: To connect, yes, I use. But we can do other things without them. Although...

Interviewer: It's getting harder.

Participant: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Only two or three questions remained from the talks. It is more for such skills that most of society does not see. Do you have any such specific skills that are different in any way or something?

Participant: Well, I can't judge for myself.

Interviewer 2: Is there any talent?

Interviewer: Because it's that... I'm going to give some context to that. The idea is that in different communities that are, say, minority or slightly isolated, there are often people who have some talent, some skills. Will he be a mechanic, will he be an electrician. However, they remain slightly hidden below the surface. You don't think ... you can't remember?

Participant: I can't remember.

Interviewer: Do you think there is such a thing? That there are people whose skills remain underestimated?

Participant: Yes, yes, there are certainly those who remain...

Interviewer: Yes. Below the surface somehow.

Participant: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: Do I have to, how to say, pay a little attention to this from above in some way?

Participant: Well, yes, for sure.

Interviewer: In your opinion, if they are encouraged to learn such professionally oriented things at school, say? Will it help?

Participant: Yes, it will change completely.

Appendix E3 - Interview transcript with Participant 3 - Project leader in the city, female, Bulgarian ethnicity

Interviewer: Are you familiar with the idea of social exclusion?

Participant: In general, in the process of my work, such situations of social exclusion, especially in my practice, are most often observed in remote and small settlements, where access to services is much more limited. And that's where this factor of social exclusion really comes from. The environment itself is much poorer in resources for the development of children and young people.

Interviewer: Does this have anything to do with the rights that people have given by the state or is it more of a social process?

Participant: Well, it is rather a problem of social policy in the country, because in small settlements there is no opportunity for work and development and from there there is a process of depopulation. Even the few young families who remain in the remote corners of Bulgaria, so to speak, they really have rights, but there is no way to use them. Rather, it is a problem of the state itself, of social policy, of demographic policy. So there are rights, but they cannot be applied in reality.

Interviewer: They remain a bit really isolated.

Participant: Exactly, yes.

Interviewer: Do you think it has to do with ethnicity or does it depend on people's access to different resources?

Participant: To some extent, he begins to associate himself with ethnicity, because for one reason or another there are many problems in the education system that remain in the shadows. They stay in the dark. And they know, but they know secretly. No one creates with their name, with their position, to say that they exist. And children from small settlements in general, most of them do not even have schools in the settlements. They have to travel to other villages to attend a school, to get education. This, in turn, gradually leads to lagging behind, to reducing the motivation of a child to be well educated. There is an early dropout from the education system, they start working, be it in

the field of agriculture as most often, in small settlements, they are either in construction or in agriculture, or choose to go abroad to work low-skilled labour. So this factor is also related to the ethnic group. Most of the villages already have, so to speak, a priority Roma population. And even in these villages. They are not a minority, but predominant. And it is linked to low levels of education and inapplicable tools for motivation. There are developed programs, there are projects that are being worked on, but the efficiency is very low. Let's hope we can see some change over time. But it is too early to summarise any spectacular results.

Interviewer: Maybe digitalization can help in this regard?

Participant: Yes, we very much hope so.

Interviewer: Because we are quite the same, so in education we now draw many parallels between urban and rural. How are things in a more populated, more concentrated city center, say [a large district centre]? Whether such units are being formed again, which are isolating themselves, or rather it is a problem of the rural communities, which are closing down somehow.

Participant: In the larger city, where it can be said that there are resources and club forms that develop the interest, the potential of young people, different schools according to profiles, again according to interests, according to potential, but this division is still observed. Now, under the project implemented by the [Youth Development Center], we have the opportunity to visit not only small settlements but also neighbourhoods that are far from the central part of the city. The ethnic group is still closed. They gather in groups of young people, they and the children go out, but in their community. They choose schools that can be called marginalised and are mainly with Roma children. But they feel comfortable in this environment and do not want to take the step to leave their community. They feel calm and comfortable there. We try very hard to attract and involve them in our activities. Interestingly, although the city [large district centre] is not such a large city in area, in territory, they rely on transportation. In the evening they do not want to go home alone. They must be accompanied. There is concern among the parents themselves. So we are seeing the detachment of the neighbourhoods themselves, which are on the outskirts of the city. There is this problem there as well, but it seems to be a little easier to overcome, precisely because of this territorial scope. It's easier to call someone from the neighbourhood than to bring them from ...

Interviewer: At least one taxi can be taken.

Participant: Yes, as long as these funds are provided, it is possible.

Interviewer: Well, yes. But it's one thing to take a taxi to a neighbourhood in the city, it's another to ...

Participant: Absolutely, yes.

Interviewer: It's different outside the city.

Participant: Recently in [village 4 to a large district centre], an educational mediator with many honours, I would even encourage you to have a meeting with her, from [village 2 to a large regional centre] [educational mediator from village 2].

(unrelated personal conversations)

Participant: This girl, we recently had a meeting in [village 4 next to a large district centre] with mothers. Frankly, she couldn't even pay the taxi. They agreed to pay him next. They also needed 40 leva with taxis. We could not have transport here that day. Then another 20 to get us back. Or 40 leva, which she didn't even have. She made them a deal. Buy from personal funds flowers for mothers, for the eighth of March, to make them feel special, to tell them that their children are special and have a future. Regardless of the situation in which they live. So there are inspirers. So if there are more, this fire will be lit, I hope.

Interviewer: Yes. A spark is needed, in principle, so they say.

Participant: Yes, yes, yes.

Interviewer: The question is a bit redundant based on what we said, but I will ask it anyway. Is it important for a society to integrate these communities or not? Because there are some scientists, some trends right now in science, that these communities are isolated and they are isolated because they are just different and integration would be tantamount to inclusion. Do you think that this process should be carried out in order to get closer to us?

Participant: This is a very interesting question, because I have asked myself sometimes. Walking around the neighbourhoods, either in [a large district centre] or in remote settlements, I was sometimes provoked to wonder if it was necessary. So much so that they live happily. Their way of life brings them satisfaction. They are happy for themselves. They are happy in their daily lives and it is somewhat strange to me that we are trying to make them happy in our way. Just as we ...

Interviewer: In a sense, to pull them out of ...

Participant: Yes, as we understand happiness. As we understand prosperity. If prosperity for us is to have a well-arranged home, if possible a villa somewhere, and if possible a vacation, and if possible a few degrees in education, a family with about two children. This is our understanding of happiness. While their understanding of happiness is a huge family, with 12 children, I felt somewhat guilty that I was trying to make them happy in different ways. But this is only one side of the coin. On the other hand, life is moving forward. Everything is evolving, everything is digitising, everything is changing, and they remain on one periphery. They, in this case the Roma community, become an easily manipulated and used mass. And I'm rather sad because I see a potential that is wasted. They are extremely talented, they are people like absolutely all of us. They have the same potential that we have here. And these are the future doctors, the future lawyers, the future professions that we need to move forward and develop. And IT specialists in every field. This is a potential that stays, stays there

Interviewer: Hidden.

Participant: Yes. He remains in misery, in dirt. And in their form of happiness, but why is theirs, because they have not tried the difference. And I am sure that if we have a gradual process of integration, if there are families that break away one by one or take steps forward, that would be a possible smooth transition. My very close friend, from the Roma ethnic group, I thought she was Turkish, because, I don't know ... In general, in our opinion, the Turks are to some extent more developed than the Roma community. We are speaking sincerely at the moment. She said: "No, I am a gypsy and whoever perceives me will perceive me as I am. I openly tell myself that I am a gypsy." But this is a man who cannot be said to be a gypsy. And that is what successful integration is all about. When we are all one and it does not matter what we were born, what ethnicity. And I

think that makes sense. It is important that it happens. It may be slow, it may seem impossible, but it has to happen.

Interviewer: There is another coin to their happiness. Everyone finds happiness in something ...

Participant: Exactly! And we try to tell them, "But that's not good, you have to live like us."

Interviewer: A bit like colonisers.

Participant: That's right!

Interviewer: Which is currently associated with quite bad ...

Participant: We break up a society, the way it exists, and we say, "But no, you will not live ... You will live like us." But it is for their good. Because I don't want them to be an easily manipulable mass. And why do you have these settings? Because then it says "It's all about the Roma!". As working on such integration projects, we have been reproached many times and we have been accused many times that this is again about the gypsies. "Everything for the gypsies!" That for them there are benefits, for them there are social services that are absolutely free, and "we have to pay for these things". And a big gap is being created between the ethnic groups, which for me is artificially created. Created at the level of politics. Because, I repeat, an easily manipulated mass of an illiterate community.

Interviewer: And speaking of politics, how do you think the government ... What can be done at a higher level to facilitate this process? We said it was slow, that it was difficult, but what could be done at such a higher level to drop at least some of the barricades.

Participant: I think small steps are needed. In general, this may sound cliché, but we need small steps towards great success. A very small thing at first glance, in my opinion, to allow classes, as there are currently mixed, there are mixed classes of several classes, to allow smaller classes. In order to be able to reflect the real presence of children in school, so that where there are absences, the teacher is not afraid of his job, that the class will be shortened, the school will be closed, some pro forma presences are kept in schools. It is permissible to have a small class, not to close schools. Yes, these are funds, these are resources, but this is an investment in the future. Because if you really find this mechanism to be involved in the education system, now the sanction is that you will

not receive a year of child after. However, without receiving one year as a child, he will write off his child from the respective school and will find another one where he will be able to receive social benefits, as he will be pro forma-driven. So these stereotypes, these terrible things need to be brought to light. We are all afraid to tell the truth, but it is the truth. There the children lag behind, there they remain uneducated. These are the future dependents of social benefits. Or the money we'll save at the moment because we will close ... We will not allow such small schools to exist. In the future we will give them (the money saved) in the form of social benefits for the illiterate and dependent on the system, instead of investing them and from there we can have several specialists who will bring dividends to our country. Or, in my opinion, my hope is for politics to be in the light of real problems. Not to put on a beautiful mask that we have managed to do things. Yes, they are. I can't, I don't want to be negative and say that everything is meaningless, nothing happens. Things are being done, but there are many things that remain hidden, remain under the carpet. Things we only know about each other. We need light.

