

Roma women- known and unknown

Family Life And The Position Of The Woman In The Roma Communities

RESEARCH REPORT

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Introduction

The Roma population still preserve a traditional family model, as indicated by previous studies.¹ Marriage occurs at early ages, generally under 20, and the mother's age at the first childbirth is also under 20, given a fertility higher than the national average. The family relations are hierarchical, men having a privileged position, while women have an inferiority status. Getting married early, and sometimes against their will, living in large families affected by poverty and taking care of the household and of a large number of children, the Roma women encounter themselves in a vulnerable position, facing such risks as poverty, the lack of social protection or exposure to various diseases caused by repeated childbirths at very young ages.

Many projects that address the Roma issue concern gender equality in Roma families and communities, but usually they are merely a secondary component of the project. In fact, the problems of Roma women and gender roles in the Roma families are little known and even less has been done to solve them. This report serves as a basis for a project that aims the issue of gender equality in Roma families and communities. The purpose of the report is to identify the status of women and gender roles in the Roma families and the factors that can be used as a basis of support for the improvement of their situation. Basically, the report aims to answer some questions like: what is the position of the woman in the Roma family? How much is she involved in decision-making, in the family and in the household? What are the specific tasks of Roma women in the families? Do they participate in the labour market? How about education? What are the characteristic features of family life in these communities? What is the status of children and how are they prepared for life? What can be done specifically to improve the situation of Roma women?

Literature addressing issues of gender equality reveals the impact of three factors on the structure of gender relations: the educational stock existing in the family, the labour market involvement of both partners and the control of the community over the individual behaviour. Thus, in families where the education level is higher and there is an experience of involvement in the labour market, the status of women is usually a better one, as there is a greater involvement, on their part, in decision making in the household and having a status closer to that of the man. Also, families living in non-traditional communities, where the community does not exercise tight control over family life and on the various components thereof, such as early marriage or reproductive control, gender roles tend to be more egalitarian in comparison to traditional communities.

We started from the premise that there are significant differences between Roma communities, regarding the situation of women from the three criteria: education, involvement in the labour market (paid work) and community control over individual lives. We have identified three types of communities: **traditional communities**, where community control is very powerful, the education stock is very low and the involvement of women in work outside the home is almost non-existent, **non-traditional rural communities**, where community control is less powerful, the education stock is slightly higher and there is some work experience outside the home, but there currently aren't opportunities that would allow excessive involvement in work and **non-traditional urban communities**, where community control is relaxed, the education stock is similar to that of the non-traditional rural communities, but there is some experience of women working, and there are opportunities that enable them to engage in paid work outside the home. The analysis made in this report is structured according to these three model types and highlights the intra-

¹ See Voicu, Malina, Popescu, Raluca. 2006. *Marriage and early pregnancy in the Roma communities*. Bucharest, Educația 2000+ publishing house.

familial and gender relations differ depending on the particularities of each community, considered separately.

This report is based on a qualitative analysis, drawing on the information collected through a series of focus groups conducted in the target communities. We have selected two communities for each of the three identified types and we have carried out two group interviews with women and two interviews with men for each of them, trying to clearly delimitate the participants, depending on their age. The six communities where the focus groups have been held are Verești (Suceava County) and Sărulești (Calarasi County), both traditional communities, Bălțești (Prahova County) and Patrauti (Suceava County), both rural and non-traditional communities, and Kuncz (Timisoara) and Patarat (Cluj-Napoca), both non-traditional urban communities.

In every community we have developed a focus with young women (under 35) and one with young men (under 35), as well a focus with "adult" women (over 35 of age) and one with men of similar age. It should be noted that, while women in all communities were more willing to participate and to openly discuss family life, discussions with men were more difficult to, because of their reluctance to participate in a discussion on this subject. For this reason, in Patarat – Cluj, we have interviewed only women.

The issues covered in the focus groups are grouped on several dimensions: the formation and dissolution of the family, the satisfaction regarding family life, the reproductive behaviour, the gender roles, the women's involvement in paid work outside the home, the school's role in the socialisation process of children and in their attendance, the involvement of children in domestic and in paid work, the potential of involving in projects dedicated to the women's position, at community level. This report is structured based on the already listed subjects, ending with a series of recommendations for concrete actions to be developed based on empirical data collected in the field.

Roma communities

Verești

The Roma community of Verești is a traditional one, comprising mostly "căldărari"ⁱ, mostly followers of the Pentecostal religion. They do not see themselves as Gypsies, but as Roma and they try to separate themselves from other people in the region. *"Gypsies [...], let's speak about „căldărari”, let's talk about Roma. They all mistake us for something we are not, Gypsies are „lingurari”ⁱⁱ [...] we are „căldărari” . We are a community of „căldărari”, who work honestly, we are not to be mistaken for the others, those are people who steal, who do bad things, do not treat different people as if they were alike. "*

Although the distance to the town hall and to the majority community is small, spatial segregation of the Roma community is visible. All the Roma, with a few minor exceptions, live on a road with lateral extensions, a road that starts near the centre of the village.

According to their own statements, they get along well with the Romanians in the village and no discrimination cases have been reported: *"We work pretty well with the Romanians – sometimes they call us Gypsies, but that's another issue! Maybe that's how they were accustomed, they don't say it in a mean way..."*.

Overcrowded houses are yet again one of the most frequent problems. Here as well, the phenomenon of the enlargement of the household in the same space is widespread. The attitude towards the authorities is rather neutral. The assistential mentality is poorly represented among the "căldărari", who are used to living primarily from the money they gain from their work and from their family's work. The issue of the connection to the power grid problem was raised (although they have electricity, they are not legally connected, but have some kind of understanding with the neighbours) and the issue of the water wells, which was solved through a project of the Soros Foundation. The roads and the issue of more jobs were the concrete needs pointed out.

Sărulești

The Roma community of Sărulești is quite large, the social worker of the mayor's office indicating that it about 300 families. It is a traditional Roma community, who speaks Romany and maintains the traditional outfits. The standard of living is very low for most families. The main sources of income are the welfare benefit allowance and the children's allowances.

The main problems mentioned by respondents were the fact that most households were not connected to the main power grid, the lack of income and the poor state of the roads in the community. Another complaint is related to the installation of the video surveillance installation in the village, considered, by the Roma population, to be a waste of money. Moreover, representatives of the school have found that installing a video surveillance system had as impact a significant reduction of the number of thefts in the commune.

A series of projects, in recent years, have benefited the Roma community, the most important promoters being the school and / or the mayor's office. Most efforts, however, were less visible in the Roma community, evidence being the low level of appreciation of the participants in the focus groups especially regarding the projects focused on education.

The Roma population of Sărulești aspires to *„live a better life, like the Romanians do”*. All the participants in the focus groups consider that they need to be helped by the authorities, that they should receive jobs and land from the mayor's office, that welfare allowance should be increased and that they should be able to obtain subsidised medicine.

Bălțești

The Roma community of Bălțești is not a large one. It is not a traditional Roma community, although they speak Romany. The Roma from Bălțești see themselves as *"neither this way, nor the other, not Gypsy, not Romanian! We're naturalised Gypsies!"* and have a lifestyle similar to that of the majority population: *"We live like the Romanians, we don't have a "bulibașă"ⁱⁱⁱ, we live by the current laws"*. There are no traditions differentiating the Roma community from the Romanians. There are no ethnic issues, the relations with the Romanian population are natural (*"we have no problems, we are equal to the Romanians", "we shared the same life with the Romanians"*), there are cases of mixed marriages between Roma and Romanians (*"We have gypsies here, boys and girls, married to Romanians [...] If there is a Romanian wedding, we go to the wedding and to the christening and then the Romanians come visit us"*).

In the past, men worked as blacksmiths, an occupation that *"is not working anymore, there's no demand for it now. We tried, after working as blacksmiths, to work in foundry, but this is not working either."* The standard of living of the community is modest, but in line with that of the majority of the community population: *"we are hardworking people, we have poultry, a pig, a horse, we're people, just like everyone else"*.

The investments made recently in the community have reduced the differences existing between this community and the rest of the village. The most frequent problem, as mentioned by the participants in the focus groups, was housing (households are overcrowded, the conditions are poor). The lack of resources makes the Roma families expand the existing housing facilities or build new houses in the same yard, for children who get married. *"We have, under the same roof, three or four families; we're not talking about the same yard here, but about the same house."* Currently, there is a project aiming at building houses, but their number is insignificant in relation to the existing needs. However, the initiative has led to the acceleration of the proceedings related to the deeds for residential property. The community also witnessed a project related to the attempt to regulate the housing situation and the identity documents – *"within a PHARE project, in 2005, we managed to issue some 70 ID, in two instalments, and only six deeds of property"*- the community facilitator).

The women who participated in focus groups also raised the question of the lack of sanitation services (*"a clinic for children should be built, if they built a hospital, half of it should be a clinic, the other half, a hospital"*) and the connection to the power grid (households are illegally connected to the power grid, thus experiencing many power failures – *"they should install a power meter, and we should have electricity and pay for it"*).

Pătrăuți

The community is not traditional and is not poor. The homes are separated by considerable distances, the courtyards and fences are well defined, the plots have a surface of 3-5 acres, allowing some Roma to breed animals.

The distance to the centre of the village is a natural barrier in the way of the interaction between the Roma community and the majority population, but also between them and local authorities; regarding these, the Roma complain that they are interested in their situation only when the elections are coming up.

The attitude towards the authorities is negative, the Roma considering them largely responsible for their situation. Men have said that the lack of jobs is the main problem of the community.

Kuncz, Timișoara

The Kuncz neighbourhood is located in the southeast region of the city of Timisoara, in the Plopi-Kuncz area. Kuncz is a peripheral district of Timisoara, located near a water channel of the river Bega. Its inhabitants are mostly very poor Roma. The neighbourhood totals about ten small streets with old houses, built mostly within a small valley. The most significant problem is the lack of property deeds. The Kuncz neighbourhood was, up until early 20th century (1850 - 1900) a rural town located near the city of Timisoara. Currently the land on which the neighbourhood located is almost entirely registered as agricultural land. The lack of deeds of property for lands and houses, the major problem of the people of Kuncz, entails other problems: the lack of identity documents, the lack of contract-based employment (as the inhabitants do not have a residence and an ID), etc.. *"They should issue us deeds of property for the houses, there are so many houses that don't have deeds. Without a deed, you can't have an ID, you can't get a job. I can't even get a loan, I can't borrow money, I can't do anything. Because I don't have papers."*

Another acute problem of the community, which all respondents want addressed, is the lack of paved and/or surfaced roads in their neighbourhood. *"We want a more civilised environment here."* Women have mentioned other problems: the lack of a kindergarten, of a school nearby (the nearest school is at a distance of 3 km), of a clinic, as they often encounter these difficulties due to their role in relation to the children and the household. *"The kindergarten was replaced by something else, it no longer exists. The nearest clinic is very far, in another neighbourhood. Each has a family doctor in the city somewhere. "*

Patarât, Cluj Napoca

The community (approximately 500 people living in social housing on the outskirts of Cluj Napoca) is not a traditional community, but a spatially isolated one, with poor living conditions. Few of its members have jobs in town, mostly in sanitation or other services. The obtained income (between 300 - 700 RON) do not allow them to pay a rent in the city, and they are currently stuck in Patarat. Besides, the residents of Patarat consider that there are no opportunities to leave the community and the situation of extreme poverty. In recent years, only two families were able to leave the community.

The main problem affecting family life is housing. Young couples do not have enough space to build wooden houses, and the space in which housing is arranged is temporary, as they have no place of residence mentioned in the ID. Living in these "barracks" means poor hygienic conditions, infested water, makeshift bathrooms and kitchens, but also the impossibility to provide their children with further education. Even worse, discrimination in schools was also reported, because of their ethnicity, but also because of the area where they live, as Patarat has a very bad reputation.

