



**Project “Identifying and Reducing Prejudices as a Source of Conflict between Roma and Non-Roma Population - Cases of Bulgaria, Italy, Romania and Slovenia Compared” – REDUPRE  
(2011-2013)**

*Presentation of the four target localities in Romania*



Timișoara  
2011

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## Abstract

*The present paper introduces the four localities chosen as focal points for the research which will be conducted in Romania, within the REDUPRE project, and also delves into the main arguments which recommend these as edifying case studies in relation to the overall project goal.*

*For such purpose, the paper begins by providing a statistical overview of the Roma population in Romania and its distribution pattern across the country and continues by taking a closer look at the four localities proposed.*

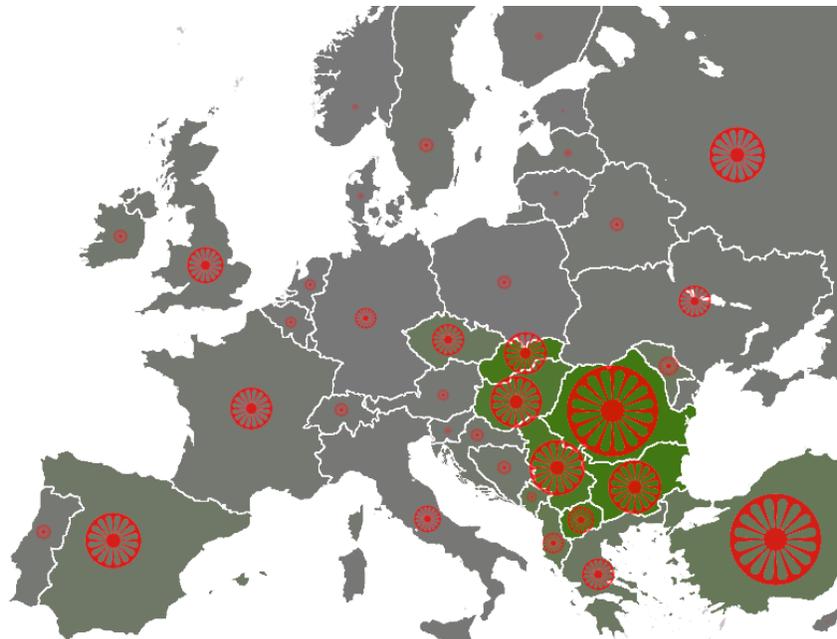
*The analysis template for each locality comprises of four main parts – a brief description, demographic data, aspects concerning the social and economic position of the Roma community and a concluding part reviewing the features which argue in favor of choosing the respective locality as a target of the research.*

*Further statistical information about the regions addressed is provided by “Annex 1 – Statistics concerning the Roma population in the West and North-West Regions of Romania (Timis, Arad, Bihor Counties)”.*

## I. Statistical overview of the Roma population in Romania

According to the data made available by the Council of Europe (Roma and Travelers Division) in 2008 (quoted by SALTO Cultural Diversity Resource Centre), Romania ranks first in Europe with a total number of Roma which amounts to 1.85 million, representing 8.5% of the country’s population.