Interviewer: Let's call them public secrets.

Participant: Exactly! Yes, yes.

Interviewer: Or some false problems are created in order to attract some media attention, and at the same time ...

Participant: Because ...

Interviewer: And we talked a lot about education, but how can digitalization be key in this process?

Participant: Here is a real option. Where we are not able to maintain the whole school, as many schools are currently empty and closed, but I guess it is much more realistic to maintain better internet access. And some, if you will call them, mobile schools. He may be a specialist who knows that today he has to go around two addresses. Or in the respective town hall. The town halls are big, the community centres are big. We have a building stock. There is a resource of buildings in the villages. Maybe in this community centre, where there is a more stable internet access, where this specialist can go and give guidelines, and go next week, and the rest of the time to communicate with these children online. Or it will be a resource of technology, original, and a resource for good internet access. From then on, the human factor will be much smaller, as will the entire

administrative burden of maintaining salary-based support for so many employees, including administrators, of teachers who work directly with children. So digitalisation, I think, would help, and we would reap more dividends from this form of education. There is also already training in this direction based on what happened.

Interviewer: The pandemic?

Participant: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: I haven't been able to collect many interviews so far, but in some of the conversations I've heard before, I've heard some opinions that are something like "But how? Who will learn them in the beginning?" Because I also came up with a similar idea, because online meetings and online work are already much easier to digest for the average person. But on the other hand, at what point do you think these things should start to be necessary so that children can work with them easily and effectively.

Participant: Well, as paradoxical as it may seem, based on the fact that so far we have talked about isolation in populated areas, but now I think there are very few children who do not handle technology.

Interviewer: Even in these places?

Participant: Absolutely! They, the children, are somehow naturally growing up with these technologies. Even if one child has not had access so far, they find their way very quickly. They are even more flexible and adapt faster than us. It has been proven that children are much more adaptable than us adults. So with pre-training this would happen. Rather, I believe that this cause is realistic. Yesterday our colleague from Norway returned and shared a very interesting experience in my opinion. They even use games, java games that are popular with young people, and teach history. They are divided into two groups. Some learn through play, others keep notes, and then gather to summarise information. So that's exactly where this interest in technology comes from, which I don't know... I have a feeling that we humans are evolving naturally over time. And once he tries, even a tiny child who is still on the potty and has no developed skills, once given a phone, he is unlikely to sit on the potty next time without the phone. Children stick to technology very quickly. They are flexible and adaptable.

Interviewer: That's positive, I think I would say so. And is there any regional policy here, let's say in [area] for education, everything is more based on what comes from above?

Participant: Regional, to some extent, I would say, but at least based on what I have an impression. It is somewhat regional, but I think that our problems overlap with the problems of other settlements. And the problems are more typical for the country as a whole. I do not know to what extent a regional problem is what is happening in our city. For example, with each passing year, there are fewer and fewer classes in [a large high school in a large district centre] . The main problem is the lack of interest in the craft professions and these are schools that remain empty. Smaller classes are also allowed.

Interviewer: About 10 people in the class have heard that there are

Participant: Yes, as long as they are not closed. But I don't know if this technique is the best, that the scope of [a large high school in a large district centre] is being artificially reduced, classes are being cut, there are fewer and fewer, and children simply have no choice and are redirected to other schools. are so desired by them. I don't know if it is the right strategy, but at the regional level, for our city we are watching, the system has tried to push students to craft professions, to professions related to production, because there is an extreme shortage of staff. Here we had meetings with the Minister of Education from the previous government, when there was an election campaign and so on. They rented the hall. We have no party orientation. Our hall was rented, the concert hall. And faced a business owner and so very serious attacks on [a large high school in a large district centre], which prepares specialists for export or there, uh, yes. This is a terrible place where young people are just getting ready to leave. And he can't find a job. I did not have the audacity in this full hall of 300 people to take the floor and share, in fact, to ask why he was left without labour. Rather, the mechanisms are lacking - enough motivation to pay, to work conditions. Not so guilty [a large high school in a large district centre].

Interviewer: There are unemployed people.

Participant: Yes. But if you are an attractive employer that offers satisfactory, not to mention excessive requirements, satisfactory working conditions and a good pay, it will not be your fault [a large high school in a large district centre]. If you offer an internship, if you offer scholarships for

students to cover their expenses during their education, with a commitment, a contract to work for a certain period, a year, two, or according to the agreement for you, this problem will not exist. Or these are our problems. A forced push, no incentives. Lack of choice. Limited choice in the education system. And that is why I would not call them policies at the regional level. Rather, national problems, which somehow everyone solves as best they can.

Interviewer: We refract them a bit through the local prism.

Participant: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: As a former part of this regional education system, I can say that many people around me, including me, are currently very interested in getting some education abroad, thanks to what we are. received from [a large high school in a large district centre]. And then back here. I honestly can't think of a person who told me "I don't want to have anything to do with Bulgaria anymore".

Participant: That's very nice.

(Phone call).

Interviewer: Are there any specific, specific methods and specific ways of working, say, in a political way, nationally, about different ethnic groups?

Participant: As in ... it has strategies developed. There are strategies that go on several levels - municipal, district and from there on to the national level. And new strategies are periodically developed every 10 years or so. They are being updated.

Interviewer: Isn't this period a bit long?

Participant: It's long, it's definitely long in time. Annual meetings are held and reviewed. They are updated where necessary. What I like, of all these strategies, I would say is some form of effectiveness - I am a member of the Municipal Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues in the city municipality [large regional centre]. It includes the various institutions in the city. It includes the police, the municipality, from various sectors in our city. What I like is that there is a local active group. It was created by an NGO and although the project under which it was created has been completed, it continues to function. What I like is that this local ethnic group is part of the

municipal council for cooperation on ethnic and integration issues. And they come with real problems.

Interviewer: Is there a consultation with them?

Participant: Yes, they say "There is no regular water in these neighbourhoods. The canals are clogged in these neighbourhoods. The problems are in these neighbourhoods." This is a form of efficiency. I really like that. Otherwise, the strategies they follow are standards. Standards that are also at the European level, and we are trying to catch up with this system, which leads to some development, to ... in ethnic issues.

Interviewer: So we are a little obligated to pursue European standards?

Participant: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: They write some directives. It's just that we have recently studied how the EU works and there are things we have to do.

Participant: Absolutely yes! It is already agreed. Once you are a member, you perform.

Interviewer: Do you think these strategies are really effective and what would you change in this approach to really have any effect?

Participant: I dare say to some extent. So one point that you say is that the period of these strategies is long. In short, the advantage is that there are meetings that are working. But once a year is hardly enough. I guess, although not in this whole composition, I hope that there are working groups in time that meet with this local active group. But we need to be more intense, and when such a meeting takes place, we need to come up with a few agreements. The practical side is missing. We are strong in large-scale ideas, but we do not reduce them to small steps, small steps in this direction. By seeing, or sharing about this blocked channel, it is clear that not all institutions can be activated, but the two institutions responsible for this can be seen in 3 months, or even in a month, and they can see if something has happened or has been cleared. The efficiency would be better if the meetings were more frequent, there were steps outlined as a result of this meeting, and to be more realistic. Not so loud, but more realistic.

Interviewer: Yes. A more decentralised approach.

Participant: Rather yes.

Interviewer: Are you familiar with the idea of digital exclusion?

Participant: Probably not. I do not have much information in this regard.

(And clarifies the concept)

Interviewer: Do you think there is a policy, an action? I think the answer will be yes, but I will be interested to know even what it is ... What is the policy to overcome this, in English the so-called 'digital divide' - the digital divide?

Participant: Well, if I have to answer this question honestly, I will say that I am not familiar with policies in this direction. Regarding the digital world and the Internet, including our organisation, we work to prevent risks in this space. We are talking about the dangers of the Internet. That they may be victims of a number of problems that may happen to them on the Internet. Or our work is, and I think the policy is, aimed at preventing the risks posed by the Internet and the anonymity it allows. But in this direction, it really intrigued me, and I don't think I still feel like I'm thinking about making full use of the resource in digitalisation. And indeed, most are used either for entertainment or to search for information on certain topics.

Interviewer: Searching for information is still a meaningful use. There is a lot of talk in the West at the moment that if a group is socially excluded, due to the lack of resources that comes from it, they start to be digitally excluded. But the way our society develops, when they are digitally excluded, they become even more socially excluded, and when they are even more socially excluded, they are even more digitally excluded. The circle also revolves around, for example, whether any steps are being taken, so to speak, in the direction we said earlier, to create an online, Internet infrastructure in the villages that can be used for education and other things?

Participant: I think things are still in their infancy and in a very early stage. And in this case, such a horror as a global pandemic has some positives that things are moving in our country, I guess that in others, things have moved in this direction. And we seem to appreciate the need for digitalization

everywhere. Even in more remote places. But it is too, very few things have been achieved in this direction. There are still many places that do not have internet access, including phone ranges ...