The participants in the focus groups assessed the need for more changes, related primarily to the improvement of their living conditions. The families living in Patarat want their own home (*"to have a place to stay and not to be driven away all the time, with your clothes in a bag, where no-one comes and shouts <Round up!> "*), a playground suitable for their children and decent hygienic conditions.

Family

For Roma, regardless of the community of origin, be it traditional or not, rural or urban, be they women or men, young or old, the family is the most important aspect of their lives, and within it – the children are paramount.

The importance of family and children

"For us, Roma, family is most important. Parents, brothers, brothers-in-law, grandchildren, children, wives are the most important part of our lives."(Verești, men under 35)

"For us, family is a divine gift, especially the small children are a blessing from God." (Verești, men under 35)

"Children come first, they're our life. We live for them, and die for them. Children come first. For us, Gypsies, this is our wealth."(Cluj, women over 35)

There are marked differences between the types of communities, as far as marriage is concerned. In traditional communities, girls marry early, usually at 14 - 16 years of age, and boys up to 18 years of age. There are numerous cases of earlier marriages (12 -14 years for girls and 14-16 years for boys), especially in Sărulești.

While practiced, the attitude towards early marriage is still rather negative. Even for the older generations, early marriage is considered to be a problem and deemed to have a negative impact on youth development, on personal fulfilment. It seems that in Verești, where the whole community is reformed, religious considerations lead to an increase of the marrying age.

Age at marriage, in traditional rural communities

"The boys, at 17-18 years of age, the girls, at 14-15. This is how our ancestors established it." (Verești, men under 35)

"It would be nice if people would [get married] at 18-19 years of age, so they have some things clear in their heads. But our custom, established by our forefathers, is that people should get married at 12, 13 years of age. I got married when I was 12 years old and at 14 I had my girl."

(Sărulești, women under 35)

„Before, people got married at 10-12 years of age. But now they get married at 16,17,18 [...], we don't allow them to marry so soon, we don't want them to suffer some disgrace. We're afraid now, afraid of God. We're reformed. Same goes for boys, at 18, 19, 20 years of age, they're older." (Verești, women over 35)

Apart from tradition, there are pragmatic justifications for this situation. For the girls, an important consideration is virginity, a very important aspect in the community. Girls marry very young so as to prevent any "wrong doing", to prevent them from being "stolen" and losing their virginity. There is a custom to show evidence of their virginity – the bedding used on their wedding night. This test is required in order to prevent scandal from arising between the families of the community. *"It is very important for the girl to be a virgin, if she gets married and she is not a virgin, this brings shame upon us, it is a problem, the family rank also falls." (Verești, men under 35)*

Moreover, once married, children can contribute to the family, assuming domestic responsibilities or ensuring income. *"We cannot keep them. Life is tough, it's very tough...We don't have jobs, we don't own anything...So, if they get married, I don't have to work to support them, they have to work themselves. The family grows." (Sărulești, women over 35)*

In non-traditional communities (rural and urban), marriage also occurs at an early age. Although there are fewer constraints, most young people marry when they are under 18. Later marriage remains mostly the mothers' wish, because in reality, most young people get married at 14-15 years of age and have children at that age. The difference between these communities and the traditional ones resides mostly in the attitude. If only a part of the traditional communities negatively evaluates early marriage, in the case of the non-traditional communities, the majority believes that it affects the chances of development and of personal fulfilment. Moreover, early marriage is considered, in some cases, to be a sign of underdevelopment of the community, of „lack of civilisation”.

Marrying age, in non-traditional communities

"Here - at 13 years old, at 15 years old. But it's not good, because they [the girls] are too young "(Kuncz, women under 35)

"Here, at 14-15 years of age, most of the families already have two children. My daughter married at 11 years old. And what good did it do her? It's over. It's not good to get married so early. " (Cluj, women over 35)

"Here, our girls marry at 18 years old. It's not like in their [community](n.ed.: the traditional community of Sărulești), at 12 years old. We are civilized people. "(Bălțești, men over 35)

In all group discussions, there were differing views on the appropriate age for marriage. Unanimous agreement was reached only regarding the very young age, under 18 years old. All participants agreed that both the boy and girl should be at least 18 years old at marriage. Furthermore, there are opinions that support even an older age, like 25 years old, and other opinions supporting a younger age, 18-20 years, especially for girls. The regret in relation with getting married too soon appeared in all discussions with women over 35.

Ideal age for marriage - women

"About twenty-something, it's better for a girl to work, to make do as she can... To protect herself... to be careful not to have babies. They should not be having these problems at that young age... Not like us, at 15-16 years old...We're sorry we did that." (Cluj, women over 35)

"If I were younger, I wouldn't get married! I am very sorry! If I were 25, in all honesty, I wouldn't get married." (Kuncz, women over 35)

The ideal age, in the case of boys, is higher and is defined by the traditional role. Material prosperity and maturity were the main requirements to be met in order to marry. The man has a duty to support his family and to take the most important decisions; he is the head of the family. Therefore, one can marry when one has the necessary material resources and when one is able to lead the family. In reality, the boys, just like the girls, marry early, without the prospect of a future for their family.

Ideal age for marriage - men

"When he's well off. And he must work. He should not expect the wife to support him. They don't grow up as fast as we do. "(Cluj, women under 35)

"He should have an income to support his family, not like this, at 14 years old, that's not good. The man must complete his military service, he must have a job, be employed, he must be able to support his family." (Cluj, women over 35)

"At twenty, twenty-something, when he's mature enough. When he can earn a living, when he can work. At 15, who's going to hire him nowadays? Nobody hires you when you're 15, they don't hire you even when you're 17. To get married, he must have an income, he must support his family. " (Kuncz, women under 35)

"[Men] should get married at 20, 25 years of age, when they're mature, when they come to their senses ... Here they get married when they're 19. "(Bălțești, women over 35)

Moreover, to start a family, the most important considerations are the material ones. This attitude is dominant both among traditional and non-traditional communities. Value-related motivations were rarely mentioned (they occurred in the discussions of the members of urban communities, in the case of participants with a higher level of education).

Conditions prior to starting a family

"I believe that when you start a family you must have a home. You must finish school, you must have a job. When you have something of your own, when you're sure of what you have, when you have the certainty of a future." "(Cluj, women under 35, high level of education)

"If you don't have a situation, getting married doesn't make sense to me. On what basis can two 14-year old children get married?" (Kuncz, men over 35)

"There is no specific age, it's when you feel ready for it, when you meet that someone with whom you want to spend the rest of your life. It's a decision to be pondered upon, it should not be taken in haste <hey, I love this guy and that's it, we get married> "(Cluj, women under 35, high level of education)

Even if the views on marrying age do not differ radically, the situation regarding the choice of partner is completely different. In traditional communities the choice is made exclusively by the parents, sometimes taking into account the option of the children, while in non-traditional communities, both urban and rural, the choice belongs to the young couple.

In the traditional communities, the boy's parents choose the girl they want as bride for their son, paying a certain amount to her family. The prevailing criterion for the choice of partner is fortune. All the Roma women who attended the focus group had gold necklaces.

Choosing partners in traditional communities

"The parents choose the partner. The child must also agree, a little bit, he/she must like her/him, because if the son/daughter doesn't agree, eventually both the family and the child give up.

What if the parents want it, but the son/daughter doesn't?

"Even so, he/she is bound to obey to his/her parents." (Verești, men under 35)

"If I like her, he must like her. That's how things go here. This is how my father got me married, this is how I do it!" (Verești, men over 35)

"Things don't work here like with the Romanians, when she likes some guy in Constanta and she goes there to live with him...no way! She can't! We, the parents, we agreed on something." (Sărulești, men under 35)

"We, the elders, choose her. Here, I choose that one, he has a daughter, I like him, and it's a good family ... "(Sărulești, men over 35)

In non-traditional communities, both urban as well as rural, the most important criterion for marriage is love. The most important thing is that both partners love each other. Parents are not involved in the choice of the future husband / wife, but rather they face the *fait accompli*. Usually, "the girl leaves home with a boy", regardless of whether the parents like him or not, and for a while the girl lives in the boy's home, and thus the parents get used to the idea of marriage. Afterwards, the parents discuss issues related to the marriage ceremony and to the support they can offer to the young couple. If the parents have resources, a wedding is also prepared. So, the girls or boys in the community choose "who

they like", usually it's the boys who „set their eyes on a girl". After the marriage, the young couple lives in the family home of one of them, usually in the boy's house. Usually, any home holds three generations: parents, children and grandchildren.

Choosing partners in non-traditional communities

"Things don't work like this here, with wealth and the like. They must like one another. Parents may be against it, but he'll still marry her." (Bălțești, women over 35)

"Nobody can win over love" (Bălțești, men under 35)

"We must love each other. No matter if he's rich or poor. If I like him, that's it." (Kuncz, women under 35)

"I didn't marry my wife for the money, I married her because I liked her, mine is poor, his is poor...everybody here is poor."

(Kuncz men under 35)

Sometimes, if the families of the young couple don't agree at all on their union, they resort to "eloping". Most of the times, they return to the community after a while.

Eloping as a solution for family disagreement

"If the parents don't agree, they wake up one night and they elope, and things settle down after two weeks or so, and they stay together." (Bălțești, men under 35)

"If a girl likes a boy and the boy likes the girl, and they are still young, they elope for a while, and then they return and their parents don't argue anymore." (Cluj, women over 35)

"The boy, if he wants to marry the girl, he goes to her parents to ask her hand in marriage... if they don't approve, I take her and farewell." (Patrauti, men over 35)

Marriage is endogamous in all the studied communities, even in the urban ones. In general, partners are selected from the community or from neighbouring communities. *"I grew up with this girl, and at some point, after 10 or 15 years, we met again: if you want me, I want you. Bringing a husband or a wife from elsewhere... that happens very rarely...they don't marry people from other places, they don't bring a girl from other town or county, who lives in Kuncz marries someone from Kuncz." (Kuncz, men under 35)*

The homogamy condition is another differentiating criterion between communities. In traditional communities, the family of origin, the social similarity are important criteria: *"First the community must speak well of her, she must come from a good family, of hardworking people. They must have money, they must have gold. They must not be drunks. They must be someone." (Verești, men under 35)*. In the non-traditional communities, the partner's family is often less important: *"You don't marry the family, you marry the person. If you don't like the family, no problem." (Cluj, women under 35)*.

Even in urban communities, it is important that the partner is either Gypsy, for fear of future problems in the case of an extended family. *"My father is Romanian and my mother is Roma. His parents did not agree to the marriage, but my father said „very well, if you don't accept it, I'll leave home." He left, they managed to make a living, they started from scratch. Things were very tough for them." (Cluj, woman under 35)*. *"That's my story, me and my father-in-law, we don't speak at all since I married her, because I am Gypsy and they are Romanian ... and we don't speak to each other." (Kuncz men under 35)*

As for the qualities a future wife should have, they form a coherent whole and are common to all types of communities. The attributes mentioned in the group discussions are related more to her role in the household, strengthening the dependency status (features such as „obedient" and „compliant" were very common. The respect for the husband and for the

family has also been unanimously mentioned. A lack of respect justifies even domestic violence. If the wife does not show respect to her husband, she deserves to be struck by him. Respect means submission, obedience. The woman's faithfulness is also highly valued. To take a simplifying approach, the standard portrait of the Roma wife must reunite the following qualities: a good housewife, obedient and faithful.

The wife's qualities

"She must be the woman in the house ... obedient, a good housewife. She must cook, take care of the children, send them to school, if they are enrolled, pick them up afterwards. She must do the cleaning and take care that her man is clothed properly..." (Cluj, women over 35)

"A wife must be obedient." (Patrauti, women, mixed group)

"These are the rules here. She must take care of her man. He must not chase after other women." (Sărulești, women under 35)

"The girl must be quiet, she must be a good housewife, she must not wander elsewhere, she must not go to bars... She must be hardworking." (Patrauti, women, mixed group)

"She must be a good housewife, she must be honest. She must respect her husband, her family, her children." (Kuncz, women under 35)

"We all had boyfriends. But after you marry, you have to be good." (Kuncz, women over 35)

Complementarily, the husband's qualities fit his role as head of the family and main provider. A good husband is a man who assumes the responsibility to support his family. Some attributes are defined negatively, by the absence of undesirable behaviours, such as alcohol consumption and domestic violence. Another condition, often mentioned by women, is that the man must be steadfast, he must not be unfaithful, he must not leave his wife for other women.