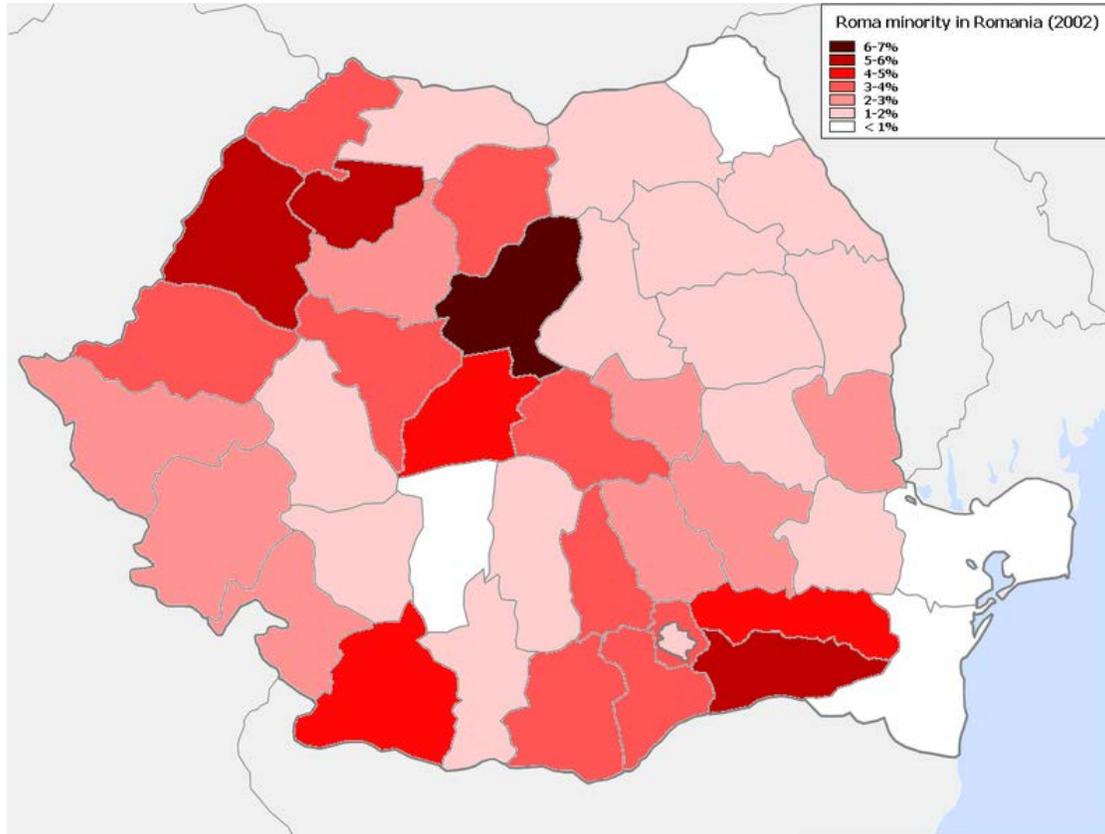
**Fig. I.1. Roma population by country**



*Source: Council of Europe*

According to the 2002 census, the total population of Romania amounts to 21,680,974, out of which the Hungarian ethnic group accounts for 6.6% (1,431,807), while the Roma ethnic group represents 2.47% (535,250). Consequently, the Roma are the second largest ethnic group in the country.

**Figure I.2. The Roma ethnic group in Romania**



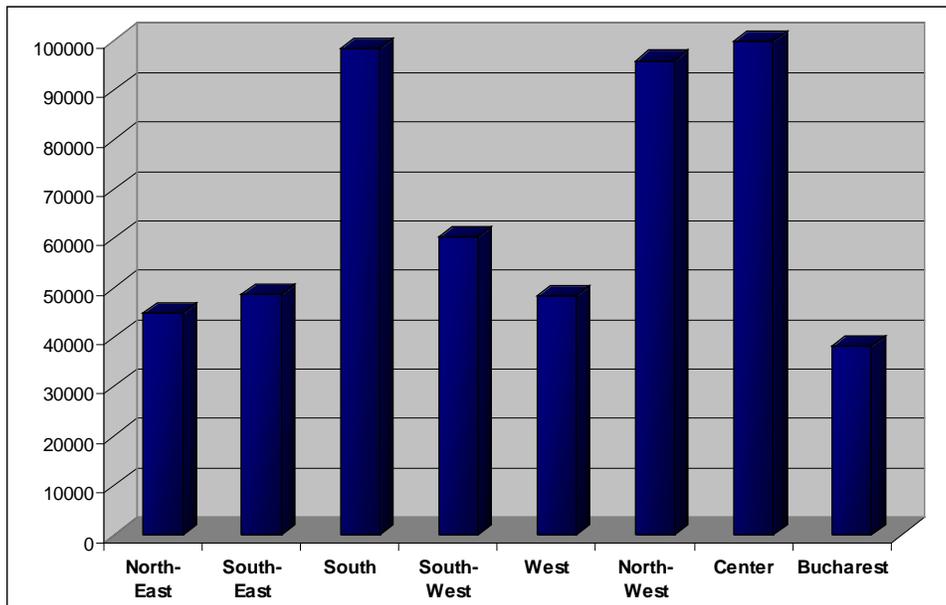
*Source: Wikipedia*

Despite the six-year period between the two estimates, the significant discrepancy between the two figures emphasizes that the accurate number of Roma people in Romania is subject to controversy given that most of them do not admit to their ethnic origins out of economic or social reasons.