Interviewer: Even electricity maybe?

Participant: Absolutely, absolutely! Access to all forms of communication - transport, supplies, health care. There are still places in all directions that are completely isolated. Not to mention the digitalization of these same places. But as a result of the pandemic, our country received a provocation and we hope that it will not only stay here, but also think about the future. But they are too few, the things that have been achieved are very pale.

Interviewer: Yes, because we were talking on the way here, for example, for three years at the university I did not have to hand over anything on paper.

Participant: Great, great!

Interviewer: Even our exams take place on computers, in halls. And it's also a lot harder, I think, to come up with a way to cheat the system, so to speak, in an exam.

Participant: Yes, I agree.

Interviewer: Is there money, so to speak, coming from the EU for digitalization?

Participant: Well, I think they are writing in this direction and some of the schools have already received them. But to be honest, I am not aware of whether they have succeeded with the resources of our country or with European funds, but this has required security. But again, this is a very small part, because the provocation was rather in the direction of shaking the thinking that it is necessary. But it is for these places, I honestly have not heard anyone say as feedback that there is more stable Internet access, that children are equipped with mobile technology. Rather, it was the result of donation campaigns or media reports where someone was heard and donated a phone to a child who wanted to study but could not. Rather, she was with us. We mention the same educational mediator again, maybe because we communicated with her, there are probably others in the villages, where they delivered the sheets with the housemates to the houses and then robbed them back. But we are very, very, very back in development in this direction. Long ago.

Interviewer: In your opinion, are the skills and talents of the wider Bulgarian community, say, members of the Roma community?

Participant: This question is rather painful for me, because it is very difficult to break our stereotypes. We are talking about the fact that we are much more broad-minded than years ago, that our generation already thinks differently, but it is very difficult. This is also in the way we speak. The definitions we give to things, we call them "Well, it's a gypsy job" or hmmm, many such epithets are used, which are set for us and are used in a natural way, we even get carried away without thinking. And for me, this problem still exists very strongly. We perceive the Roma community as a community with a rich soul. Nobody denies that these are people who are people of dance, people of music, hardworking, people with talents, but it will be harder to accept and recognize than if he is a person of our ethnicity. We have to grow in this direction. We have barriers that need to be overcome. The fact that we associate the Roma with an ethnic group of criminals is still connected, and this is really worrying. And I was very impressed by a girl who chose to be a mediator, on another project in the national network of youth centres, in another city, she has an interesting name, they say ... There is also a report about her, you can be interested and meet her. I really liked her statement that it hurts her the most when she sees how people perceive a gypsy as a thief and an uneducated person. He says "this is my problem". She lives in a place they call him ... where mostly people have higher education. Percentage of settlements with the highest number of Roma with higher education. And this is exactly what she is talking about, the choice of man, in which direction he will choose to develop. She also has the support of her family, which is very important, but we return to prejudice. They are deeply rooted in Bulgaria. We really need a big change. And I hope that with joint efforts we will achieve it, but there is still a lot to be done.

Interviewer: What can be done from a government point of view? Why these skills, examples that are given, are so to say that there are people who can be mechanics, car mechanics, electricians, but they are rather self-taught. Would it be effective to create any government programs to further stimulate this education, education in such areas, and in some way to use these skills economically?

Participant: Yes, to some extent I think that scholarship programs would also help. I guess, there are some at this stage. But I am a person who is in the field of youth work. I have only heard from a colleague with whom you will have a meeting that there are such programs. They are not so popular

- scholarships for minority groups. Now the next moment will come. "Isn't there something for the Roma, but not for the Bulgarian children?" This can create an abyss again, but it can be linked to success, to children who really want to learn. (A story about a child with potential and help from an organisation on condition of success) He managed until the moment he stopped to go to work on a construction site to help feed all those children who lived there in one room , absolutely everyone. And that's the problem. Here, then, a scholarship program would help, but I do not know how much it will solve the whole problem in this case. Rather, we are talking about the complexity of working with the family. The family should use social services, support, so that this child can really continue on his way. But in short, a scholarship program for children who are successful, have a desire, I think they would be useful. Let's expand a little wider in this direction of support for education.

*Appendix E4 - Interview transcript with Participant 4 - Educational mediator in the city, male,
Roma ethnicity*

Interviewer: How do you define yourself ethnically? As part of which group?

Participant: This is a very difficult question. Specially for me. How I define myself. In general, I grew up in Bulgaria. My mother and father are Roma. My grandfather is a mixture of Bulgarians and gypsies, because his father was a Bulgarian and my grandmother was a gypsy. That's what history says. So this is how I define myself, rather like, like a rum maybe. Because that's how they forced it on me.

Interviewer: From parents or as a community as a whole?

Participant: Well, from parents, but in general my experience is that in Bulgaria, when you say rum, for example, you are not very well received by society. Although I have a bachelor's degree, I am not very well received. Also my grandmother, my mother's parent, they are Turks, from Turkey. Because I am a musician and I deal with music and I have been here and there when we are in Turkey and we speak Turkish respectively, they do not accept us as Turks. They accept us as Bulgarians.

Interviewer: Since I have had contact, you speak a little different Turkish than Turkish, don't you?

Participant: Well, let's say it's some other dialect. Like the Bulgarian one, the Shopska one.

Interviewer: Yes, yes. And they immediately realize that you are not ...

Participant: No, respectively, when you introduce yourself, you say in a conversation that you are from Bulgaria. And when you say that you are from Bulgaria, they slightly discriminate against you. Some accept them naturally, but they connect with Bulgaria and with the Russians, who ... like the Russian women in Turkey are not very good ... there are such schemes.

Interviewer: I heard, I heard. I've heard what it's all about.

Participant: What I share are my experiences. The point of view

Interviewer: That's what I'm looking for in the end. You mentioned some things, but how do you feel as part of the specific community, for example the Roma community? Do you feel part of such a community first?

Participant: Most of me, conscious life and unconscious life, is ... in general, the environment in which I grew up is the Bulgarian environment. Rather, I was discriminated against by Roma society because I went to school and spoke Bulgarian. Maybe I didn't speak Turkish well until I was 25. And so there was a slight discrimination from them. At the same time, there was discrimination at school by Bulgarian society. Quite a difficult childhood. When we wanted to play with the girls, the girls said "You are a gypsy, we will not play with you!". It was quite difficult. But at this stage I somehow grew up, I experienced things, and when a person has difficulties, as they say, they do not kill him, but make him stronger.

Interviewer 2: And find your place.

Participant: Well, especially here I feel quite out of place. I do what I like and I try to help my Roma society to see, to change their worldview, to get out of the environment in which they are. Because there are some now, there is some chance, because there are a lot of Roma, they want to be quite modern now on the Internet and on these trips abroad, they already see another world. They dress differently, furnish their homes differently, and they already look different and begin to change their thinking. In my opinion, this generation that is being asked, although most of them live abroad, and this generation that is asking and studying abroad will be very different from the one that was in Bulgaria and is developing in Bulgaria.

Interviewer: Do you think that efforts should be made, so to speak, for them to see or ... Should they, how should I say them ... Because some people describe that they are happy in their own way. Should we make them change this way in your opinion?

Participant: Well, here as a person who has walked here and there and seen foreigners living a begging life, but they like it. Meaning he is on this island today. He has decided to travel the world without any finances. There are people in the Netherlands who are on the street who actually have some money ...

Interviewer: Optionally on the street.

Participant: He says "I will travel the world". He takes his backpack and we leave. He goes to this city, puts on his hat, and if he has a guitar, he gets better. He collects some money to eat and moves on. Regarding the Roma, what was ...

Interviewer: Should we make them change the way they exist?

Participant: Yes, he had said they were happy. Well, there is, everyone is determined, in my opinion nowadays, everyone has the opportunity to determine how to be happy. I say nowadays because the borders are already open and whoever wants to goes abroad to work. Whoever wants, stays here. In addition to the work that is now, I make some of my colleagues come with me on a tour of the neighborhood to see how people live. And accordingly, when they see someone's house, more miserable, muddy, and broken carts. And I say, "Colleague, that's how people live. They're happy." They don't want any branded clothes or a more luxurious life.

Interviewer: Cars, other.

Participant: Cars ... They are happy in the misery in which they live. They are happy. The man goes, works, buys a beer, goes home, plays his music and that's it ...

Interviewer 2: So, does it make sense to stay at that level, does it make sense in poor living conditions?

Participant: This is his decision now. The youth center in this case or the schools, because there are also mediators who go to the neighborhoods. Every school has, for example, a mediator, an educational one who is supposed to know the parents, or everyone ... the area to which the school belongs. Accordingly, the mediator should talk to the parents and make the children go to school. That's the idea. Like our idea, now at the Youth Center. I think it's better for me because I like to communicate with people. And for me it is not just one region, but we are in the city [large regional center] and in the vicinity of the villages. So at least I have more access to people. We disseminate information to convince them of the activities offered by the Youth Center. The various activities.

Interviewer: Rather with the idea of giving them a chance if they want to ...

Participant: Get out of misery.

Interviewer: Yes, not having something imposed on top.

Participant: Yes, not necessarily, like school for example. For example, school ... Naturally, they have to go to school first and then think about some extracurricular activities like ours.

Interviewer: Drawing, music, that thing?

Participant: Drawing, music, in this case we have, we offer free Bulgarian and English language courses. Folk dances, yoga, comic clubs,

Interviewer: Theater maybe, something?