The husband's qualities

"He must be good, he must bring money, he must be resourceful and have a job, he must know how to make good cauldrons, because this is our profession." (Bălțești, women over 35)

"He must have work, he must not strike his woman, he must not torment her, he must mind his own family." (Cluj, women over 35)

"He must work, not wander around like they do these days. He must love his children, his family. He must take care of his family, he must bring money in the house. He must not idle around." (Kuncz, women over 35)

"He must be understanding, mature, he must not drink, he must not be a drunk, he must love us, and bring money home." (Kuncz, women under 35)

„He must take care of his wife, he must not argue with her or beat her, he must not chase her away from home." (Patrauti, women over 35)

"He must not beat her up, he must not leave her for another..." (Sărulești, women under 35)

"He must be a good man, he must care for his home, he must buy what is needed, he must work... he must not wander about, or see other women." (Verești, women under 35)

To „care for one's home” is synonymous with „bringing money home”. The most important aspect is related to the traditional role of men – to have work and to support their family. If this condition is met, even alcohol consumption, fighting or infidelities are tolerated. *"Now if he drinks, that's it, you can't change it! My husband drinks as well, but at least he brings some money home." (Kuncz, women under 35). "Men come home, they drink, they eat. There is no perfect man. That's it, I live with him, he brings money home, what can I do?"*

(Sărulești,, women, over 35). Simplifying, the standard portrait of the husband may be reduced to a one quality: to be able to support his family.

In all types of communities, in most cases Roma are not legally married, even in non-traditional urban communities. The formalisation of the relationship is in any case impossible, in a first phase, since many relationships start at the age of 14-16. If desired, marriage comes later, with the coming of age. According to cultural norms, moving together and having children equals marriage. The term *concubinage* is unfamiliar to them and has different connotations. The meaning of the word, in common, informal language is that of *lover*. Children represent a guarantee that the couple is married. Living together without children is closer to the meaning attributed to *concubinage*.

Marriage without papers

"If she doesn't get to the church to wed, that means less trouble for you. In our [community], women don't go to church to wed because this is the law. Here, if you have 150-200 Euros, you have a wedding. We buy food and drinks, and that's it." (Sărulești, women under 35)

"I've have had many wives ... concubines. It's very interesting for me, the way they use here the terms concubine - wife. We call her „wife”, directly, a „concubine” is a mistress."(Kuncz men under 35)

We are bound by our children, if you have children with her, you are married. For example, I got hitched with my wife 12 years ago, and we're not even married. We call her our wife only if we have children with her, it's not the papers that keep me here ... it's the children." (Kuncz men under 35)

Except for religious Roma communities, who joined various neo-protestant Evangelical cults, religious marriage is much less widespread. *"But we don't go to church anymore to do the wedding. Because if we do that, he'll be with me in the afterlife, and I don't want him to be by my side there as well."* (Bălțești, women over 35)

Legalisation of marriage occurs only for practical considerations, related to certain legal benefits or to obtain the child's papers more easily.

Motivations for a legalised relationship

"I have a 26-year old son and I got married when he was 3. I gave birth to my child and when I saw that the mayor's office won't give him his birth certificate, when I got out of childbed, I got married. " (Bălțești, women over 35)

"Nowadays we wed, more than before, because we might need papers from the mayor's office." (Bălțești, women over 35)

"I've been with this man for 7 years now and we got married only 3-4 months ago... a sister-in-law of mine has been with a man for over 10 years now ... It's not necessary to get married when you start living together. You only get the papers if you must. "(Patrauti, women under 35)

Family quarrels are often considered a given: *"Come on, don't tell me they don't get along! They will, in time. Nowadays, you have to get along. "* (Sărulești, women over 35). Problems, sometimes even domestic violence are seen as inherent in couple relationships and in family life. They are not a major source of dissatisfaction. The reasons for disagreements are, invariably, financial difficulties.

Reasons for family disagreements

"Poverty. If you don't have anything to eat, if you don't have money, you don't have anything." (Bălțești, women over 35)

"Shortcomings, for example when I get paid and my wife spends it all, this is a reason for a quarrel, why was this so and not the other, why did you buy this the other day and today you have not and so on." (Kuncz, men under 35)

"For 90 percent of the families, shortcomings are the main reason. There are families where people fight because of the food on the table, for years and years." (Kuncz, women over 35)

The responsibility of conciliation rests particularly with the woman. Her role is to attain family harmony. The expressive function of women, according to the traditional model, also illustrates her lower status in the family and in the community: *"When they are fighting, the woman should yield. He must be the man ... and the woman should shut up ... the woman has to be obedient... and the man has a superior position."* (Verești, women under 35)

Marriage is a covenant for life for the Roma. In rural communities, both traditional and non-traditional, there are no divorces, unless the woman is unfaithful. In urban areas, divorce seems to be better tolerated, as far as attitudes go, but is also very rare.

Divorce in rural communities

"No matter how things are, here, they don't separate. Not for us, the „căldărari". In this tradition, ours, there is no such thing as a divorce." (Verești, men under 35)

"When God wants it, when he dies, that's it! If he's a gimp, he will remain a gimp, if she's one-eyed, she'll always be one-eyed. Things like these don't change." (Verești, men over 35)

"If they argue, he gets out and goes to the gate, and then he comes back. He leaves for an hour or two, then he comes back. Two people separate only if she runs away with another man. That's how things are with us Gypsies, since forever". (Sărulești, women under 35)

"They fight, but they don't separate. We leave the house...that's what happens when you're angry...and then it passes." (Patrauti, women under 35)

"There aren't very many alternatives, for example if I marry her, if I took her away or if we ran away together, even if after two months we don't really get along, we don't have many alternatives, I can't – say - leave her and run away with another ... this is a small community, and people are like they are... how should I put it, you've chosen your horses for your cart, and that's what you end up with ... " (Bălțești men under 35)

In traditional non-urban communities there is a major difference in attitude towards divorce between men and women. Men have the same conservative view on marriage, as being a covenant for life *"During the first years you give her a break, but after that you take her back and you keep her until you're old and gray." (Kuncz men under 35)*

Women, however, show a tolerant attitude. In their opinion, a lack of love and understanding between partners or serious situations and abusive behaviour warrant separation. Acceptance of divorce is still more at a declarative level. Although they often mentioned the existence of problems such as alcohol consumption, infidelity or violence in their families, issues that would justify separation, none of them decided to separate from

their husbands. In reality, it's the men that leave the family, if they do it. A quite frequent situation is that of the mother having several children with different men. After separation, the biological father of the children loses his natural rights and no longer has obligations towards his natural children. His role is taken over by the new husband, who becomes their only father.

Women's tolerance towards divorce, in urban communities

"Of course separation is not a good thing, but in some cases the man and the woman can't get along, and they break up. The man, sometimes the woman, but in many cases both of them decide to do it." (Kuncz, women over 35)

"If they don't get along at all... don't torment yourself...they should divorce." (Cluj, women over 35)

"I realised he won't come back and he won't do his job, he was a drunk and a rover, I tried to have a life with someone else. That didn't work out either, I got pregnant twice and he also left. that's how it goes, they chase around other women... . " Women don't have time for this. "(Cluj, women over 35)

In all the investigated communities, the only unanimously accepted reason for divorce is the infidelity of the wife. The husband's infidelity is accepted, it is even considered to be one of the very attributes of his masculinity.

The wife's infidelity - the only grounds for divorce

"Here the things are different, the only rule is that the woman should not go with other men." (Bălțești, women over 35)

"Here, if a woman makes this mistake, it's goodbye."

But what if men make this mistake?

„Well, it's different when a man cheats on a woman... if the hat is dirty, I pick it up, I shake it a bit and I put it back on...but if she does it...it's a great shame. " "(Kuncz men under 35)

"Let's say the wife discovers that her husband is cheating on her... For 3 or 4 days, you don't speak to each other, then she starts: here, she empties her plate on your head, there she doesn't give you anything to eat, you don't get any cake...and then things come back to normal." (Kuncz men under 35)

Children are a source of solidarity. Despite family problems, they are the reason why partners feel that they should stay together, as an additional indicator of the traditional mentality.

Children – a source of solidarity in the family

"Maybe they would like to separate, but if they have children, they would be crazy to leave."(Bălțești, women over 35)

"I see my mother, how many things she takes from my dad. At a certain point, they wanted to separate, but mom didn't leave because of us, the kids, she said <I want my family to stay together>. (Cluj, women under 35)

Reproductive behaviour

As for reproductive behaviour, there is one major difference between communities. In traditional communities, the families have many children, usually at least 5-6, some reaching up to 10-12 children. In the non-traditional rural communities, the number of children in families tends to be smaller, usually under 5 children. In the urban communities, families often have 2-3 children. The number of children in the family is in fact an indicator of the community type.

As far as the ideal number of children is concerned, the same difference appears. In the traditional families, the desired number of children is the natural one, "as God wills", while in the others, it tends to limit at 2 children (in urban communities) to 3-4 children (in rural communities). However, we cannot say that there is unanimous agreement regarding this aspect. Some participants from traditional communities, particularly women, supported a limited number of children in the family. At the same time, in some non-traditional communities, both from rural and urban areas, there were participants who supported the idea of a large family.

In all group discussions, the ideal number of children was debated in terms of support possibilities. There were two opposing currents of opinion: one that supported the idea of a large number of children, based on the principle that "their numbers increase, but you don't even notice it", while the other tends to restrict the number of children, favouring quality and the investment in their future. The first position was supported especially in traditional and rural communities, especially by representatives of the older generations and by the men, while the second was supported mostly in urban communities, by women and by representatives of younger generations.

The ideal number of children for a family

"It depends on how much a man can work, on the possibilities... to tell the truth, I had 13 children, and another two, three on the side...It depends on the possibilities, it's true. "(Bălțești, men over 35)

"Well, you can have as many as you can support. I would raise even twelve, for instance. They would have food on the table, just like it was for me, we were 15 children and our parents raised us as they could." (Patrauti men under 35)

"It's good to have many kids...We're at peace, because we know we have someone to leave our possessions and our houses to..."(Verești, women under 35)

"Now the times are harder ... we don't need that many... 2 or 3 is enough ...raising kids is hard. " "(Patrauti, women under 35)

"I'd say two. That would be alright. Too many children make life very difficult." (Cluj, women over 35).

"I like the idea of a big family. But I'm afraid I can't have that many. "(Cluj, women under 35)

"Two. You can have more, but you have to have the means to raise them." (Kuncz, women under 35)

"If we agree, we have one or two. Accidentally, another one might come along. However, from the third one on, it's not an accident anymore, it's not sensible. Well, now you have the possibility to prevent pregnancy, they shouldn't have that many an accident." (Kuncz, women over 35)

Women, and especially younger generations, seem to have a changing attitude towards fertility. A large number of children is often viewed negatively, especially in non-traditional communities. The large number of children was mentioned as an obstacle to personal fulfilment: *"Precisely because of this, the family (a family with many children) remained like this, somehow separated from the rest. It's because this older guy had a bunch of kids, and the family stalled. Kids grew up, and when they set out to start something, each kid went about his or her life, and they remained poor, and he kept on having even more children, and the family got even larger, and now they don't have any food to put on the table."* (Kuncz, men over 35)

Generally, boys are preferred, even in urban communities, because there is a belief that girls are more difficult to raise, they need more care. According to the traditional rule, a girl leaves the family home and goes to live with her husband, and therefore girls are regarded as a bad investment or as a loss for the family. *"Boys are better. With a girl you have to be a lot more careful."* (Cluj, women over 35). *"Boys are more helpful. The girls leave. You have the girl, you raise her and then someone comes and takes her away. The boy remains there with you, he won't leave you to die. But the girls go away."* (Sărulești, women under 35)

The age deemed appropriate for child birth is, as is the case with marriage, much higher than actual age. Marriage and the first child occur at the same time, in general, and therefore the first childbirth for women takes place at the age of 16-18 or before. .