As the Roma Inclusion Barometer emphasized (Bădescu, Grigoraş, Rughiniş and Voicu 2007), the experts and research institutes other than the National Institute of Statistics pointed to a higher percentage of Roma population. All the more interesting, according to the same barometer, the average estimates made by both Roma and non-Roma people concerning the amplitude of the Roma ethnic group in Romania were much higher than the official ones (almost 10 times).

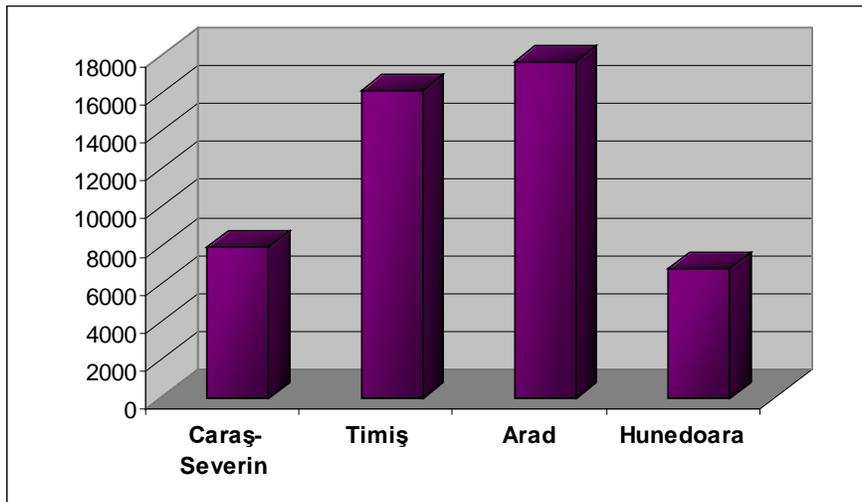
Taking into account the official 2002 census, the regions having a higher percentage of Roma population are: Center (3.96%), North-West (3.5%), South (2.91%) and South-West (2.58%).

**Fig. I.3. Roma population by region**



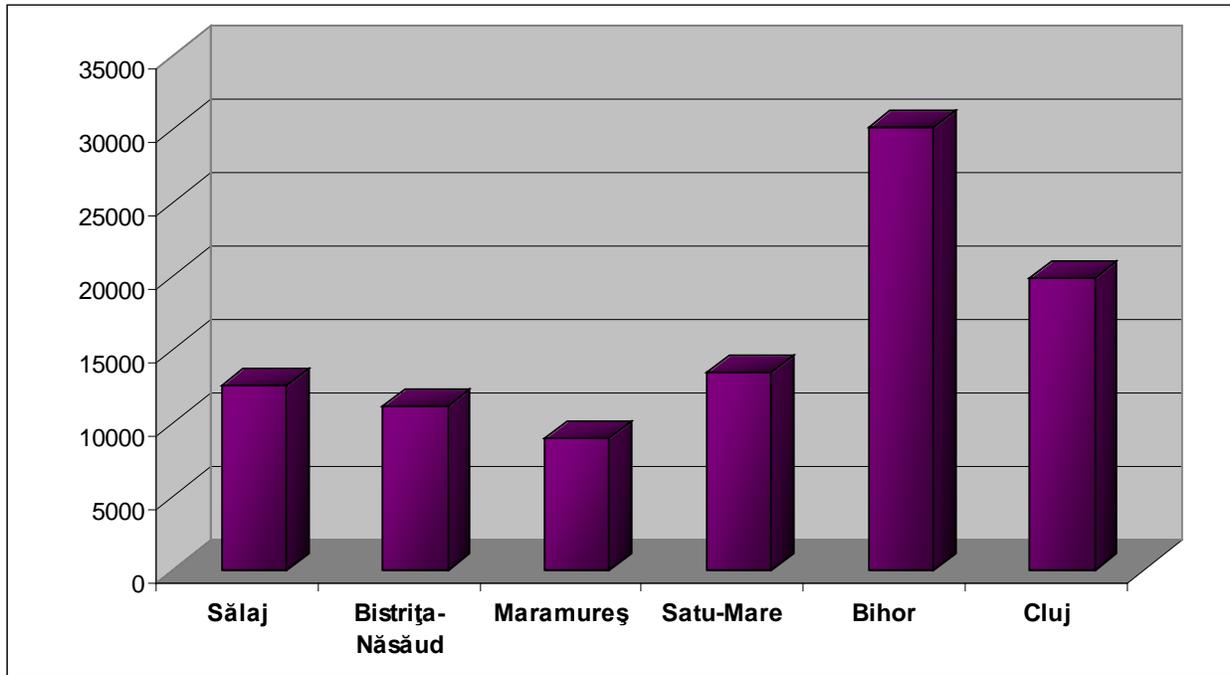
In the West region (comprising of four counties – Timiș, Arad, Caraș-Severin, Hunedoara), the two counties situated at the top of the hierarchy, judging by the amplitude of their Roma communities, are Timiș (16,084 Roma, i.e. 2.37% of the county’s population) and Arad (17,664 Roma people, i.e. 3.82% of the county’s population).