Participant: Theater, music, piano, singing, so on.

Interviewer: To try, to see if they like it.

Participant: Yes, yes. And what they do, and because I am part of the Roma society and recognizable, and I try to explain to them that if they want their children, they can at least be able to develop in another way, outside their sphere there. Their community that is.

Interviewer: That there is another way. So to speak

Participant: Yes. Although it is quite difficult.

Interviewer: I told you before that ... I'm going to ask you the question - do you feel somehow excluded from society right now?

Participant: To feel, no. Maybe I'm used to it and I'm shivering anyway.

Interviewer: Rather used.

Participant: Well, rather, maybe I did it so that I would be respected by people, at least those I know and the people I work with. So I think everyone accepts me positively and everyone is happy to know me. Meaning, I get along with everyone.

Interviewer: Is there any arrogance on the part of some people?

Participant: There is always. There is always someone, but just because I'm a Roma doesn't mean he does it for me. It's just that the character is like that.

Interviewer: They're just like that ... Okay. Now the next questions are about school. How does he feel at school when he goes to school? We have already mentioned some things, but ...

Participant: Well, when I went to school, it was the end of the era of the Chavdars and the pioneers [school organizations during the socialist regime]. Interviewer: Well, still. Because yesterday I talked to some people who said that 10-15 years ago, when they were at school, people were much more united, there was no division into groups. While there is now.

Participant: Well, there wasn't. I ... Now there were some first-graders, while there were these chavdars and pioneers [school organizations during the socialist regime], he now thinks that there are some in Bulgarian society. I don't know why some parents still fill their children's heads with ethnic differences. He still has it. I thought things had changed. Well, they are not like before, but ... Until the fourth grade, for example, I had some difficulties, but then I can ... And then the study was mandatory. And meaning the classes were bigger and in fact the mixed classes had more children. Now I don't know, now if they are 20, I think they were about 30. Then we were more mixed and as we grew up in the classes, the Roma started to clean more. They refused. And by the fourth or fifth grade we were already one or two.

Interviewer: It's so early.

Participant: Yes. And since then, they've kind of started ... apparently we've gotten used to each other in class. The main thing where we were. And after the fourth or fifth grade I don't have any striking injuries, as I say ... I haven't had any experiences. And so on. It was even easier in high school. And in the Higher there were no ...

Interviewer: Problems.

Participant: Yes, well, it's a question of growing up and being able to isolate the negative and be able to enter society somehow, to integrate, even though they see that you are different and think that they consider you different. .

Interviewer: Don't be affected by any such throws.

Participant: Yes. To make people accept you.

Interviewer: Because even ... although I would say that our family defines itself as Bulgarians. Because I'm a little darker, I have black hair, and I've had a lot of toppings before when I was younger.

Participant: Yes, that and I think the problem is with the children. Because a child of 3-4 years old can't know whether he is Indian, Gypsy or Romanian, or something else, from some other ethnic group, and you have to be more reserved towards him. In my opinion, children teach them and that's where the whole problem begins.

Interviewer: It is already building up in the brain.

Participant: Yes, because abroad, for example, it is not so.

Interviewer: Yes, they are certainly more open.

Participant: They are much more tolerant,

Interviewer: Yes, yes. What do you think about our education system, before and now? Is there, is he doing something to make, say, the Roma make it easier for them, or?

Participant: The special education system is ... I don't have much direct observation. Although my mother is a teacher. And she, as a Roma teacher, tries hard to make the Roma study. There is a lot going on. And what we have at the moment is the privilege that the Roma enjoy some privileges from the programs that are granted. For small, for large children. There are many training programs. As long as they want. But in our region the Roma are less interested. And from [another large regional center] onwards, the situation is completely different and they are already well ahead. And that's why there are more intelligent Roma, who are ... Even 5-6 years ago I met a Roma man from [a city in Northwestern Bulgaria], where he was from, and when I asked him what you were studying, he told me about atomic physics. and some of them, I shout "What do you do, what is this thing, man".

Interviewer: "Where did you invent it?"

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: Why do you think we are a little more ...?

Participant: Are you behind? I do not know why either.

Interviewer 2: Does it make sense to lag behind in interest in education?

Participant: Well, not only. Yes, so in the first steps I took, I met other Roma societies 15 years ago, maybe. Perhaps the moment when various Roma organizations were already being set up to bring the Roma together, right? Then I saw other Roma from other cities. If you don't look at his face and just listen to him speak Bulgarian, you say to yourself, "Hey, he speaks better than the Bulgarians."

Interviewer: I wonder if we will understand why there are some ... in the conversations that are ahead of me. I did not expect such a division, for example.

Participant: Well, these are my thoughts, my experiences ...

Interviewer: Yes, that's it. You mentioned that your mother is a teacher. Is this the whole thing that you ... did you want to continue learning on your own, or was it also influenced by your parents?

Participant: It was influenced by the parents until the fourth grade.

Interviewer: After that?

Participant: And it was quite strong. I think that's normal.

Interviewer: Because we are talking about what distinguishes you, for example. You said, a lot of people have filtered out, dropped out.

Participant: I, I, my observations, from my work, are that the culture of children and the fact that they do not want to learn comes from the family, not from the teacher. He comes from the family, that is, from the parent. Our family in particular, perhaps in our region we are the most educated. My mother is a teacher, my father is a builder. My brother graduated in law in Bulgaria, he has two degrees abroad. There is practice in the European Commission and others.

Interviewer: Where exactly are you from? Purely to orient myself geographically.

Participant: From here

Interviewer: From here but from the city?

Participant: Yes

Interviewer: Yeah, well, yes. Because you say "From where we are" and I was a little confused.

The next part is a little about digitalization, about new technologies. I guess you have everything - smartphones, computers, TVs, everything that is used. Do you think that these things are an indispensable part of the day?

Participant: Well, if it depends on people like me, it's better not to have them. But they are a need now. My daughter is not well growing up ... I try to limit her. She is 4 and not so attached yet. Maybe because I'm trying to limit it in some way. But these are inevitable things that are in our daily lives and we cannot avoid them. Although there are people who try. There are TV shows - to catch the forest and some. And you remember, I envy these people, let me tell you. They have somehow managed to succeed in this environment and know exactly what they want from the environment. If I'm in this place, I don't know what to do. I don't know how to survive.

Interviewer: There is little comfort here in civilized society.

Participant: Well, everyone builds their life in their own way. And those who give them in "To catch the forest" had some other ideas, some other views on life, which when he went to the village there he fulfilled them. And I do not have such views.

Interviewer: Do you think they still make life better?

Participant: Technology?

Interviewer: Yes.

Participant: Well, it is clear that not 100%, but to some extent.

Interviewer: For example, for communications and some such.

Participant: This is the most important thing! From then on, everything else is already an ankle.

Interviewer: When I live abroad, we need to hear such things from ours.

Participant: Well, yes, my wife is younger than me and when we go somewhere, I'm with the location. "We are in this place. We are at this restaurant. And I shout "Do we need everyone now to see where you are and what you are doing, and to take pictures to watch us?" This is something that is quite personal, but most of the public wants to show what they are doing. I don't understand it. They understand it, so everyone decides in my opinion.

Interviewer: For me personally, I like to see, for example, the friends I have from Plovdiv who study in Germany, to see what they do. They, on the other hand, see what I'm doing. And from this point of view.

Participant: I thought so too, yes. Of course.

Interviewer: Otherwise, those people who already have a much more global influence and I don't understand them much. Where they are shown in thousands upon millions.

Participant: It would be more interesting for me to see you in the Netherlands than you do than to play three times a day what you do, where you went and so on.

Interviewer: Yes, yes. For example, I only play by doing something interesting. Now that I'm here with ours and eating lasagna, I won't post it on Instagram.

Participant: But if you are in Bulgaria and you eat lasagna, that's it cme (laughs)

Interviewer: The father is a chef.

Participant: I am a candidate chef.

Interviewer: You mentioned that you are a musician. How did you learn first? Sam...

Participant: Self-taught.

Interviewer: What do you play?

Participant: On the piano, but I'm not a notary. I don't play symphonies and such. I play popular music, by ear, which foreigners like. Playing ABBA, Tom Jones. What were these new ones there... Uptown Funk. What they were... Now I can't remember exactly.

Interviewer 2: Ah, do you have musicians in the family in general?

Participant: No.

Interviewer: And how did you discover this talent?

Participant: I have no idea. Maybe my cousin, we were children. He is also a musician. And, all my cousins, most of my cousins are musicians. Wait a minute now... We are all the same age and we are all de facto caught up with each other. Not that...

Interviewer: One soil and hence the other...

Participant: Yes, yes. The good thing happened and so...

Interviewer: I ask because there is a lot of talk, for example in Roma communities they remain, there are skills that remain a little hidden under the surface. And do you think people appreciate such skills?

Participant: Hidden that...

Interviewer: They are not paid attention. Musicians. For example, there are some people who are car mechanics, understand electricity. And they can stay a little in the community and remain hidden from the whole society. I don't know how else to explain it

Participant: Is this the meaning you tell me about hidden professions, Roma hidden professions?

Interviewer: No, I don't mean that exactly. I mean people who are so self-taught who do some things for the community, but...

Participant: Because they are not graduates?

Interviewer: Yes. Couldn't use this thing...

Participant: And they can't work.

Interviewer: Or the family does not support them.

Participant: I think there is one in every society. And, especially in our society, I for this thing, people who work without a degree, there are a lot of people, of course, who are self-taught. Mechanics, as you say. There are many

Interviewer: Can they find a job?