In all the group discussions, all the participants agreed that it is not good to have children too early, despite personal example. We notice the same gap between the speech, the reported attitudes and the actual behaviour, as in all the investigated aspects: age at marriage, at childbirth, number of children, contraceptive behaviour, etc.

Rural communities support the idea of childbirth at an earlier age (18 years old), for reasons biological in nature (the woman is more fertile, childbirth is not as traumatic, the risks for children aren't that high, etc.). In traditional non-urban communities, the majority believes that the woman should be over 20 years of age, however not too late, because of the same biological reasons.

In all the communities, there was a relative consensus among women as to the age limit for childbirth (25-30 years), after which they should stop reproduction. For men, there is no age limit. In their case, the decision to have (more) children is related to the support possibilities, rather than age.

The appropriate age for having children, in women

"After 20. At 23, 24, but anyway after 20." (Kuncz, women under 35)

*"You must not be very young either. From 21 to 30, that's the right age to have children."
(Cluj, women over 35)*

"Up to the age of 30. Women should have at least one child at 29, we know that after 30, children could have problems." (Cluj, women under 35)

Most women in non-traditional communities mention that, after early childbirth, they experience a sense of loss of the best time of their life, the opportunity to have fun. They regret that they had children too early, especially the women over 35, including women belonging to traditional communities; this topic was present in all discussions of the group. *"That's when life is at its best, why should you have a child? I was young when I had my child and it was not well, you should have kids later. You still want to have fun, you want to go out."* (Kuncz, women under 35)

As with the age at marriage, for men the right age for having children tends to be higher, around 25 years. Again, age is related to his traditional role - supporting his family and leading it. It should be noted that delaying the moment when one should have children is discussed and even accepted in traditional communities such as Verești, for instance, especially by men. The changing attitude towards reproduction among men, even if it isn't necessarily a dominant phenomenon, may be one of the main catalysts of change, in the family life of Roma communities.

The appropriate age for having children, in men

"When he has a job, when he has the means to support your family, at 25 years of age." (Cluj, women over 35)

"When one is able to work ... Us men, from 25 years on, we begin to smarten up..." (Bălțești men over 35)

"It is better for them to wait, to have a house, an income and only afterwards to have children. But here the situation is different, first we had the kid, then the home, and then the entire household...you have to think things through, first you must have a place to live, a better life ... But if you don't have enough resources, you raised another child like anyone else's here..." (Bălțești men under 35)

If a family has problems, they don't have a good house, if they don't have the means, children must come later. If there are reasons, it can be delayed. If there are good reasons, I've seen things like these get postponed." (Verești men under 35)

The use of contraceptives is an important differentiation between communities. In traditional communities – Sărulești, Verești - modern contraception is not accepted and probably not practiced. As many members of the community are followers of neo-protestant Evangelical churches, the traditional community rule is reinforced by the religious rule.

Interestingly, in the community of Patrauti, elderly women vehemently deny the use of modern contraceptives, while women of younger generations accept and acknowledge the practice. Moreover, the authority of men, in this respect, is often challenged on the grounds that he won't manage to support his family.

Contraception in the Patrauti community

"Anything, be it abortion or using protection, it's the same thing...it's still a sin...it shouldn't be done...most of them are reformed ... some are Christians, Pentecostals, Adventists and we don't have abortions." (Patrauti, women over 35)

"There are ways... Injections every three months, pills. And where do you have the injections? At the clinic.

And the men agree with that?

„Why shouldn't they ... do they have a say in the matter?

If they worked ... (Patrauti, women under 35)

"I've seen many, lost of girls getting their injection ... some of them were there to get an abortion, some of them the injections ... "(Patrauti, women under 35)

As indicated by the appropriate age for having children, the reproductive behaviour, in traditional communities, ends at to the age of 30. As it starts very early, the number of children is high – 5 or 6 children. Subsequently, women are likely to use contraception, although acknowledging this is more difficult. Some state that they don't get pregnant – „it's what God wanted, he gave me this many". Others, although initially denying the existence of contraceptive behaviour in the community, eventually manage to give examples that indicate proper information about contraceptives.

Contraception in traditional communities

"After that you no longer have kids. If the kids are grown up, then you no longer have kids. One has daughters-in-law, he kids are all grown up, it's not the proper thing to do. Being so old and having kids? " (Sărulești, women over 35)

"Here, if you have kids after 40, it's a thing that brings great shame ... you already have married girls and boys ... and to have children... it's a shameful thing. " (Verești, women under 35)

"They took them here too (contraceptives). But they don't know how to take them, they didn't go to school. They didn't take them properly and they still got pregnant." (Verești, women under 35)

"I can't have any more children, I have a daughter, she's 10 now and I can't have kids anymore, this is how things are for me."

"There are women who go to Bucharest, they have an abortion and then they come home."

"I take the pill."

"I said I no longer wanted kids, so I had my tubes tied, and won't have any." (Sărulești, women under 35)

Even in the traditional communities the difference in reproductive behaviour, compared to older generations, is acknowledged. Participants believe that in the past, families had more children because of better material opportunities, but also due to the lack of modern contraceptives. *"They had more food to put on the table back then. They had more money.*

And there was no abortion, like nowadays ... you did not know what to do. People had as many kids as they could." (Sărulești, women under 35)

In non-traditional communities and in rural and urban communities, women support contraception, although at first sight, it doesn't seem to be a widespread behaviour in the community. In fact, in every group discussion, women admitted that either they or their daughters had used contraception. In this case, as well as in the cases mentioned before, there are differences between generations: older generations couples have significantly more children and have practiced contraception to a lesser extent, due to the community rules. But even among them, the majority accepts that in recent years the situation has changed. Most of the participants mention that with time they have learned to protect themselves by various means, used both for themselves and for their daughters: contraceptive pills, injections (every 3 months, as a contraceptive), IUDs and, in many cases, even having their tubes tied. There were cases of girls under 20 who had children and who opted to have their tubes tied after the last childbirth, in order to avoid getting pregnant again. Especially in the urban communities of Cluj and Timisoara, women have demonstrated a good knowledge of various aspects of contraception. They are well informed on the effects of contraceptives, a sign that they have used and even debated these issues. So these communities demonstrate opening to reproduction control and to a limited number of children in the family.

Contraception in non-traditional communities

Practices:

- *"I had injections until I had my kids... also, there are pills... even abortions" (Bălțești, women over 35)*
- *„There are women who have injections, Pap smears, there are those who take contraceptives, who have IUDs, or who tie their tubes." (Cluj, women over 35)*
- *"I told my daughter to put in an IUD. Three or four months ago she turned 21. If she wants another child, she should have it." (Cluj, women over 35)*

Knowledge:

- *„The injections are not good, she has headaches, she's all nervous ... They make you all bloated, you swell up and you have headaches. The most appropriate method is the IUD... You don't get side effects, you don't get fat, you're not bothered by it."(Cluj, women over 35).*
- *"But with these pills ... you put weight on. I went to see this gynaecologist, he explained what and how to do. And that I have to get an IUD. But when he explained the risks, I gave up. I told him that the only solution, the easiest, is the condom."(Kuncz, women under 35)*

Roma women of non-traditional communities are aware of the negative effects of early marriages and early childbirths. Urban communities were provided with highly relevant cultural explanations. The differences between the Romanian majority population and the Roma were discussed, as well as the negative impact of the early marriage and childbirth on the situation of Roma women. The lack of contraceptive use, explained by the lack of education, is seen as a key element leading to the vicious cycle of domestic duties that engulfs them early on. In non-traditional communities, the role of education in creating more opportunities is also considered even by women of older generations and by men.

Cultural explanations for the inferior position of Roma women

"We don't use (contraception), that's why Gypsies have so many children. The truth is that they too are weak in the head, they say that they receive allowance for each child. There are even women like this, weak in the head, who will not accept that they can do it differently. I know a family who received a letter in the mail, they had the possibility to have IUDs put in, for the entire family, for free. And they don't go to have the IUDs, they don't go to the doctor. They won't go. Because they are weak in the head. They didn't go to school. " Kuncz, women over 35)

"For the Romanian girls it's different. they know what's best for them. Not like in our case, having 3 or 4 kids at the age of 15. The Romanian girls do it differently, they calculate, they go to school, they protect themselves, and if it happens, they go and <have an abortion, my parents don't know it>. They're smart, not like ours. "(Cluj, women over 35)

"Here, in the Roma community, at 13-14 years of age, they already had children. Romanian girls finish school, they go to high school, finish it, then they go to college, again, they do their business, but for us it's not like that! Here they don't go to school, they don't finish it...Roma girls are backward in this sense. "(Cluj, women over 35).

Only men from urban communities have acknowledged the use of contraceptives in the community and talked openly about this subject. They agree in principle with the use of contraceptives. The method that was frequently mentioned was "guarding oneself" or abortion. The decision to keep the child or not belongs to the man, or at least so they say.

In traditional or non-traditional rural communities, even if they accept that some families don't have children or that even their family, at a certain point, will not have children, the explanations given are related to the women's infertility or to abstinence.

Contraception viewed by men from rural communities

"They just won't have children anymore. They stop. Here there is no contraception. "(Bălțești men under 35)

"Me and my wife, we don't have children not because we don't want them, but because we can't have any, who wouldn't want children? I think there are young girls who try to prevent it, who run around, there are girls who don't want to have kids. Here most families have 5, 6 children. The Romanians do this stuff (contraception), but Roma are not accustomed to these things. "(Patrauti men under 35)

What happens when people have more children and don't want children anymore? What do they use?

„That, we don't know. We don't mess with other people's families.

He doesn't go to bed with his wife anymore. To got o bed with your wife is one thing, to sleep with her is another.

All together: *„They do it somehow, who knows ... " (Verești men under 35)*

Satisfaction with family life

Family and children are the main aspects of life that make Roma happy. As for conditions, money and health come undoubtedly first, as far as importance goes. A happy man has everything he needs. A full life is a carefree life.

Having everything one needs has material connotations, particularly. They believe that money is the means by which all other things can be achieved, who has money has all he needs, even a harmonious family life. Success in life is set according to some material references, such as a house, utilities, all the necessary facilities and a car.

To conclude, we can say that for the studied Roma communities, happiness depends on fulfilling some basic needs. Simplifying, money is a requirement for happiness.

Requirements for a happy life

"You have to have everything you need in a home, you have to have the required conditions. Children must go to school, they must be appropriately supported, they must be good children. "(Cluj, women over 35)

" Good health. To have support, to have no cares for tomorrow, to manage as best as I can, that doesn't mean having a palace to live in. "(Cluj, women under 35)

"A happy man should have a house, money, good health, and harmony." (Bălțești, women over 35)

"A happy woman has a good relationship with her husband, a job to make do. A united family, children. Everybody must have everything they need. A house. One must have everything one needs, no shortcomings. If one wants something and doesn't get it, he is not happy. "(Kuncz, women under 35)

„If I'm in good health, but I don't have money? Well then, I want money. In fact, all the problems come from money. When you don't have money, the fighting begins, then all the problems. You must have money! "(Kuncz, women over 35)

Happiness depends sometimes on higher needs, spiritual in nature.

"Having a dream come true. Having love in your life... (Cluj, women under 35, higher level of education)

"I don't want money, but I want, as much as I can have... "(Kuncz, men over 35)

Among the issues that define a happy family the participants mentioned love, communication, understanding, mutual trust and especially children who are *"the purpose for which we fight to get by."* Family happiness and personal happiness depend on material success, such as those mentioned above. In all the group discussions, the participants held to the view that the reasons that most often generate fight or family problems are invariably linked to material resources and living conditions. Also, vices of men were mentioned (alcohol, violence, infidelity) as the source of complaints made by women.

