



Some important facts about the Hungarian Gypsies

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The Hungarian gypsy population lives in smaller or larger dispersion in every settlement. Their groups have mostly been integrated to the majority Hungarian society but they have their own linguistic, cultural and anthropological characteristics. Beside their ethnic dimensions their social problems, living conditions, level of schooling, their hopeless situation at the labour market have become evident for everybody by now.

Their urbanisation has been continuous since the 70-ies and it has been characteristic. Their migration is typically two-directional, they have moved to the small villages of depressive regions as well as to large industrial towns. As a consequence of the change in the economic structure and the lack of need for unskilled labour the gypsy population forms the slum regions of the country, the ghetto districts of Budapest and the small villages of the disadvantageous regions. The eastern part of the country, especially the zone next to the frontier belongs to this group.

Although there are gypsies living everywhere in the country, the regional distribution is not even. Their proportion is especially high in Northern and Eastern Hungary as well as in the southern parts of Transdanubia, in some areas the proportion is as high as 30-40%. There are several settlements next to the frontier where the proportion is 60-70%.

The colleagues at the Economic Geography Department of Attila József University of Arts and Sciences made a survey at the settlements east of the river Danube in 1997/1998. The data compared to the previous research show the followings.

According to the data of census in 1980 there were 64 thousand people who declared themselves to be gypsies. This number was 143 thousand in 1990.

The most exact answer for the question on the real number of the gypsy population was given by a national representative sociological survey, made in 1993-1994, directed by István Kemény; according to this study the number of the gypsy population was 457 thousand. This data, compared to their previous sociological survey of 1971 that showed 320 thousand gypsy ethnic group, the increase is 43%, that is 4,4% of the whole population. On condition the increase remains the same, the proportion of the gypsy population in 2015 may be 750 thousand people, which is 8%.

According to a questionnaire made at the settlements near the frontier in 1997/1998 in Eastern Hungary the number of the gypsy population there is 53 952. It is 12,22% of the population, which is much above the national average.

The number of live birth among the gypsies was 28,7 thousandth in 1993 that is the proportion of children under 16 is 40%. Taking the whole population of Hungary into consideration, the proportion of those under 16 is only 19%. If we examine the proportion of those over 55, 19% of the whole population belongs to this group, while among the gypsies it is 4,5%.

The age pyramid shows that the gypsy population forms a young society. At the same time it means a population at the periphery concerning the data of schooling and economic characteristics (low schooling, bad living conditions, high proportion of unemployed) and if we want to integrate them we have to improve the schooling of the young population.

Based on Ministry of Education's data of 1992/1993 more than 80% of the gypsies have got 8 classes of primary school qualification which is a great improvement compared to the 26% in 1971. The number of those who finish their elementary school studies over school-age is significantly high even today.

33.6% of the gypsy students enters secondary schools, 90% of them enters vocational secondary schools. Many of them learn a trade that is not needed at the labour market. The situation is even worse because of the high proportion of dropping out; in many cases the reason is the poverty of the gypsy families. The proportion of those with higher education qualification is even worse, it is 0,2% of the gypsies who take a degree.

The colleagues of the Economic Geography Department of Attila József University of Arts and Science made a random test of 3521 people, which is 6,52% of the whole gypsy population next to the frontier on the gypsy population of non-school age; the data of the survey show the followings:

School qualification	number	%
no	806	22,9
1 class	11	0,3
2 classes	14	0,4
3 classes	64	1,9
4 classes	137	3,9
5 classes	100	2,8
6 classes	237	6,7
7 classes	178	5,1
8 classes	1635	46,4
vocational school, special school	267	7,6
secondary grammar school final exam	64	1,8
higher education qualification	8	0,2

The data of school qualification show the hopeless situation of the active age gypsy population in the field of employment. The older generations are almost uneducated, the proportion of those, having no school qualification is extremely high. Maximum 10% of the population has got any chance to find job at the labour market because of the qualification and in some places the economic backwardness of the region makes the situation even worse. The proportion of almost permanently unemployed ones is 80% among the gypsies in many of the settlements. The discrimination in employment decreases their chances as well which is a quite general phenomenon in Hungary.

The data of primary schools concerning the gypsy students according to 1992/1993 M of E survey show a reliable picture of the situation.

It is evident that the proportion of gypsy pupils is especially high in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Nógrád and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties. The number of school pupils in the settlements next to the frontier in eastern Hungary was the following according to the survey of 1997/1998:

	All the pupils Data of KSH	Gypsy pupils Data of JATE Univ. Dep. of Ec. Geogr.
Kindergarten	18 571	3 058
	16,46%	
Primary school	46 331	9 164
	19,77%	
Vocational school	19 976	* 788
	3,94%	
Grammar school	17 998	* 356
Modern school		
	1,97%	
Higher Education	no data	* 31

* the data are not official, given by the self-government

The data of the survey show that the number of gypsy pupils in the primary schools of the 246 settlements next to the frontier in Eastern Hungary exceed the average proportion of all the counties while the data of the secondary schools show a proportion worse than country average. Since in the towns next to the frontier (E.g. Balassagyarmat, Szécsény, Sátoraljaújhely, Berettyóújfalu, Gyula, etc.) the proportion of gypsy pupils in primary school is 7,12% we can estimate a proportion of 60-70% in the small settlements.

Based on these facts it can be stated that these disadvantageous ethnic regions need cultural and linguistic educational models, pedagogical methods as well as socialisation solutions for increasing their chances.

The elaboration of programs for the gypsy children of the settlements next to the frontier would improve the labour market and social conditions of the gypsy population. It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and undoubtedly that of the National Gypsy Minority