Participant: They manage to find a job because they have a circle of people, friends, which spreads over time.

Interviewer: Yes, and the word is heard.

Participant: Now here in our region they are engaged in construction. Painters, plasterers. Of course they have no education, but they have learned in practice.

Interviewer: From life.

Participant: Although abroad they seem to want some qualification for everything. To have a diploma.

Interviewer: I want to, yes. Do you think that it should be stimulated in some way, with some scholarships and such.

Participant: The teaching?

Interviewer: Teaching, yes, practice and so on.

Participant: Well, there is, in this case there is a lot of support. Lots of foundations that help. Especially Roma children in secondary and higher education in Bulgaria and abroad have a lot of organizations that support young people who want to learn.

*Appendix E5 - Interview transcript of Participant 5 - Educational mediator in the city, female,
Turkish ethnicity*

Interviewer: Just to have the information in black and white on the record. So, the first question is how do you define, self-determine your ethnicity?

Participant: I am Turkish.

Interviewer: How do you feel as part of this community in [a large regional center] in Bulgaria?

Participant: Well, let me tell you, my environment is more like ... both my friends and my best friends are not out of greedy. That is, I communicate, as ugly as it sounds, more with Bulgarians. Maybe in my diction it will look like that. I speak a lot, almost not constantly, but that's the way it is. I speak Bulgarian all the time. I use Turkish only with my mother and my mother-in-law, respectively. With older people, so to speak. It's not very good, let me emphasize. How can I tell you, some ... sometimes some phrases sometimes I don't even remember how they were, which is not very okay, maybe. But, but that's it. All my life I've been in this environment and my work, my daily life, and so on.

Interviewer: For me, it even happens in Bulgarian, now that I live abroad, some things in English now, phrases and so on, and then I come back here. I try to talk to ours and I can't remember how it is in Bulgarian.

Participant: Yes, you are in an environment where only such a language is spoken. It is the same with us, the people living here. We may be from another ethnic group, aren't we, that is, descended from our native language, mother tongue. Or as it should be, I don't know how to define it for you, mother tongue come on.

Interviewer: Mother, yes.

Participant: It's from generation to generation, but things are changing, as in your case.

Interviewer: Do you think that there is any special attitude towards your ethnicity, your community or you personally from other people?

Participant: Well, there have been such periods. I have never felt any division in my environment. That is why I choose such friends who do not feel any division or any tension between us. But when I approached institutions when hearing my name, it was not Bulgarian. Not by speaking, because by speaking they cannot understand me that I speak another language or I am of another nationality. The reaction changes immediately. It is felt. You can't help but feel it. But with this thing already, how can I tell you, I accept it as normal that people have the opinion that everyone is free to think what they want, and yes, right ... to have their own opinion, anyway, or yes accepts or does not accept the person according to affiliation, origin and so on. Everyone has the freedom to do so, but it is insulting. I would also like to emphasize that we consider ourselves a very democratic and free society, and we accept the different ones. Unfortunately, I do not know, as a foreigner in her country, whether you have ever felt this, but I in my own country, given that I have not lived anywhere else, I have lived only in Bulgaria. My parents. I grew up here, as I said, and at one point you feel like a foreigner in your own country, don't you? But not everywhere, I emphasize again, and my environment is not like that. I would not sit in such an environment where I would feel discriminated against in any way. Come on, let me put it this way.

Interviewer: Or isolated in some way?

Participant: Isolated, no. Rather, with a warning, something from their side, not from mine. I have no prejudices against anyone. Man is free to live and do everything freely

Interviewer: Ah, you think this comes, how to say, from the person himself? Is it individual, or is it a little more collective? This discrimination...

Participant: Well, it's individual. Maybe someone has been instilled in some way, their way of thinking, that is, it affects their way of thinking. Rather planted. Hatred is sown. Whether from parents or from the environment, they are planted. Such are my observations. What I have seen and met personally. Man is not born bad. He acquires these qualities and, unfortunately, what I meet every day, the young people do not express their own opinion, but express the opinion of others, even where they are interesting. Not because he thinks so, but because, do you see how to tell you ...

Interviewer: Not to be shared with others?

Participant: Yes, I don't consider him a traffic jam. And you see, I don't know. He may like others, but he may not express his own opinion.

Interviewer: And when you say young people, this is young people in general or special groups of young people?

Participant: In general.

Interviewer: In general, yes. And I can say that I have seen something like that. Until recently, I was ... I'm still a young man. Yes. Okay ... How did you feel at school? Everything ... Were there any divisions, any problems?

Participant: Emmy, how at school... I will tell you about the renaming [Bulgarian Turks are forcibly forced to change their names to Bulgarian]. We are talking about this period. I was a student at that time. We are talking about the 89th, 88th, 89th year. Ah, then they changed our names. We, I was a teenager, that is, in puberty we are talking about seventh-eighth grade, that is, 13-14, 13-14-15 years old, this period. Well, let me tell you, it was a very scary time for us. For me especially. Come on, let's not talk in general, let's talk about myself. It was strange to me because I went through a period of much ridicule. From [her name, Turkish], as I say, born, raised that way. My friends accepted me as such, the teachers accepted me as [her name, Turkish]. Suddenly it became [another name, Bulgarian]. And when it became [another Bulgarian name], I became the object of ridicule. And before that I was not the object of ridicule. They didn't make fun of me. I was an excellent student, I was very successful. But then something happened to my so-called friends, something happened to my teachers, something happened to the circle of my parents. Basically the circle of friends. They turned against us. People with whom we have lived all our lives, and ate, drank, rejoiced, as there is a good Bulgarian word. We became their enemies maybe, I don't know. And we became the object of hellish ridicule. That was politics. Maybe they were to blame. They were... perhaps they should have joined the regime that ruled us at the time. But, yes ... Maybe they were right for themselves, but we were right for us. That is, we were not different people. It's just that our names were different. We accepted it in such a way that we are not different people. We are the same.

Interviewer: But suddenly I became different.

Participant: But suddenly ... I couldn't have been born and raised. A name does not change a person. No way. Man remains a person, physical.

Interviewer: How have these things changed? Because now you say that you are still part of one, you have one environment.

Participant: I have lived for many years, let me tell you, I live with it at times... Do you know how many years have passed since then? Maybe 30 and a few?

Interviewer: 33, 34 at least, Sure.

Participant: Yes... For these 34-5 years, do you know that there are still people who, when they renamed me [another name, Bulgarian], have not forgotten that I was called that and continue to call me [another name, Bulgarian]. What does it say about you?

Interviewer: I will not comment.

Participant: We do not need to comment. I also couldn't teach these people, after they gave us back our names, we had the right to get them back, to become the people we were. We haven't really changed. We were the same. We just changed our names. But these people stayed with the thinking there. What do you think these people deserve? Ignore? No! I continued to treat them as I have always treated them, nothing has changed.

Interviewer: Because there is no change...

Participant: But there was a change from them! Definitely.

Interviewer: Do you think that the educational system we have here in Bulgaria, which was before and it has changed a lot in these 35 years, whether it somehow manages to address the needs of such minority groups in Bulgaria? Be it Turks or Roma.

Participant: So, I worked in a kindergarten for 25 years. I work with young people everywhere. I have worked everywhere with vulnerable groups, ie those who do not speak the language. I have a look before, that is, as a child, I have a look now. What impresses me? Basically, the education system has really changed a lot. Given that the emphasis is not on the quality of education, but rather on the quantity. Schools became companies. Come on, don't say too much нали

Interviewer: As far as I know, the higher the average jasper, the more money is taken. Is there something like that or? At least I've heard.

Participant: Well, it's not like that. Rather, they are on delegated budgets and are influenced by the number of students and take money per student. Already according to the status of ... that is, the ministry has made several changes over the years. Considering the overall success of the school, as you talk about, that's why these external evaluations, these participations of students in Olympiads, competitions and so on, so, so. I guess there were elite schools in your time. Now they are there too, but already...

Interviewer: Are they more informal or? So to speak.

Participant: Yes, yes. It may be so, but considering... Come on, I'll give you [a big high school in a big district center] . It was once an elite high school, and now also... You are a graduate of [a large high school in a large district center] ?

Interviewer: Yes.

Participant: And now there is also a renowned high school for the capacity and quality of young people who produce there. Indeed, you are a very successful product of this high school. There are other examples, right in other high schools. Which set are you?

Interviewer: 2000s.

Participant: My daughter is 93 years old. She graduated from [another high school in a large district center] because she had such preferences, but she actually graduated in English philology and does completely different things. He speaks five languages, but stayed in Bulgaria (laughs). Yes, but I want to say that other high schools also produce a good product. This depends more on the family environment. I understand that education is not so good, anymore. They also introduced a lot of paperwork, redundant material that needs to be studied. Not to mention, they also work on projects, many projects. They work for the financial, don't they ... We are talking from a financial point of view. Yes, because teachers receive a percentage of these projects in addition to teachers' salaries. Yes, it is not the decision to raise teachers' salaries. Yes, it is an option for quality education. It is not a solution, because the staff that the universities are vomiting is not of good quality... I would

say that in our time... I am the 74th. I would say that our set, 74, in our years, a secondary education is the current higher education, can be equal. I'm not just saying that. I'm talking about ... the grammar of the most elementary at least. Grammar. Because every day we meet young people, twelfth-graders already ... What is it called, they leave school, they go to university. I don't want to offend you in any way, because you are the 2000th set, right...