A happy family

"It must be united. Children, parents, they all must live in harmony, with good communication, with love." (Cluj, women under 35)

"A happy family? Do you want to see one? Come over to my place and see for yourself! Come see the little ones, how they romp. That means that they are well fed and you don't have to worry about them, they're healthy. "(Kuncz, men over 35)

"If you have peace at home, you shouldn't bother about the rest, we eat what we can afford, we work as best we can, compared to others, we're alright." (Patrauti men under 35)

A happy family must have 2 or 3 children, a source of income, money and they must know how to get along and to have an honest relationship to each other. "(Verești men under 35)

Gender roles

In all the communities we investigated, the women's status is one of inferiority; the man is always „a little bit above the woman." (Sărulești, men over 35). Everywhere there is a consensus regarding this aspect, and women accept this as a given. That is the nature of things and it should be accepted as such, regardless of the age of those with whom we talked.

The status of women in the Roma communities

„He must be a man ... and the woman should not open her mouth... the woman must bow her head...and the man must be above her."

„The man should not be lead by the woman...it's not like it should be. It's a shame. The bible says so, as well... "(Verești, women under 35)

„The man....well, the man leads, he's the „rooster" in the house, so to speak, and the woman does what she's told ..."

"The man is a bit above [the woman]..." (Sărulești, men over 35)

This position of women in the social hierarchy is indicated both by their non-participation in decision-making, in the household, and by the marked preference for male children. Both men and women have expressed this preference, the reasons given was that the girl leaves home, whereas the boy stays and helps the parents later on. In fact this marks the inferior status of women, the presence of female children in the household is not always considered a blessing for the family.. The status of girls in the family represents the basis for the lack of investment in their education, which further perpetuates inequality in younger generations.

Attitudes towards female children

"It goes way back, we want boys more than girls. Girls leave home to go to their husbands, but boys stay by your side. " (Bălțești, women under 35).

"Because to us, at any time, boys come first. The family loves boys more than girls, the family helps boys more, while the girls are instructed to sweep, to do the dishes, to cook, to become a good housewife. "(Verești, men under 35)

The inferior status of women is marked by the intervention of the community, and especially of the woman's husband, in their choice of clothing. Rules on how women should dress are very strict, even in non-traditional communities. According to these rules, women must dress in a decent fashion, with long skirts, so that a stranger would not be able to see their legs or other body parts, for example their backs. Moral rules are very restrictive in terms of female fidelity, and any deviation is severely punished by the husband or by the community, indecent clothes being a sign of infidelity. However, rules do not apply evenly to men, and there are no similar restrictions for men. They can dress as they wish, women have no power to intervene here.

Clothing rules for women

"She is not allowed to come before her brothers or brothers-in-law like this , with the shirt unbuttoned, with a short skirt, a bare back, that is not allowed. I mean with that, with dressing this summarily, I do not like it and I don't allow her to wear such clothes.

Moderator: But does she impose clothing rules for you?

No.

Moderator: So here the only one who decides is you?

Yes, at first I mean, at first, now she knows it as well, and she doesn't want to wear things like that as well. She doesn't wear such things. She got used to the idea this is the only way she can dress, she's not allowed to wear mini skirts or shorts outside, no way."(Timisoara, men under 35)

Basically, the two sexes have different competences, as in the domestic life there is a clear demarcation of gender roles in the family. The woman is responsible for all things related to domestic life, while the man acts and works in the public space and responsible for the interaction with the external world. This mechanism should ensure a balance of power in the family, the woman having a say in domestic matters and the man in those related to the outside world. However, things are different in most cases. In all the investigated communities, women make decisions regarding unimportant things, like shopping at the market, issues related to children's school, but when it comes to decisions with a greater degree of importance, the decision is taken by the man in traditional communities (Verești, Sărulești) or by mutual agreement, in non-traditional communities.

Decision-making in traditional communities

"I know that the first decision is taken by the man."

You all agree, the wife should be asked as well?

In my house, if she doesn't obey, I punch her twice in the mouth and that's it. For us, for a man to beat up a woman - that's also a tradition . "(Verești, men under 35ani)

Moderator: In your house, who takes the decisions?

The man. The man. He's the head of the family.

Moderator: „And if she doesn't agree?

[all together]: *No way, there's no way she wouldn't agree!" (Verești, men over 35)*

"The man, he must eat, he must have a place to stay. If he wants to...If he doesn't...He asks you who is the master of the house, who isn't ... you can bring millions, if he doesn't bring anything, you can't buy anything. " (Sărulești, women under 35)

"We don't buy important things. "(Verești, women under 35)

Moderator: Who decides in your family?

"Especially the elders. He who has no prosperity, at least has advice ... do that thing, do the other...that's how it works! Without wanting to offend, but if he has a girl and her husband in the same house, the mother-in-law, the father-in-law and the husband also have a say in the matter. The man is the man, he's the boss! "(Sărulești, women under 35)

In traditional communities, the decision belongs mainly to men, and women do not believe they should intervene in any way. Sometimes, in-laws are also involved in decision making in young families, somewhat justified by the power play between the family of the in-laws and the young couple. By contrast, in non-traditional communities, both men and women tend to assert that decisions are made by mutual agreement. The issue is rather one of social controversy, because in general a consensus was reached among participants in this regard.

Decision-making in the couple, in non-traditional communities

„Both ... They talk, they seek each other's advice ... how to do things, what must be done, that's why they are together, right? Both. A job cannot be done separately, they must do it together, properly. "(Patrauti, women over 35)

„Both of them. This is how it works here, both of them. "(Timisoara, women over 35)"

„Sometimes they talk to see if it's possible or not, whether to reconcile or not to buy this or the other thing, it's not that I stop or anything, that she says that she wants furniture and I say no, we see what we can do, if we afford it, if we can reach an agreement. "(Timisoara, men under 35)

Another issue that stirred controversy in non-traditional communities, but enjoys a consensus in the traditional consensus, is maintaining and managing the family budget. The traditional rule states that women are the ones who manage the family budget, even if the man is considered to be the main provider of the family and he is taking important decisions related to the allocation of the budget resources (buying durable goods, potential investments). The justification offered is that women are more sensible, they stay at home and they spend money more wisely, while men would spend it on drinks and other temptations. They know what is best for their home, while the man is more spendthrift. Actually, this budget management method masks a different power play within the family. Apparently, women have no power to decide, they have a status of inferiority that prevents them from having an open opinion in the family. However, there are several mechanisms by

which they participate indirectly in the decision and due to which they have a certain amount of power in the relationship with their husbands. As they hold on to the joint finances of the couple, there may be no expenditure without their knowledge thereof, they somehow control what happens in the household even though, apparently, they are not allowed to have an opinion.

Who manages the family budget - traditional communities

"Well, as much as we have, 200 thousand, 300, 500 thousand, she's the one to hold onto them, because if I kept it, I would spend it all on drink, and kids wouldn't have any food... "

"Even if I can go to the pub and have a beer or something stronger, what does she say? You can't, we don't have any money left." (Sărulești, men over 35)

"She stays at home, she knows all the problems and she is taking care of them. We bring the money and we give it to her. The man must earn the money." (Verești men under 35)

"Us, the women. I keep the money, not him, he's the man?! "

"The money stays with me, but he decides what to do with it."

"I keep it, if it were him...if he sees money, he says <let's go grab a beer> and he spends it. This is good for them, as well." (Sărulești, women under 35)

The relationship changes in the case of non-traditional communities, where there is a consensus among participants in group discussions, regarding the member of the family in charge of the budget. The apparently accepted rule is that money should be kept by the wife, but some group discussions revealed the fact that, where women can actively participate in the labour market, such as in Cluj, Timisoara and Patrauti, the money is no longer exclusively managed by women. In these cases, a controversy arises in the community and a series of alterations occur in the traditional model: she takes the money, but the man retains a daily amount to cover his needs, the money is shared equally and each manages their own money. Active participation in the labour market changes the *pattern* of family relations; women have, in this context, a greater degree of independence. They earn their own money, sometimes being the only income providers in the family, and then, they cannot manage alone the budget of the entire family, without disturbing the balance of gender relations in the household.

Who manages the family budget - non-traditional communities

"The woman."

„Both, the man and woman."

"Yes, it's better if it's the woman, she knows better what is needed in the house."

"We put the money in one place ... when he needs money, he comes and says that he needs it ... when I need it, I take some...we don't keep it separately. "

"I keep the money in my purse."

"Yes, he agrees. the household is my thing....it's nice, because I'm the one to run the household...he's the head of the family..."(Patrauti, women over 35)

"For us, it's separate, each one with his/her money. " "

"She keeps the money."

"Here, it's the woman, that's how it's done."

"I come to the store and she says what she wants to buy. "(Timisoara, women over 35)

"I give an example, my wife has a job, so the money is at hand, in the house, all the money , if she wants to buy herself something, she won't ask permission from me, if she doesn't exceed some limits...she knows how money is earned. And if she wants something and she sees the price tag, it's 500, well, it's kind of expensive."(Timisoara, men 35)

Household chores are also clearly separated, women are those who must deal with the household and the children, while men are responsible for the yard and all things related to working out in the garden, outside the house. Thus, women cook, shop for food, do the cleaning and take care of children and men bring water, firewood, they clean the yard and take care of animals. The clear distinction between what a woman and a man have to do, in the household, also applies to non-traditional communities, both rural and urban. It should be noted that in the urban environment domestic work carried out by men outside the home no longer exists, and as such there is an imbalance between the chores performed at home by both sexes. However, all the participants in the group interviews reported that domestic work should be carried out exclusively by women.

It should be emphasised that, in this respect, even educated young Roma share a traditional gender ideology and regard the gender division of domestic labour as natural. However, the involvement of women in the labour market and financial dependence of men on their spouses tends to change the allocation of domestic labour. Some young men who participated in the discussion group from Timisoara clearly state that they help their partners with chores and housework if their spouses are at work, and they stay at home. It seems that participation in the labour market lead to changes in the traditional *pattern* and to a different allocation of household work depending also on the time available for spouses, not only in terms of gender ideology.

Who is responsible for domestic work

"Together, when we have to clean up. The wife cleans the house, I clean the yard. "(Patrauti, men over 35)

"Women at home, minding their pots ... That's how it goes ..." (Sărulești, men over 35)

„If he doesn't help his wife, he's not a man. Look, for example, his father cooks."

„In my case as well, my dad knew how to cook, it's better like this. "(Timisoara, men over 35)

I mean this, the cooking, taking care of the children?

"Oh, that's the woman's job, I cook when she's, say, sick and has to stay in bed, when she can't cook. "

"I like to cook, I cook anything ...For example, my wife works night shifts and she gets home at 8 and she has to sleep ... that's the least I can do, cooking, doing the dishes, you have to."

"I like to cook... three quarters of our parents, they cook."

"When it comes to cooking, he helps his wife. Also, when it comes to doing the dishes..." (Timișoara, men under 35)

"There are men who help, there are also those who don't, or they only clean the carpets. Carpets only. "

„And the clothes. And he bathed the children, everything."

„And cooking."

" "Yes, there are men like this, but they are few. They are few, but when it comes to helping you, they do."

"They have to lend a hand. While I was in hospital, who cooked for them and cleaned for them? Things happen, they should get used to it too." (Cluj, women over 35)

Raising children, especially at early ages, is the exclusive attribute of the mothers. The group discussions showed no active involvement of extended family (grandparents, aunts) in childcare. The father begins to have an active role in the children's lives when they grow up, and he especially intervenes in the education of children. The mechanism operates mainly in communities where traditional crafts are still passed on to the children (the manufacture of boilers, bricks) and its purpose is to transmit to the younger generation the father's job. Girls are raised closer to their mothers and learn from them the knowledge necessary to meet the specific role of the woman in the household. Although not very involved in childcare, fathers are considered responsible mainly for monitoring children and for their education.

Who is responsible for the children's education?

"Normally, a woman should see to it ..."