**Fig. I.4. Roma population by county (West region)**



In the North-West region (comprising of six counties – Sălaj, Maramureș, Bihor, Bistrița-Năsăud, Satu-Mare, Cluj), the county that displays the highest number of Roma is Bihor where these amount to 30,089, representing 5,01% of the county’s population.

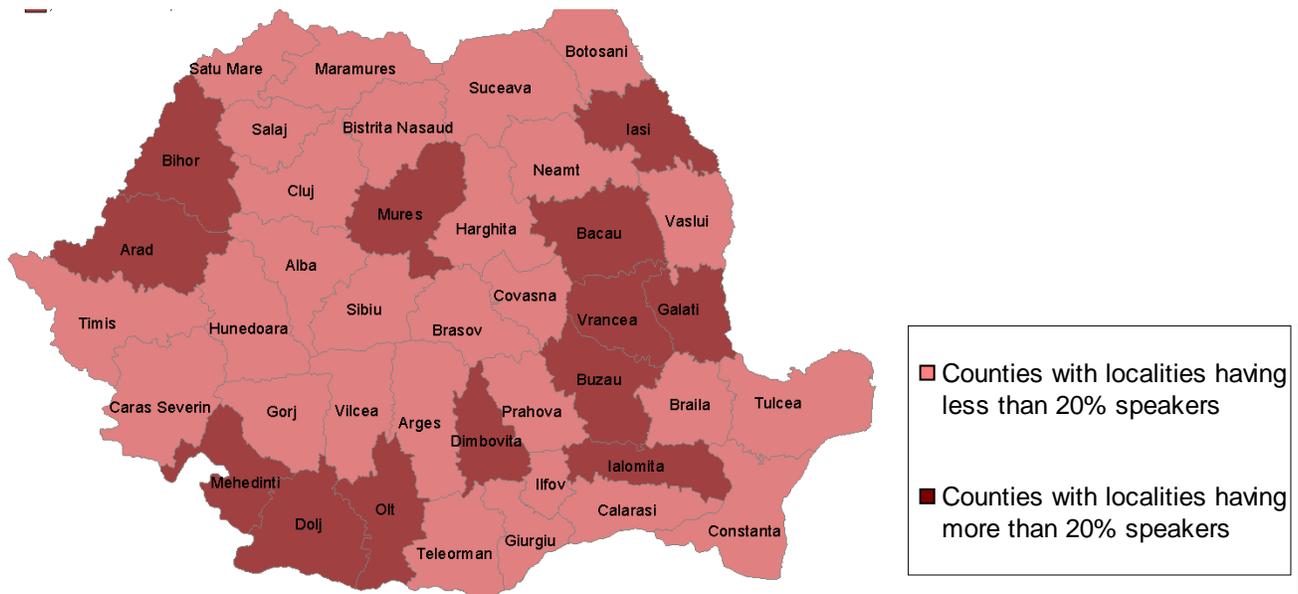
**Fig. I.5. Roma population by county (North-West region)**



When shifting to the number of people speaking Romany language in Romania, the 2002 census emphasizes that 91% of the country's population have Romanian as mother tongue, while only 1.1% admit to having Romany as mother tongue.