Interviewer: That's why I went abroad, because I understand how things are.

Participant: Yes, you may be making a difference, right, what it is, how it is, what it is, and you can best judge for yourself. But I'm telling you because I face 12th grade every day. Sorry, he can't write. And this young man has to take a high school diploma. Okay, he'll get a threesome. He will go to university. He will take it again, because universities are vomiting staff, because they don't. It is a sacrifice. But quality education is no more. And I don't know how the whole system should start all over again.

Interviewer: One restart.

Participant: Absolute restart.

Interviewer: What we have at the moment cannot be glued.

Participant: No, it cannot be patched, it cannot be glued, it cannot be restored. It has to start from the beginning with an absolute restart, with a lot of quality shots. Starting from kindergarten, then in the beginning and you get to... And now you know what migration is. Everyone goes abroad and the uneducated, the ignorant, the incapable. But what do they do there when they go abroad. He was first introduced there to learn the language, wasn't he? And here you are trying to teach him the whole life in the language and he cannot be rebuked [to set himself up] to learn it. It is not rebuked. Yes why? Because there were rules. They have the rules here too. Why are they not observed?

Interviewer: Nobody ... yesterday too ...

Participant: I very much hope that those who have left will one day return here and understand that we also have rules here, we have laws and that they must be obeyed everywhere, and that children learn everywhere, both in Europe and here. Why? Because in Germany they gave good social benefits, children. There was none here. Okay, no, but they give you a free education. How our

children studied here, for example. Come on, then they're gone. In your case, you're gone. Mine did not leave. It is a little further. In [the larger Bulgarian city] already. But I mean, language is a huge barrier in these communities. It is a huge problem.

Interviewer: That is, perhaps this should be emphasized.

Participant: Yes. And what else ... For them it is incomprehensible the matter and the material that is provided. Starting from kindergarten, they provide me with some programs that a child who does not know the language, you take it at the age of four. It wanders between the mother tongue. You're talking about vulnerable, that's your question, isn't it?

Interviewer: Yes, yes.

Participant: He wanders between his mother tongue and Bulgarian, which he has to learn. It doesn't understand you. It cries. First you become a psychologist, you have to calm him down, as a child. Then at school, like you ... the same job. In kindergarten you teach him things that he should probably learn in the first grade. By the age of 4, a rabbit needs to get used to the language. Let him understand what you are telling him to join him in an open society, because they are closed societies. You know very well. They need to leave this society in order to integrate in order to grow up in another environment. This is the main, their main problem. And decisions for these communities to get them out of the community to develop.

Interviewer: If, for example, they do not have in the kindergarten ... the people who work there, for example, do not have knowledge of their mother tongue, how ...

Participant: It is very difficult.

Interviewer: There is no way for those of these vulnerable groups, for example, to go to a kindergarten, which is, say, in another part of the city, where the staff there, for example, do not know the language. As you describe things, it just sounds impossible and that's why...

Participant: Well, it's complicated. And that's why it's hard to work with this community. It is very difficult to work. Because you work with the children first. You also have to work with your parents. That is, you educate not only the child, you learn some values, knowledge. You have to teach this to the parent himself, because he does not have elementary respect, elementary attitude to

the institution. I'm not talking to the person, the teacher or whatever the institution is. To the institution itself. We are not just talking about education. We are also talking about the other public institutions we have. They have no respect for that. Rather, they do not accept that you have to give something in order to receive something. They only expect to receive. This is to them... how can I tell you... Ingrained over the years. They learn only that. This is difficult to change.

Interviewer: Is there a little coming from the system, because ... Does the impression remain that they have rights, but obligations?

Participant: Yes. They are given many rights and many opportunities and they take advantage of every opportunity that is given and given to them. We, like the other society, that is, the other ethnic groups, do not have their knowledge. They are a very closed society, but they are an extremely cohesive society. Unlike the rest of us who live in Bulgaria. I do not know if you have such observations, but mine are.

Interviewer: Well, yes. It happened yesterday. In a conversation with my grandmother we came to the conclusion that all nations are divided, but other nations gather from time to time to do some work, and in Bulgaria there is little of this gathering.

Participant: He's gone.

Interviewer: And would a digitalization of education and society as a whole help these communities to these groups? Let's call them groups.

Participant: I don't know how this can happen, to be honest. The state and power are powerless. They use these communities only for their own interests. This is my opinion. I do not engage anyone with my opinion. Because a simple, illiterate people are the easiest to govern.

Interviewer: Yes. And vote the easiest.

Participant: Because if you do not understand what you are told, you do not assimilate what you are told. You only answer the first signal. "Abe, if you give me some money, I'll do whatever you say." This is the answer you can get. In this line of thinking. So I don't believe honestly. I do not believe this will happen.

Interviewer: So maybe the key step to breaking this vicious circle is really education.

Participant: Yes. Education is the key. Because educated people are wise people. Education is the key to knowledge. It is! Because if he is educated, if he understands what is happening, he will not approach at the first sign. As a purely animal instinct.

Interviewer: There will be some rational thinking.

Participant: Absolutely!

Interviewer: Are there any different skills left in such groups, whether they are talents like music, dancing, etc., or among young people, let's say, if they understand from, I can just say it from wires, from electricity work, from mechanics and painters . Do they remain a bit hidden in these communities simply because they are isolated or there are some...? Do you see that, how to say, the wider society really appreciates such skills or?

Participant: Yes. We know that these communities are usually better known for their musical skills. Instrumental, singing skills. But I would tell you that there are many good examples in these communities, but the only solution for them is, as I mentioned earlier, to get them out of these communities. Even the family environment. They think in the family environment. So, if they give their child a chance... You see that he has some inclinations, the young man respectively, and you encourage him to follow his skills, what is really given to him, the product is very high quality. The final product. And it really has an effect. There are many successful people among them, the Roma in particular. They are terribly successful. And an interesting thing ... Because I was at a national conference of youth centers. We had a meeting [a larger Bulgarian city], together with health and educational mediators. At this meeting, as well as NGOs, NGOs, all kinds, and different types of institutions, and so on. There I met extremely educated Roma with two or three higher educations. Very smart, very creative. Perhaps in the region itself I would say that we do not have so many educated Roma in our region.

Interviewer: [Mediator 1 from a large district center] also mentioned that he had noticed something like this.

Participant: Yes, but there I was very impressed by this meeting. Very interesting contacts with such people. I was in another world. Perhaps, what we want to do here in the [big district center], because we are talking about our region, I would like to do just that. Getting them out of the community, educating them, giving them guidance, and things will change a lot. They are very open to the world, but at the same time they work in Bulgaria, live in Bulgaria, and have achieved a lot. They are mostly farmers with their own businesses. People, successful people, but educated and successful people. You know? Such people's worldviews are changing. They become other people precisely because of the education they have acquired. And meeting other people.

Interviewer: The more people you meet, the more you learn.

Participant: However, they are returning to the community, which is interesting. They don't come out of there. They come back and change others.

Interviewer: In the community itself.

Participant: Yes! And what an interesting thing they said: "I am the one to change, to achieve what I have achieved, in half. Come on, that's not all. " It is a pleasure and a great success for me.

*Appendix E6 - Interview excerpts from talk with Participant 6 - Educational mediator in Village 2,
female, Roma ethnicity*

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Interviewer: I begin directly with a somewhat personal question which is how do you self-identify ethnically?

Participant: How do I self-identify? Hmm, from the Millet. I am from the Millet.

Interviewer: Do you feel as a part of some sort of a community?

Participant: To feel? I am from there. I have come out of there. I have.. Yes, I feel a part of it.

Interviewer: Do you feel some sort of... What do you think about the opinion of people who are not in the community about the community?

Participant: Depends on what they have seen from this community. And depends on good and bad. It depends on the behaviour, how they presented themselves.

Interviewer: Yeah, because sometimes people say that others are arrogant and towards... on the basis of ethnicity and so forth.

Participant: Yes, some say nothing will come from them. Look at them...

....

Participant: [...] I see that they are acting like I am dumb. And I look at him and he thinks he outsmarts me, he is smarter than me. But he does not know that he is shaming himself. And I go home... I really love talking about this. I go home and I say "This is the end. I am not gonna go anymore. I will not work with kids. Everything has ended. And I am starting to look out for myself." In the evening I am shaking with anger. I am crying out of anger. In the morning, you wake up and you say... You are out of courage, it happens to me. And what happened a few days ago. One day I was cleaning and a box fell right in front of me. I opened it and what did I see? I saw the cards that little kids had written for me. With little hearts on them." "[her name], we want to be like you, we love you, you are very kind." Such nice drawings. Some spelling mistakes. They write

like first graders. “You are like a gift to us”. These little cards... And I started crying. “Look at this”, I said to myself. You have literally just said “This is the end. Of everything.” And in the end this box falls in front of you and I do not know how it happened, where had I put that box and then forgotten about it. Then, you open it and you think “There you go! It is never too late! The work is not for nothing”. And I cried, and in the end you wipe your eyes, you get up and you continue on. You are getting inspired. Sometimes the parents... At least a few out of these 100 kids, at least some of them. 5, or, or 10 should come out that will have a fighting spirit to change the other world. I get very inspired, really! This is our mission in the end. This is our calling. No one can escape their calling. I feel like my calling is chasing after me, like I have a tail attached. That’s why I can not stop. And I love to help. I love to talk with children. I love the kids, working with them.