"Well, that would be my wife..."

"... she must take care of the child, because I, as father, I have to work and make money, put food on the table, to provide for my family. "(Bălțești, men under 35)

Moderator: Who is in charge of the children's education?

"Both."

Moderator: It's the same if they are boys or girls?

"Yes. Both parents. "

"We both have to do it, otherwise they would be out of control."

"My wife. She deals with the cooking, with the children. "

"Yes, but the father should take part in this as well."

„Mom. She stays home. Dad goes to work, then comes home, but mostly Mom.” (Patrauti, men over 35)

Women's participation on the labour market

Participation in the household's economic activity is the factor that distinguishes the three types of communities: traditional community, non-traditional rural community and non-traditional urban community. The way in which women engage in the family's income generating activities models and transforms the family relations, the women's status and the division of domestic labour. Apparently, in all three types of communities, women have a status of inferiority, but independent work outside the home and earning their income models the family balance of power in different ways.

Although, according to the traditional pattern of gender roles in families of Roma, the woman is the one taking care of the house and the man earns money for the family, things should be viewed from a much more nuanced perspective. The scope of income generating activities in Roma families often exceeds the boundaries of formal employment, a relatively small number of Roma are employed on a labour card basis.² For this reason it is difficult to define which of the Roma women are active on the labour market and which are not. We will refer rather to women who are economically active, i.e. women who contribute in some way to the economic activity of the household. We will show that the manner in which they engage in the economic life of the household has a decisive influence on their status and opens or closes doors towards a better position, in the family and in society. The participation in the economic activity of the household will be presented separately, by types of communities, emphasising the features identified in each community type separately.

Traditional communities

It should be noted that despite the stereotype that attributed exclusively to the men the role of income providers for the family, women are also present in the economic life of the household, even in traditional communities. In communities such as Sărulești and Verești, women mainly contribute in two ways to the household's income. On the one hand, they

² According to Sorin Căce (2002), between 1990-1998 only 35% of the active Roma population was formally employed, with work card or work permit (Căce, Sorin. 2002. „Crafts and occupations of the Roma population in Romania”. In Zamfir Catalin, Preda Marian (coord.) *The Roma from Romania, Bucharest, Expert publishing house*)

perform community work under Law 416, for the welfare allowance. In many cases the persons interviewed perceive this activity as a paid job, as long as those who work for the community receive money for the work performed. On the other hand, women actively contribute to the income generating economic activity of the household, even if this contribution is considered insignificant and often remains uncredited. In Verești and in Sărulești, they contribute both to the production of cauldrons, giving a helping hand to the spouses, in the work that they perform, and to the sale of the manufactured goods, joining their partners in the sale of cauldrons, even if that means moving to another location.

Women's participation in the household's economic activity, in traditional communities

*"I help him sometimes, he can't do the job alone, right?... I bring him water or the spindle..."
„Or with the metal sheets, I help him hit it with the hammer, I polish the cauldrons..." "*

"The paraffin ... it must not spill...And we take it and we move around..." (Verești, women over 35)

"The woman also works, we go and sell cauldrons, we can't let our men work alone, especially with this heat..." (Verești, 35 -)

"Now he's working on the cauldrons, working the metal sheets, the woman roams about and shouts : „Cauldroooooons!". But if the police catches us, they beat us up, they take our cauldrons, they lock us up because we don't have permits, we don't have stamps, we don't have what we need...and they beat us up...we don't know what to do ... we come home crying, they took our stuff away, they took away everything ... "(Verești, women over 35)

"The man does the work, but we help as well." (Sărulești, women under 35)

Moderator: They help the men with the cauldrons?

"Yes ... they help. ... Here and there. They help."

Moderator: How do they help?

"With the hammer ... and when they go through a village, they shout together: Come get the cauldrons!"

Moderator: So she goes with him.

"Yes. If you don't sell anything in this village, you go to another and so on ... Your feet hurt, you get blisters...Your head hurts, your feet as well..."

Moderator: So you go together.

"Yes, we take the metal sheets." (Verești, women under 35)

However, the role of women in domestic production is that of a helper, they will not have any decision-making power in this process. In addition, their participation in the manufacture and in the sale of goods is carried out only in the presence of their husbands and under their strict control. The so-called jealousy of the spouses prevents Roma women to leave home to work, even if they do in the interest of the household. Even if, declaratively, the spouses show that they are willing to allow their wives to work outside the home, in the traditional communities this doesn't happen. The reason they invoke, both women and men, is the lack of employment opportunities, but even if jobs would be available, jealousy would prevent their participation in work outside the home.

Who should earn money in the household?

Traditional communities

"The husband must work and earn money, the woman must take care of the house, of children, she must ensure ... " (Verești men under 35)

"Some work in several areas. Some sell cauldrons, and there they both go and sell them. In a business, when they have to process the metal sheets or something like that, only the husband goes, and he makes all the decisions. "(Verești men under 35)

"No, but the first priority to us is our family. We couldn't both work. Kids must be fed, washed, taken care of ... And I as well, when I come home, I have to find a hot meal waiting on the table." (Verești men under 35)

Moderator: Would you agree to your wives getting a job in another town?

[All together, general uproar] : „No !!!”

"My wife is also working for the welfare allowance. But here, not in another town. "(Verești, men under 35)

"Us women, we don't work to earn money and so the weeks pass and we don't have anything... how could we..." (Verești, women under 35)

A feature of the traditional communities is that the woman engages in the economic activities of the household without that role being acknowledged and without such involvement having positive effects on her status in the family. In these communities, there are defined roles for both sexes, women having to take care of the home and of the domestic activities. Formal involvement in work outside the home is not widespread and they don't even aspire to such a status that is considered unsuitable for them.

Formal labour market participation is affected not only by the existing gender stereotypes in the family ("the woman must take care of the house, the man has to work"), but also by the very low levels of formal education existing in the community. In traditional communities many women, even those under 35, are illiterate, a situation which excludes them from the labour market. In these circumstances, even if they had the opportunity to be employed outside the home, there would be very few jobs available for them. Additionally, the aspirations of women are very low. When they were asked what work a woman could do outside the home, they mentioned jobs like cleaning lady, laundress and sellers.

Non-traditional rural communities

In this type of community, such as those of Patrauti and Bălțești, there is a certain of female participation in paid work outside the home. Work outside the household is recognized and supported at community level, even if women are not necessarily encouraged to go to work. In both communities, in addition to the involvement of women in the work performed to receive the welfare allowance, women work in agriculture and in other households. In Patrauti, the proximity to the city of Suceava provides them with a formal employment opportunity, in some cases. In Bălțești, the habit of working on farms in other regions of the country, practiced in the communist era, has given women work experience outside the household, which continues to influence their position in the household. Moreover, older women regret that period that they recall with nostalgia.

Who should earn money in a household? (non-traditional rural communities)

"The man and the woman." „My wife earns more than I do." "In my house, I'm the one that works. "(Patrauti, men over 35)

Moderator: Who should earn the money in the household?

"The man."

"Of course it's the man... she's a housewife. If she earn something ...well, that's even better. "

"Of course men here go to work ... women too, sometimes... Now there are some companies ... a shoe company, called Denis... they hired people and there are mothers who left some 7 or 8 kids at home and they went to work... the husband works ... "(Patrauti, women under 35)

"By the age of 18 they do time work, or they work without papers, or they weed out the land...they pick potatoes, they work in the corn fields... there's work to be done and we do time work ... They can earn 500 thousand a day, or 600 or 400, and more members of the same family got o work in the field, it's better... Depends on the agreement you have ... "(Patrauti, women over 35)

In both communities, participation on the labour market is hindered, on the one hand, by the lack of jobs available and by the level of schooling, that is rather low in the Roma community. In these cases, female illiteracy is not as widespread as in the traditional communities, but the average education level of adults is limited to primary education. The male jealousy mechanism is present here as well, blocking attempts to get employment outside the home. In the event that there are jobs available outside of town or even in town, village women said that they would be prevented from going to work by their husbands, if they had to commute or if their workplace had too few women and many men employed.

Male jealousy – an obstacle for the participation of women in paid work

"The problem here is that one woman, a Gypsy, can't work in a Romanian institution. If twenty women were working in the same place, that's alright. Because otherwise, if only two or three work in the same place, people start to talk, „hey, you sided with the Romanians, that's it". That's the cause. If 50 or 40 women work in the same place, it's alright. "(Verești men under 35)

"What is that? A man can get jealous."

"It would be nice if she could also find some work, the woman, but ... ' "

„I went to work, but he didn't allow me anymore. He let m ego to work for one week and after seeing how many young boys work there, he told me one day: <that's it, woman, you're not going anymore. >." (Bălțești, women over 35)

The presence of industry job opportunities, as well as the educational stock, slightly higher compared to that of the traditional communities, makes the women aspire to jobs with higher status, such as services (sewing, hairdressing) or in the industry.

Non-traditional urban communities

Although the educational stock does not differ much from that of non-traditional rural communities, the relations within the family are different and the status of women is different, compared to the other two types of communities. Both in Timisoara and in Cluj, women and men have a much richer experience of participation in the labour market, which resulted in a change of gender ideology and making the first steps towards reshaping gender roles in the families, although they are still encumbered by traditional values and behaviours.

It should also be noted that the experience of participation in paid work does not mean, in all cases, that they have all the papers required to work legally and to enjoy the rights associated with such employment. Also, work experience does not translate to full-time employment and over a longer period of time. From the statements of the participants in the focus groups, work outside the household often meant employment in unskilled jobs,

with no contract or labour card, usually for short periods. However, the effect on gender roles is significant, being reflected in the financial independence of women, who are sometimes the only income providers, in a higher decision-making power of women in matters of family life and more in an egalitarian division of domestic labour.

Who should earn money in a household? (non-traditional urban communities)

"Well, yes, I feel kind of inferior to her, because I can't make money. So she earns around 6 million at month, plus meal tickets. Well, I used to earn this in 3 or 4 days."(Timisoara, men under 35)

"Mostly the man, but in my house, it's each one with his money."(Timisoara, women over 35)

"Most among us, they see it, lady, women go to work, not men."

"They don't like it!"

"they don't like working, that's the truth, and women go to work, we go, because we have to."

" They don't like to work."

"We have to raise our children, because if we don't, they starve. It's better for a boy, when he completes his military service, to go to work to support his family. "(Cluj, women over 35)

"I say we should all work, both women and men. We should both work. I wouldn't like to stay home. "(Timisoara, women under 35)

„And I said to my husband. He didn't force me to go - I wanted to go. He told me not to go, but I went. What to do at home? Some extra money is a good thing. We have lots of expenses, we have to pay the instalments to the bank, taxes, electricity, cable." (Timisoara, women under 35)

In these communities, the participation of women in paid work is not usually called into question, but is an accepted fact by women and men alike. It seems that the urban environment breaks the closed circle of traditional gender relations and change attitudes towards the participation of the Roma women on the labour market. The need to get a second source of income, in families affected by poverty, combined with the declining traditional community control over the *pattern* of family interaction, are the foundations of this change. It should be noted that although female employment is widely accepted, it does not translate into a similar transformation of gender roles. That is, the family hierarchy is maintained, the allocation of different roles for men and women is still present, but these things become the subject of controversy in the community, which marks the beginning of an attitude change.

Concerning the attitude of women towards participation in paid work, we have to mention two aspects. On the one hand, the level of aspiration related to the workplace that is best for a woman is higher than for other types of communities. Although they mentioned, as an alternative, a maid's job, the participants in the group discussion also mentioned higher status alternatives, such as a secretary's or a teacher's job, the occupation being closely linked to level of education and "to the abilities of each one of us".

Motivation for work of the expressive type for Roma women from the urban environment

"You leave your problems at home."

"You win a penny for the family."

"Yes, you have to do something else."

"You get things off you mind, you relax."

"This is something else, you just... you forget about the house, the kids, the meals... everything."