According to the distribution map drawn up by the Department for Interethnic Relations (Horváth, Raț and Vitos 2006), out of the 41 counties in Romania, 13 include localities with over 20% people whose mother tongue is Romany. Among these, Bihor and Arad rank high.

**Fig. I.6. The population having Romany as mother tongue**



## **II. Presentation of the four target localities**

The four localities representing the core of the research to be conducted in Romania are Timișoara, Sânpetru Mare (Timiș County), Sântana (Arad County) and Aleșd (Bihor County). The main reasons for which these are believed to make strong cases in the context of the REDUPRE project are their large Roma communities and the fact they are located in the border region. The latter is a value-added feature which gives the opportunity to analyze the prejudices against the Roma in different ethnic backgrounds, due to the fact that borderlands have always been places of “exchange and enrichment”, where plural identities meet and mingle (Dolff-Bonekämper, 2004).

In the case of the three counties chosen, the proximity to Serbia and Hungary is mainly responsible for the multiethnic profile displayed, even though other groups (Germans, Slovaks, Ukrainians etc.) also pay notable contribution to the great cultural diversity of the region. Therefore, in order to have a wider perspective on the perceptual categorization of the Roma, the research (and all project activities) will address different ethnic backgrounds which reveal the relationships between the Roma and the Romanians, but also the relationships between the Roma and other ethnic groups which outnumber them or have similar dimension.

Moreover, communities of different sizes will be considered in order to determine how the quantitative aspect impacts the interactions among their members.

Consequently, the research sets the ball rolling for a comparative analysis of the prejudices and stereotypes which are prone to emerge in both small and large communities and aims to establish a correlation between the nature of the prejudices and the ethnic structure of the communities addressed.

### **II. 1 Timișoara**

#### **A brief description**

Timișoara (Timiș County) is the largest city in the West region and also, according to 2009 statistics, the third largest city in Romania (*Agerpres National News Agency*, 2 February 2010).

It is considered to be one of the country’s most prominent multicultural emblems given the 29 ethnic groups and 17 religions it hosts. The great cultural diversity is also the key lever used for proposing Timișoara as a potential European Capital of Culture in 2020 (*The City Hall of Timișoara*).

In 2000, after a 5-month monitoring by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Center for Institutional Reform and Informal Sector (IRIS), Timișoara was awarded the ‘5-star city’ distinction due to its openness to foreign investment. Thus, the city displays a promising economic climate given the impressive investments particularly made by German, Italian, Swiss and USA companies and its low unemployment rate (Magyary-Vincze 2007).

Besides the economic environment, one of the main aspects which appeals to the foreign investors in the region is the distance to border crossings. Timiș County has three border crossings: two with Serbia (Stamora Moravița and Jimbolia) and one with Hungary (Cenad). The distance from Timișoara to each of the crossings mentioned is 56, 45 and 75 km, respectively.