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*Appendix E7 - Interview transcript with Participant 7 - Vice-principal of a school in Village 2,
female, Bulgarian ethnicity *incomplete**

Interviewer: And on personal issues, there are more important issues, and as deputy director I would be interested to see the perspective of the institutions. Are you familiar with the idea of social exclusion first?

Participant: Social exclusion of children or social exclusion in society?

Interviewer: In the society of certain groups, for example.

Participant: Well, to some extent yes. There is social exclusion in Bulgaria and this thing will not be prevented in any way.

Interviewer: Whatever to do?

Participant: Whatever is done. Social exclusion does not exist among people who live together. It all starts with the fact that for some we can, for others we cannot in this country.

Interviewer: And this is coming more...

Participant: From above. Yes. Otherwise, all, absolutely all of us can live in, understand and be equal, but there is social exclusion. And it does not depend on ordinary people.

Interviewer: Are they doing it on an ethnic basis, is it happening or not?

Participant: Well, for now, for these years, it must be on an ethnic basis. I give an example that so many years of working with minorities ... I have not only worked here with them and in the city as well...

They say, "You have to" Why do we have to? Why is he using this thing? Because someone allows them. We do not allow them. Neither you, nor your mother, nor me.

Interviewer: Many rights are given ...

Participant: Yes. And why don't we say "We have to"?

Interviewer: Ah, where?

Participant: What do you have to do from 8 to 5 to go to work?

Interviewer: Well, to eat. (laughs) In parts yes.

Interviewer: But you have to go to work from 8:00 to 5:00, because you have to give it to us later.

When some people allow this model of life to someone and oblige others to live according to another model, to fight from 8:00 to 5:00 for the minimum wage.

Interviewer: A little...

Participant: No way!

Interviewer: There is a double standard.

Participant: That is why we cannot integrate and socialize these people, integrate them.

Interviewer: Well, the next question is do you think they should integrate?

Participant: I have to!

Interviewer: Because...

Participant: There are people and people from them.

Interviewer: There are some who say, "You stay there. They ..."

Participant: No! Parents of these children work for me and my husband. I want to tell you that some are not like their children.

Interviewer: For better or for worse...?

Participant: For good, for good. It used to be different. Obviously, the society itself, the politics itself, the government was not like that. It's a terrible thing now. There is no integration. No no. The bad thing is that we walk, walk, travel the world, come back, melt a document of 300-400 pages. "Read it, do it." What are we doing? What should we do?

Interviewer: Writing some strategies...

Participant: But we do not want to write! We want work, we want cooperation. So what if there is a strategy?

Interviewer: Someone needs to do something about it.

Participant: Well, fine. We are participating here in a mechanism for reaching children. Did you know that there are representatives from the social services, the police, the municipality. I'm from school. And when the time comes to go, to embrace the children, we are also [educational mediator from village 2]. Where are the others? Because there are strategies...

Interviewer: They are busier.

Participant: And they are written on documents. You can't go with two people, you don't want to integrate the children, to embrace them. No, no. They are difficult to integrate. There are people of them really. There are those who thank you! And study, and read, and write. I know some of them with doctoral degrees. Really! But it also depends on the environment you are in. It depends on where you came from, what your family is. They don't want to. They live that today he should turn 18, get a license and drive a BMW 3. This is our ideal life.

Interviewer: This is the ceiling...

Participant: But none of them say "I want to learn. To become one and whatever I work. I learn the word, to become and be something, to work... None of them have these three things. Here if there are 5% of children. All the others are "I want to get a book, buy a BMW or an Audi."

Interviewer: Great profession. What do you think. what can be done to facilitate this integration process?

Participant: Do you know that if their rights are reduced, they are cowards? Yes, they are very timid. If their rights are reduced and they do not want to ... and stop with this "Lie at home. They give social benefits. ", It

will be very easy. While the state gives and pours and allows them to go and one ... they now go to Germany. What they do? These kids are dragging them there. Do you know where the children are kept? Home locked.

Interviewer: Because they are at work?

Participant: Or they take them so that they can enroll them in language courses where they do not send their children. And I say why they don't send them. Because you have to become someone, dress this child and take him away. And these children are locked up for 24 hours in one apartment. During that time, they worked illegally because they were low-paid labor and cheap labor. They go if they make 500 euros in Germany and it's a big deal. Nothing is 500 euros. If they think that Germany will take over their accommodation ... That's why it will take over their accommodation. Because they are cheap labor. And they put them in miserable ghettos. I don't know if you went to Germany, where they live, where they live.

Interviewer: I didn't fall.

Participant: Well, God forbid! It's like entering the neighborhood of Victory and behind the dump. It looks like that.

Interviewer: Some people say that they go there and manage to integrate everything ... and the children go to courses and...

Participant: But this ... Their course is two years, man. Imagine what kind of integration it is. He went to this one for two years, supposedly going to a course. Buckle doesn't know. When they come here, let me ask them how good the day is in German, no one knows, no one can say. Otherwise, the German knows it. He can't know. They don't know Gypsy, they don't know German. And he hasn't taken a course in two years. If he walks, it will be once a week. We know how much he takes a course. We know how much his mother is involved in this and that the child is educated. And it comes here and it starts, "Well, can't you enroll me a year in advance?" But how could it be? There is no way he can. That they say that there ... there they do not integrate.

Interviewer: They remain ...

Participant: It's just that they earn 2 leva. In what way is their job. Somehow he changes them, but I wouldn't say how much. Because when they come here, they eat the Euro and they are the same. They come with a self-confidence as if struck by the lottery. And three times when you go out in the center of [a large district center] and three times when you enter Kaufland and...

(incomprehensible). At this treasure. There is nothing to lie about. Very rarely do they integrate there ... I know people who live there. But I want to tell you how old I am in Germany. She works at Eurofootball in Germany, where only those who go to her. He told me, "I'm chasing them with the stick." That thing is hell! None of them ... there are people who just shout and show theirs. Especially when they hear that you are Bulgarian and speak ... Their numbers show them everywhere.

Interviewer: Some people say, right...

Participant: Who are integrating? I was in Brussels, I don't know if you went.

Interviewer: I went, I didn't like it.

Participant: I don't know if you went to the center in the evening.

Interviewer: Oh, it's disgusting.

Participant: Did you see how many gypsies have to beg.

Interviewer: No, I was like a horse with caps and walking and looking nowhere.

Participant: In Brussels, in the center, in every corner, begging with their children. Is this integration? What they told you when you set foot in Brussels. Don't walk the streets alone in the evening, do you? What? You know what's going on, don't you?

Interviewer: I was with a boy 1.95 m, 100 kg and we both walk and look around.

Participant: Yes. We were in groups of 10 people. So as not to be attacked. From which? From the Bulgarian gypsies. Can you imagine. Is this integration? Yes, those who obviously work for them, their fathers in a different way... They have the most money. I have, yes, friends I know in Germany, I have such acquaintances. Yes, their psyche changes a little, but because they have money. Otherwise...

Interviewer: It's the same again.

Participant: I have a friend in Dobrich. He is a tenant. His two children are dentists. Thanks! Thanks!

Interviewer: Is he from the Roma ethnic group?

Participant: Yes. Thanks! If you know how smart they are! These are the boys!

Interviewer: And on personal issues, there are more important issues, and as deputy director I would be interested to see the perspective of the institutions. Are you familiar with the idea of social exclusion first?

Participant: Social exclusion of children or social exclusion in society?

Interviewer: In the society of certain groups, for example.

Participant: Well, to some extent yes. There is social exclusion in Bulgaria and this thing will not be prevented in any way.

Interviewer: Whatever to do?

Participant: Whatever is done. Social exclusion does not exist among people who live together. It all starts with the fact that for some we can, for others we cannot in this country.

Interviewer: And this is coming more...

Participant: From above. Yes. Otherwise, all, absolutely all of us can live in, understand and be equal, but there is social exclusion. And it does not depend on ordinary people.

Interviewer: Are they doing it on an ethnic basis, is it happening or not?

Participant: Well, for now, for these years, it must be on an ethnic basis. I give an example that so many years of working with minorities ... I have not only worked here with them and in the city as well...

They say, "You have to" Why do we have to? Why is he using this thing? Because someone allows them. We do not allow them. Neither you, nor your mother, nor me.

Interviewer: Many rights are given ...

Participant: Yes. And why don't we say "We have to"?

Interviewer: Ah, where?

Participant: What do you have to do from 8 to 5 to go to work?

Interviewer: Well, to eat. (laughs) In parts yes.

Interviewer: But you have to go to work from 8:00 to 5:00, because you have to give it to us later. When some people allow this model of life to someone and oblige others to live according to another model, to fight from 8:00 to 5:00 for the minimum wage.

Interviewer: A little...

Participant: No way!

Interviewer: There is a double standard.

Participant: That is why we cannot integrate and socialize these people, integrate them.

Interviewer: Well, the next question is do you think they should integrate?

Participant: I have to!

Interviewer: Because...

Participant: There are people and people from them.

Interviewer: There are some who say, "You stay there. They ..."

Participant: No! Parents of these children work for me and my husband. I want to tell you that some are not like their children.

Interviewer: For better or for worse...?

Participant: For good, for good. It used to be different. Obviously, the society itself, the politics itself, the government was not like that. It's a terrible thing now. There is no integration. No no. The bad thing is that we walk, walk, travel the world, come back, melt a document of 300-400 pages. "Read it, do it." What are we doing? What should we do?

Interviewer: Writing some strategies...

Participant: But we do not want to write! We want work, we want cooperation. So what if there is a strategy?