(Timisoara, women under 35)

"For example, I don't like it, but I got used to it. I haven't worked a day in my life. I've been working for a year and a half now. And now I like it. If I had to go to another factory, I wouldn't go, but I like it here. Otherwise I wouldn't work, I'd stay at home." (Timisoara, women under 35)

The second aspect is related to the type of motivation for work, i.e. the reasons that cause women to go to work. It is interesting that both in the discussions held in Timisoara and in Cluj, the participants say they are going to work because they like it, because they feel comfortable there, because at work they forget about their worries and hardship. In other words, there is a shift from the instrumental motivation of work ("I go to work because I need money"), to a value-related type of motivation ("I go to work because I like what I do and I feel that I am valued"). The change in work motivation shows that these women do not work outside the home only because of material constraints, but because they value the status of employee and the work itself. This demonstrates that they are also motivationally integrated and that they probably wouldn't quit working even if they had enough money to cover their current needs.

Children and childhood

There is a general consensus, among the persons interviewed, about the moment when childhood ends, namely marriage. Although women tend to say that, for them, their children remain children all their lives, childhood ends for the Roma of the six studied communities when a person starts his/her own family. The differences between communities arise in relation to the age when the former children and future adults get married. Thus, in traditional communities childhood ends very soon, because the first marriage takes place at a very young age, when children are under 14 years old. In the case of girls, marriage can occur at 10-12 years of age, when a child can hardly be considered an adult.

When does childhood end?

"When you get married."

"When he gives his best to think like a mature man."

"If he hasn't married yet, he's a child."

"When you get married, they stop calling you <hey, kid!>"

"Boys - by the age of 17-18, and girls by 15-16 years of age."

"When they get married and they have kids, that's when they become women. At 14, 15, she's a woman, but still a child. "

(Verești men under 35)

"Well, it depends on the child when he or she wants to put an end to his/her childhood. For example, if she's in school and she wants to get married, their childhood is as good as ended. When they get married, childhood ends." (Bălțești, women under 35)

"If he/she wants to remain a child, he/she'll wait to reach the age of 15-16. " "

"If she gets married, she's no longer a child." (Sărulești, women under 35)

"When you're married, the others don't see you as a child anymore. When you are married you're considered an adult." (Timisoara, women under 35)

In non-traditional communities, marriage occurs a bit later, usually after the age of 15 -16, even though there are cases of girls who married at 11 years of age. Especially in these communities, women find that early marriage is not good for girls, but say that in most cases girls choose to go away with a boy and the parents can't object. It should be noted that, for the persons who were interviewed, the transition to adulthood has no connection with legal majority, but with the time when the individual can start a family according to the rules of the Roma community.

Education and values transmitted through education

The values that are generally inspired through education to children require obedience and submission to authority, to the parents and to the community. In all discussions of the existing group, there was consensus on the fact that both boys and girls must be obedient, respectful, and compliant. Education should not encourage personal initiative, independence or autonomy. They all have an impact on subsequent family relations, because the younger generation will be subject to community rules and to the wishes of parents, regarding important decisions such as marriage. Also, through education girls learn to obey their parents and husband, and not to doubt the will of either of the two parties. Things are slightly more nuanced in non-traditional communities where girls decide for themselves who to marry, and decisions are usually taken together, by the couple. Nevertheless, the basic values acquired through education do not encourage social change, but rather preserving the existing order.

Values transmitted through education: obedience

"She does the laundry, she doesn't go out with guys... she doesn't roam around..she works...she obeys her mother, when her mother goes away on business, she cleans the house ... " "

"They tell her that she should obey..."

"Yes ... if she doesn't obey her mother, they give her a spanking. "

"Of course... she wants it or not, she has to obey..."(Verești, women over 35)

"He must be compliant, he must work. He must go abroad and bring home money, Euros". (Patrauti, men over 35)

Education generally has a strong effect on modelling family relations and on the way how gender roles are divided. A high level of education is associated with an increased acceptance of gender equality. The educational stock and the access of the Roma children to education has represented before and continues to represent a serious problem of Roma communities. The low educational level and the lack of opportunities to continue education beyond the elementary level is one of the factors leading to the preservation of traditional gender relations in these communities. Beyond educational stock and opportunities to access the school system, the manner in which individuals and communities relate to what school means and to the benefits it brings to children of both sexes. Valuing education is likely to lead, over time, to investments in the education of future generations and to reduce gender inequality.

In traditional communities, the perceived usefulness of formal education is reduced to basic knowledge of writing, reading and calculations. Beyond the advantages to this basic knowledge that helps people handle, minimally, everyday life, going to school is considered

to be useful only for getting the driving license. The people living in these communities do not think that going to school helps you find a better job or lead a better life, because "nobody hires you, because you are Gypsy". The quasi-total lack of formal education prevents them from seeing the benefits schooling can offer. Basically, people in these communities are so far from school and from the educational system, that they can't understand its utility. The situation is made worse by the fact that they live in relatively closed communities in which interactions with the outside world are minimized and there aren't successful examples in terms of benefits to be gained by going to school.

Family education versus school education in traditional communities

"Yes, I agree, he needs to be prepared for life, but it depends, the child takes after his father. Let's say he's a businessman and he carries the child around from the age of 10. And the child learns all the tricks until he's 13, 14, 17, 18 years old, until he gets married. After that, he's got his own family, and he does what he knows best. But if the father is a drunk, the family is like that as well, as the father. It depends on the family..."

"The girls are educated by their mothers."

All together: "The mothers!"

„She has to be a good housewife, she has to cook food, if there's a smaller child in the family, of, say, 9-10 years of age, she must take care of the child..."

And until what age is she allowed to go to school?

"Until the age of marriage, until she marries." (Verești men under 35)

"You know what our parents did with us? We didn't go to school, they gave us a piece of tin, and a little hammer and they said: <here, hit this with the hammer, kiddo>. So they taught us, when we were 3 or 4, to hammer the tin."

And now, you do the same with your children?

"No, no, now when they turn 7, they go to school."

"The children want to have the same job as their father, what his father does, that's what he wants to do. If my Dad sells tin, I go along with him and I sell it too." (Verești men under 35)

So she has to stay home, to be good.

"Yes ... to take care of the house... While she's engaged, she must know how to cook food, to do the laundry, to sew ... like our elders. "

"She must learn how to do many things..."

"When she marries, she moves out, to the house of the boy's parents."

"She doesn't learn this in school...how to cook."(Verești, women under 35)

As for girls, it is believed that school does not provide the skills they need for life, that is they don't learn the things known to be of use to a housewife: cooking, doing the laundry, taking care of the children. It is believed that women don't need to know much more than that, aside from some minimal literacy. This knowledge is however considered necessary for all children and their absence is perceived as a disadvantage in daily life. Thus it is considered that school is especially useful for boys, in order to obtain the driving license, while girls need to go to school only to learn how to read and write.

In non-traditional communities, whether rural or urban, education is seen as an absolutely necessary requirement for success in life, both for boys and girls. Attaining the highest possible level of education is always related to finding a job and succeeding in life. Even if in

some communities the aspiration level is quite low, 10-12 grades being generally the objective aimed at, there is the idea that those who are learn can have a better life and that it is better to send children to school if you want them to lead a better life.

Attitude towards school education in non-traditional communities

"I'd do anything for him to go to school. I'd work hard for it and I'd go sell seeds and all, and I still would send him to school. If he wants to go to school, he should."(Timisoara, women under 35)

"It's hard to put a girl through school in other places... it was a shameful thing ... but you should think that it is an honour to go to school."

Moderator: Why was it a shameful thing?

"That was the concept back then, that girls should stay home. The woman should mind her cooking, she shouldn't go...that's how things were...Now things have changed... " "

Moderator: Were the boys encouraged to go?

"Yes ... the boys were encouraged ... In the community, young people are now interested in having a better life...they went to qualification courses, with Mr. Ciuraru... they learned to take care of the elderly, to take care of crops. "(Patrauti, women over 35)

"Of course ... it is more important than anything, if you don't go to school you don't have a job, you are not qualified ... you can't do anything with your life, everything in life is to have a qualification ... "(Patrauti, women over 35)

Moderator: The girls must go to school?

"Yes, of course!"

"Yes, yes!" [all together]

„What do you mean, no going to school ...My daughter knows more than I do! The more training, the better, let me tell you that! "

"To be a Gypsy and to have a high school education and training, now that's something." (Timisoara, men under 35)

"To go to college. Not to marry so early. Yes! To stop her from marrying as soon as I did. The girl should do what she wants, but she must not marry. She should not marry, for the rest, she can do what she wants."

Moderator: She should never marry?

„No, I meant she should marry after she turns 20. As for the rest, she can do anything." (Timisoara, women under 35)

The main reasons given for the lack of participation are lack of money needed for school supplies, clothing, footwear and food. Therefore it seems that the "Milk and croissant" programme has a positive effect on school participation in these communities. A second reason given for early school abandonment is the discrimination practiced by teachers. This reason is mentioned in traditional and in non-traditional communities, but it seems to be more acute to parents of children living in non-traditional communities, who value school and face practices they perceive as discriminating, when they try to send their children to school.

Perceived discrimination in the education system³

"Children should be accepted in the school, they should be treated by the teachers like every other kid, these differences should disappear, whether we are wrong or not. This is what I think. This big difference should no longer exist. "

"The teachers distinguish between children. A lot. The Romanian children sit in the front of the class, and ours in the back. They don't see the children, they don't check them. When they come to their seats, the teacher turns around, she doesn't care. " (non-traditional communities, women under 35)

„They treat them differently in school, as well. <You live on Carpenului, you live in the barracks, in conditions that...>". The children sense it, the ones who are older sense it. And they come home crying, saying <Mum, look what that guy said about me...>. And he says <I won't go back to school>. Sometimes they beat them up, they call them <Gypsy>... Things like that. They treat them differently. " „When they see them, they say <Look, the Gypsy>." They can be as prim and as proper as they come, but the others still know where they come from and how that is. "(Non-traditional communities, women over 35)

Children and work

There is a marked difference between the three types of communities, regarding the involvement of children in work, both domestic and outside the home. While child labor, in traditional communities, is accepted as normal, for the household work in non-traditional urban communities, parents tend to say that a child can't be put to work.

In traditional communities, children working in the household represent a part of the primary socialization process, and it is rather intended as a substitute for formal education done through school. Involving children in domestic work is done from an early age, under 10 years, and is strongly differentiated by gender. Girls begin to help their mother with the housework and the boys stay in the yard with their father, assimilating the basic elements of the craft that they will do later. As noted previously, school is regarded as unnecessary in the assimilation of the skills and abilities necessary to make do later, so that the family must compensate this deficit by helping the children socialise according to the roles that they will perform as adults.

Attitude towards the involvement of children in work, in traditional communities

"For housework, starting at 6-7 years of age..."

Moderator: Do you put your children to work?

[All together]: Yes, but they don't do heavy work! To bring a cup of water. To sweep, to hammer the tin, they can do that...They help Dad, what else have they got to do?

You don't help you father, you don't eat.

It's a traditional craft.

Moderator: And the girls?

Girls handle cleaning, with their mothers.

The food.

They sweep. (Verești, men over 35) "

³ In order to avoid the possibility to identify the actors, we avoided direct reference to the town where the focus group was conducted.

"She cleans, she does the dishes, she is a girl, after all.

If it's a boy, he brings water to the animals.

He goes with the cart through the village.

He draws water from the well, he feeds the animals, he draws a bucket of water from the fountain. "(Sărulești, women under 35)

"Moderator: Do they help you in the household?

Child protection comes and takes us, if we talk about putting children to work ...

No...no... I have an 11-year old girl and she sweeps sometimes, with the broom ... "(Verești, women under 35)

We have no information as to the involvement of children in paid work outside the home, as the participants in the group discussions have avoided the subject, those of Verești stating that they will not talk about the work their children perform, for fear of an investigation of the child protection authorities. This statement suggests that they were faced with situations where some parents were investigated by the authorities regarding this aspect. Additionally, previous studies show that, in the Roma community of Verești, pupils leave school and go with their parents from spring to early autumn, helping them to sell cauldrons⁴. As the border between domestic housework and income generating activity is very fluid in these communities, because the manufacture of cauldrons is carried out at home and the sales are made by the family, it's hard to say where the involvement of children in domestic work ends and where their actual involvement in income generating activities starts. However, regardless of which side of the border we are, children in these communities begin to have responsibilities in the family home at an early age.

Another problem related to child labor, in traditional communities, is related to the young age when parents understand by childhood ends. As the onset of adulthood is related to marriage, that occurs at very young ages in these communities, active involvement of minors in the household economic activity occurs at early ages. Marriage at the age of 10-12 leads to adult status. It is the moment when the girl starts to have the attributes of a spouse, when she does domestic work and provides help to her husband with the manufacture and distribution of cauldrons. After the marriage, a child ceases to be a child, and parents will not feel responsible for his or her involvement in the work, as this is consistent with adult status.

In non-traditional rural communities, things are different. Children help their parents with household chores, but continue to attend school. A study conducted in 2005⁵ reveals that, both in Bălțești and Patrauti, Roma children attend school after the end of primary school. As stated earlier, school is much more valued, and parents are more involved in the relationship with the school and with school life. While there are cases where work at home affects school attendance (Radu Cosmin, 2007), it seems that parents do not rely quite as much on their children in the household.

As in the traditional communities, parents get used to involve children in domestic work, to prepare them for life. This is particularly true for girls, who can't learn in school how to cook, how to do the laundry or how to take care of children. These things are learned in the family and they are a supplement to the education acquired in school. It should be noted however, that they do not replace formal education, as in traditional communities. In addition,

⁴ See Radu, Cerasela. 2007. "Verești" in Voicu, Malina (coord.) *Needs and resources in Roma communities*. Bucharest, Afir publishing house

⁵ Veziu Cosmin. 2007. "Patrauti in Voicu, Malina (coord.) *Needs and resources in Roma communities*, Bucharest, Afir publishing house

marriage takes place later, the adult role is assumed at a somewhat more advanced age, and the actual involvement in work and assuming responsibilities occurs later.

In non-traditional urban communities, the attitude towards the involvement of children in domestic work and employment is in general one of controversy, as evidenced by the discussion group that did not reach consensus on this issue. Some parents claim that a child, especially a girl, should help her parents in their domestic chores, while others consider that a 12-14 years old child should still play with toys and not do work of any kind. The higher interest in formal education and the understanding of the importance it has in acquiring skills minimize, in the eyes of the parents, the role of the family transmission of skills necessary to perform adult roles.

Attitude toward involvement of children in work, in non-traditional communities

"Most say now that if you don't produce, you do not eat. In my case that's not true, and you can never tell me that that's your word, that you bought it. I don't need anything, please go to school and finish it and when you reach the age of ... and you are full of life, come then and thank me. That's it." (Timisoara, men over 35)

"The girls help their mothers, here and there, to do the laundry, to cook the food, to wash a garment, to iron it, household things. "

"I always kicked her out of my kitchen. Until she went to work. When she goes to work she makes do. "(Cluj, women over 35)

"Our girl is 11, you can't put her to work, she still plays with dolls. Grow up?"

And whose fault is that? Yours!

You don't have the heart to do it. I say she goes to school, and that's it ." (Timisoara, women over 35)

There are two factors that shape attitudes towards the involvement of children in work: understanding the role of school education in the transmission of information and in skills training, and the separation from the family economy model in which the family is an economic unit, and all members are involved in the economic activity, regardless of age. Urban life provides other opportunities and Roma living in cities no longer practice traditional crafts passed down from father to son. In this context school education takes on greater importance, while the role of the family in forming the professional skills changes to the element that provides support for school education.

The transition from the model of the family economy to that of urban life shifts the emphasis on education and on the involvement of children in domestic and non-domestic work of the family. It should be noted however that in the investigated urban communities the shift from one model to another is not complete; we are witnessing a process of change in attitudes and behaviours that have not yet crystallized into a single point of view.

Social change and potential involvement

Regardless of the type of community or of the area of residence, there is, among the interviewed Roma, much support for the idea that women have a status of inferiority. This idea is widespread among women and men alike. Women assume that position and do not even think that they should challenge the existing order. The detachment from the traditional community and the participation to paid work outside the home changes the power relations and the position of women in the family, but in these cases women are not thinking to challenge the family hierarchy or to demand greater decision making power. Although in non-traditional communities a transition is made from the family model, in which the power of decision belongs exclusively to man, to one where the partners have relatively equal power and decide together, consulting each other, gender hierarchy persists and being a man automatically gives you a better position in family and in society.

The factors that contribute decisively to the change of family relationships are education and participation in paid work outside the home, even if such participation does not necessarily mean formal employment, "with papers". Here, not only the educational stock and the work experience of women are important, but also those of the man, and probably, in communities with a higher educational stock, there is a greater acceptance of similar roles for both sexes. A first step towards this goal is to increase the educational stock and the involvement in employment. In time, they will lead to a transformation of family relations in Roma communities. Roma women in non-traditional communities are aware of the negative effects of early marriage and early childbirth. In urban communities, highly relevant cultural explanations for the inferior status of women were provided. Early marriage and early pregnancy, explained by lack of education, are considered key elements leading to the vicious cycle of domestic duties in which they are caught early on. In non-traditional communities, the role of education in enlarging opportunities appears even in members of the older generations and in men.

Beyond these factors, there are dynamics of family life even in the Roma communities belonging to the traditional type. Although apparently nothing has changed in traditional Roma families, however, there are visible changes that have occurred in the reproductive behaviour. Although fertility is valued in the Roma culture, and traditionally women are encouraged to have as many children as they can, in recent years things started to change. Although not a subject to be recognized and openly discussed, most Roma women resort to family planning in order to control the number of births. Although the age at first marriage and first childbirth is much lower compared to the majority population, the number of birth has significantly reduced compared with the members of the older generations. The availability of contraceptives and perhaps rational calculation that recalibrated the family size according to available resources led to an important change in the life of Roma families. The only community that does not fit into this *pattern* is that of Verești, where Adventist religion forbids the access of the Roma to family planning methods. Even in this case, however, although cultural norms strongly reject contraception, birth postponement was discussed as a possible option, depending on the family's possibility to support children, especially among men. The Change of attitudes towards reproduction among men, even without necessarily being a dominant phenomenon in traditional communities, may be one of the main drivers of change in the family life of Roma communities.

The overall picture after the discussions with Roma women is an acceptance of the situation and the lack of an explicit desire to change something. However, we showed that family life is exposed to change even in the traditional Roma families. Community attitudes and declared norms are doubled by undeclared practices. The change in community norms and

values is less obvious, but the women's change in attitudes, in key aspects of family life, such as towards contraception (inner values, not declared ones) is the most important resource for broader changes. It is expected to occur gradually under the influence of education and involvement in work.

In the short term, we don't expect an active involvement of large numbers of Roma women in feminist movements or in projects that explicitly aim at changing the status of Roma women. There are two reasons that justify it. Firstly, women accept the situation and do not refer to it as to a problem. Asked about the problems in their community, they did not mention the situation of women or of the family. The discussions indicated the presence of usual problems for the Roma: poor infrastructure, poor housing, lack of identity documents and deeds for the houses and land, lack of jobs and low income levels and discrimination in the education and healthcare systems. This last fact has particularly serious consequences on school attendance of Roma children and indirectly affects the mechanisms that lead to social change in these communities.

Secondly, social activism and social participation of Roma women is very low, the involvement in matters related to public space being rather a task for men. Additionally, group interviews revealed a weak desire to involve the Roma community in general in projects meant to solve problems that their community is facing. In this context, it is unlikely that Roma women want to be actively involved in projects destined for them.

What can be done? (Recommendations)

A strategy focused on improving the status of Roma women in the community wouldn't probably be very effective. Given the cultural specificity of the communities, the option for direct measures of intervention is unlikely to be supported by the population. Given the poverty of communities investigated, the poor living conditions, the measures to support the community's development, to increase the human capital would have, albeit indirectly, a greater influence than specific support for Roma women. Therefore, we have made some general recommendations aimed at the education system, employment, and certain community social welfare services, as well as a series of recommendations customized according to the type of community.

General recommendations

The education system:

- Stimulating the attendance of Roma child in school and preschool education and the establishment of free *after-school* programs in schools attended by Roma children would have a positive impact both on women, and on future generations. As education is the first step in the transformation of gender roles and gender ideology, a more intense involvement of Roma children in education will bring long term changes in the status of Roma women.
- Extending the information sessions, in schools, on the role of education in individual lives and on sexual and family education; development of the family planning units in schools (either non-existent or having limited functionality)
- A campaign against negative stereotypes about Roma among teachers who teach in schools where there are large numbers of Roma pupils.
- Expanding the collaboration between the school and health mediators and the family, particularly with the women, given her crucial role in raising children.

Community services:

- Providing public childcare alternatives, such as day care centres (for all the children in the community, not just Roma) will release (Roma) women of some of the burdens of domestic work and will facilitate involvement in activities outside their households.
- Developing services which may outsource a part of the housework (e.g. hygiene, such as those mentioned in the Kuncz community, where mothers had access, in the kindergarten, to automatic washing machines) can also be a successful service. Moreover, as the communities are usually very poor, the establishment of such services would provide access to modern means of care that would otherwise be inaccessible. In the long term, the access to these facilities and to a modern lifestyle could contribute to a change in the mentalities regarding the traditional role of the women in relation to the household. The main beneficiaries are the children, but the service will have long term implications on women.
- Organising community discussion sessions on family and children (subjects that would not contradict the traditional role of Roma women, their participation would be accepted by the community) in which women can meet and can discuss their problems and their grievances. The focus groups conducted in this research study have played this role in some communities - the knowledge or recognition of problems, the discussion thereof. Discussions of this kind can be effective precisely because they occur between women in the community and are held in terms specific to the community.

Specific recommendations, depending on the type of community

As noted in this report, the situation of the woman varies depending on the type of community in which she is living. Roles in the family acquire various nuances and their involvement in family decisions differ in the three communities identified. For this reason, the solutions to be adopted must be different from one community to another.

- In the *traditional communities*, Roma women have to be involved in activities that take place outside the house, in order to take them out of the circle of domestic dependency and help them to highlight their own personality. As the attempt to involve them in paid work outside the home is expected to be met with resistance from the family, especially from the spouses, an alternative strategy which could have positive effects is their involvement in activities related to educating children, that take place in the school, like parents' circles. Raising and educating children falls within the women's scope of work, so such a project would not contradict the traditional role of Roma women. This is only a first step in a long term project, as it is expected that change in these communities will occur gradually, as the educational capital accumulation increases and the entire community opens up to the exterior.
- In *non-traditional rural communities*, where the women's participation in work outside the home is generally accepted by the community, providing employment opportunities for them in the locality where they reside would be useful for the improvement of the situation of Roma women. For these women, commuting to jobs located in another town is difficult in practice, because they have no one to entrust their household with, and because their husbands forbid them to go to work alone. A project that would result in creating jobs for women, possibly part-time, in non-traditional Roma communities, would affect their position in the family and in the community.
- In *non-traditional urban communities*, where the women's participation in paid work is accepted without reservation, encouraging their participation in the labour market

through measures such as a job market for Roma women should be doubled by providing childcare facilities such as kindergartens and *after school* facilities.

It is hard to believe that the inferior position of the Roma women will change radically with such solutions. Interventions of this kind, adapted to the specificities of Roma communities and the opportunities for their implementation will still have a positive impact in individual cases that will lead, in the long term, to changes in the community.

ⁱ Translator's note: the "căldărari" are craftsmen who manufacture or repair brass cauldrons and other brass items.

ⁱⁱ Translator's note: the "lingurari" are craftsmen who manufacture or sell wooden spoons, mainly, but other wooden objects as well.

ⁱⁱⁱ Chieftain, leader.