Interviewer: Someone needs to do something about it.

Participant: Well, fine. We are participating here in a mechanism for reaching children. Did you know that there are representatives from the social services, the police, the municipality. I'm from school. And when the time comes to go, to embrace the children, we are also [educational mediator from village 2]. Where are the others? Because there are strategies...

Interviewer: They are busier.

Participant: And they are written on documents. You can't go with two people, you don't want to integrate the children, to embrace them. No, no. They are difficult to integrate. There are people of them really. There are those who thank you! And study, and read, and write. I know some of them with doctoral degrees. Really! But it also depends on the environment you are in. It depends on where you came from, what your family is. They don't want to. They live that today he should turn 18, get a license and drive a BMW 3. This is our ideal life.

Interviewer: This is the ceiling...

Participant: But none of them say "I want to learn. To become one and whatever I work. I learn the word, to become and be something, to work... None of them have these three things. Here if there are 5% of children. All the others are "I want to get a book, buy a BMW or an Audi."

Interviewer: Great profession. What do you think. what can be done to facilitate this integration process?

Participant: Do you know that if their rights are reduced, they are cowards? Yes, they are very timid. If their rights are reduced and they do not want to ... and stop with this "Lie at home. They give social benefits. ", It

will be very easy. While the state gives and pours and allows them to go and one ... they now go to Germany. What they do? These kids are dragging them there. Do you know where the children are kept? Home locked.

Interviewer: Because they are at work?

Participant: Or they take them so that they can enroll them in language courses where they do not send their children. And I say why they don't send them. Because you have to become someone, dress this child and take him away. And these children are locked up for 24 hours in one apartment. During that time, they worked illegally because they were low-paid labor and cheap labor. They go

if they make 500 euros in Germany and it's a big deal. Nothing is 500 euros. If they think that Germany will take over their accommodation ... That's why it will take over their accommodation. Because they are cheap labor. And they put them in miserable ghettos. I don't know if you went to Germany, where they live, where they live.

Interviewer: I didn't fall.

Participant: Well, God forbid! It's like entering the neighborhood of Victory and behind the dump. It looks like that.

Interviewer: Some people say that they go there and manage to integrate everything ... and the children go to courses and...

Participant: But this ... Their course is two years, man. Imagine what kind of integration it is. He went to this one for two years, supposedly going to a course. Buckle doesn't know. When they come here, let me ask them how good the day is in German, no one knows, no one can say. Otherwise, the German knows it. He can't know. They don't know Gypsy, they don't know German. And he hasn't taken a course in two years. If he walks, it will be once a week. We know how much he takes a course. We know how much his mother is involved in this and that the child is educated. And it comes here and it starts, "Well, can't you enroll me a year in advance?" But how could it be? There is no way he can. That they say that there ... there they do not integrate.

Interviewer: They remain ...

Participant: It's just that they earn 2 leva. In what way is their job. Somehow he changes them, but I wouldn't say how much. Because when they come here, they eat the Euro and they are the same. They come with a self-confidence as if struck by the lottery. And three times when you go out in the center of [a large district center] and three times when you enter Kaufland and...

(incomprehensible). At this treasure. There is nothing to lie about. Very rarely do they integrate there ... I know people who live there. But I want to tell you how old I am in Germany. She works at Eurofootball in Germany, where only those who go to her. He told me, "I'm chasing them with the stick." That thing is hell! None of them ... there are people who just shout and show theirs. Especially when they hear that you are Bulgarian and speak ... Their numbers show them everywhere.

Interviewer: Some people say, right...

Participant: Who are integrating? I was in Brussels, I don't know if you went.

Interviewer: I went, I didn't like it.

Participant: I don't know if you went to the center in the evening.

Interviewer: Oh, it's disgusting.

Participant: Did you see how many gypsies have to beg.

Interviewer: No, I was like a horse with caps and walking and looking nowhere.

Participant: In Brussels, in the center, in every corner, begging with their children. Is this integration? What they told you when you set foot in Brussels. Don't walk the streets alone in the evening, do you? What? You know what's going on, don't you?

Interviewer: I was with a boy 1.95 m, 100 kg and we both walk and look around.

Participant: Yes. We were in groups of 10 people. So as not to be attacked. From which? From the Bulgarian gypsies. Can you imagine. Is this integration? Yes, those who obviously work for them, their fathers in a different way... They have the most money. I have, yes, friends I know in Germany, I have such acquaintances. Yes, their psyche changes a little, but because they have money. Otherwise...

Interviewer: It's the same again.

Participant: I have a friend in Dobrich. He is a tenant. His two children are dentists. Thanks! Thanks!

Interviewer: Is he from the Roma ethnic group?

Participant: Yes. Thanks! If you know how smart they are! These are the boys!

*Appendix E8 - Interview excerpts from talk with Participant 8 - Principal in a school in Village 3,
female, Bulgarian ethnicity*

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Interviewer: The first question is are you familiar with the idea of social exclusion?

Participant: Social exclusion, this is when the community itself does not want to socialise with the larger one, with the larger ethnicity which is in the country.

Interviewer: Can this also be caused partly by the behaviour of the larger ethnicity or is it more so the minority's fault?

Participant: No, it is two-sided. It is true that the majority ethnicity, at least for our country, has a disparaging behaviour towards the minority ethnicity. Disparaging maybe because of their traditions, habits or, more so, because of their attitude towards life.

Interviewer: For example what traditions and habits?

Participant: For me personally, the Roma ethnicity mainly think about their sustenance. For their household needs. For them, if they are fulfilled, the problem is solved and they do not care about anything else.

Interviewer: Are you familiar with Maslow's pyramid of needs?

Participant: I have worked with it before but I do not remember anything, honestly.

Interviewer: On the bottom come, those simple household needs.

Participant: Yes!

Interviewer: And then if they are fulfilled you are going up. So, with the Roma it just stops at the first level. There is no climb.

Participant: Not with all of them, no. Some people have outgrown this level because I know Roma people who have higher education degrees, who have made a career, even better than some

Bulgarians. It depends on their family maybe, on their willingness to and on the fighting spirit of the individual themselves.

Interviewer: And there are some groups of people in Bulgaria who stay...

Participant: There are such groups of people in Bulgaria who are left on a primitive level. What do I mean by primitive? They are only looking to satisfy their basic needs. That is how they raise their kids and they can not outgrow this bottom level.

Interviewer: Should the government, be it on a regional or on a national level, should it make some effort to change the way of life of these people and integrate them or they should just... They feel happy the way they are, we should just leave them like this...

Participant: If we leave them 'happy' like this, the divide between the ethnicities will become even bigger.

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Participant: [...] In the villages there are almost no Bulgarians left. I am judging for two villages. Here in the school, there are 3-4 Bulgarian children. The rest is Roma and Kopanari. Maybe they are Roma as well but maybe just a different group. I do not know precisely. They are Christian, while the Roma who are defined as Roma are Muslim. In the village where I am from, there are no Bulgarians in the school. It is 100% Roma. When I have contact with my colleagues, they say the situation is similar in other villages. The villages are left with a predominantly Roma population and they can not integrate, even if they wanted to. There is no competition. They are in their own community.

Interviewer: They are in their own community.

Participant: Yes! When I worked as a teacher a lot of the parents, even of Roma children, who are educated and have a desire for their kids to succeed, they say "I am gonna send my kid to the city for school because there is competition. Here there is not. Everyone is from our group". That's what they say. When everyone is from their group it is impossible for the child to develop

Appendix E9 - Interview excerpts from talk with Participant 9 - Educational mediator in a school in Village 3, female, Bulgarian ethnicity.

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Interviewer: [...] I want to ask you, as a person who is local, what is the difference between Gypsies and Kopanari?

Participant: The difference between Gypsies and Kopanari is that... Firstly, they have a different religion. One of them are Christian, the other ones are Muslim. The other thing is, I think from my experience, they do not have such a big difference in traditions. For example, family, kids. I think both groups marry off their children young. But the way of thinking is different for the Kopanari, in comparison to the Turks. They seem to not be so closed and are not following the traditions too strictly, in contrast to the Muslims and their religion. The two religions have nothing uncommon. They are more open to new things, while the others are homogenous as an ethnicity. They are just following the steps

Interviewer: What their ancestors did...

Participant: Exactly that! They follow exactly that. While the others ones are trying newer and newer things. These are my observations.

Interviewer: What language do the Kopanari speak?

Participant: Romanian

Interviewer: Romanian, okay.

Participant: But their Romanian and the Romanian which is in Romania are... It's like a dialect. Just like our dialects here.

Interviewer: Just like with the Roma where their Turkish is different than the Turkish in Turkey.

Participant: Yes...

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Interviewer: Can technology, and the communication which is supposed to ease things, can they help to bridge the divide between the different ethnicities?

Participant: Yes, I think that to some extent it is able to. To some extent, it succeeds.

Interviewer: Is it because a lot of people say... People who live in bad conditions or don't know any other way have to see that there is another way. Can technologies achieve that?

Participant: I do not know to what extent they achieve it. But for example, if we talk about the people that don't have a house for example... They always have the device. Always... They might not have a place to sleep but they will always have either an iPhone or a tablet or... And the iPhone is not cheap at all... If they can have it but don't have a bed, there is something happening. They don't have the conditions, a place to live but they will always have... They will also be up to the latest technology, fashion trends. For example here, I have noticed, families who are not known to be wealthy throw such weddings. You would think that they are very wealthy. It looks like that from a far. They just take a quick credit and throw a wedding. That is it...

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