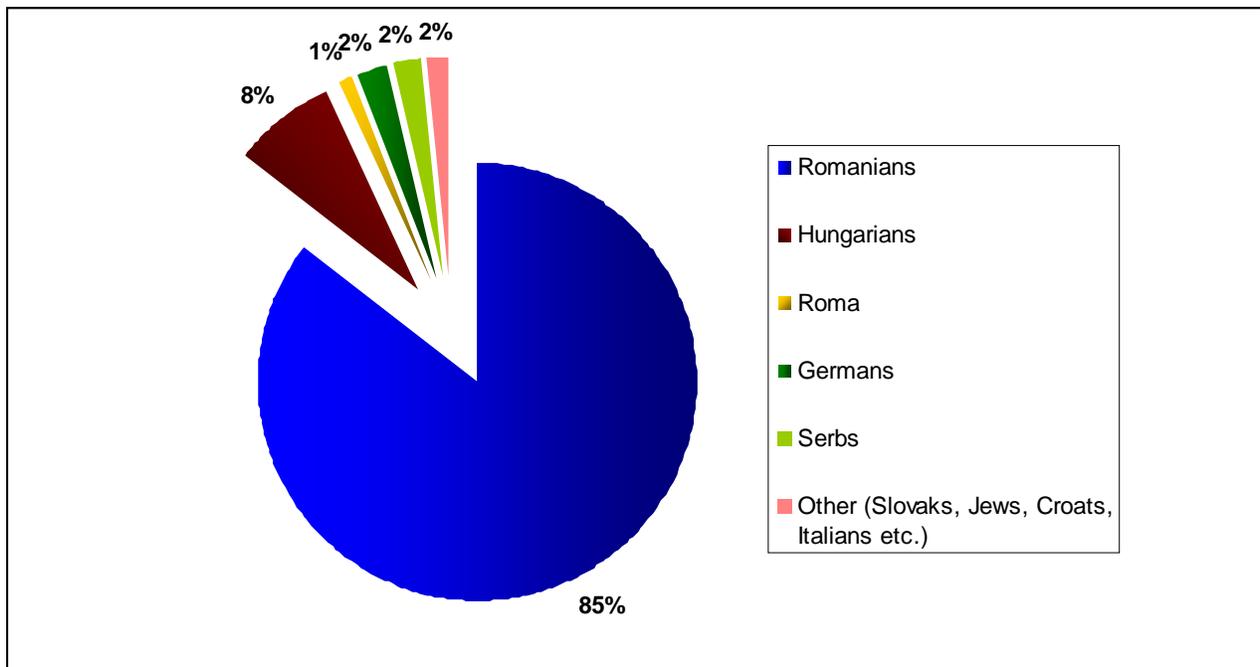
## Demographics

According to 2002 official census, the total population of Timiș County amounts to 677,926. The Roma population accounts for 2.37%, ranking third after the Romanian and Hungarian ones.

Timișoara is the largest city in the county, with a total population of 317,660 inhabitants. The city also holds the highest percentage of Roma in the total Roma population of the county – 19%, given its 3050 Roma people recorded in the official census.

When compared to the other ethnic communities in the city, Roma rank fifth after Romanians (85.52%), Hungarians (7.64%), Germans (2.25%) and Serbs (1.98%). However, taking into account that many Roma do not admit to their ethnic origin for fear of discrimination, the real size of this ethnic group is thought to be much higher.

**Fig. II.1.1. Population by ethnic group in Timișoara**



In regard to the population structure by mother tongue, the Romany language is spoken by 10,433 people (1.53% of the county's population), being third to Romanian and Hungarian.

In Timișoara, the percentage of people having Romany as a mother tongue is 0.6%, ranking fifth after Romanian, Hungarian, German and Serbian.

### **The social and economic position of the Roma community**

As stated by the research carried out within the frame of the PHARE 2004 programme – “Strengthening the institutional capacity and partnership building in order to improve the Roma living conditions and their image” (Magyari-Vincze 2007), in Timișoara, there are four main Roma categories – *băieși* (*Boyash - miners*), *geambași* (*horse dealers*), *căldărari* (*coppersmiths*), *gabori* (*Roma of Hungarian origin*).

The main neighborhoods where these can be found are Colonia Ștrand (East), Fratelia and Ronaț (North-West), Kuntz (North-East), Plopi (East) and Blascovics (West), all situated on the outskirts of the city.

From a socioeconomic perspective, the Roma in Timișoara fall into two main categories: those who are very rich and have built “their famous palaces” with the money earned abroad (as one representative of the Local Police stated in the research report above cited) and those who are poor and live on the outskirts, in ramshackle cabins. The discrepancy between the two extremes is striking given the low standard of living of the latter and the opulence displayed by the former through the heavily-ornamented architecture of their houses which is usually inconsistent with the architectural style of the areas where they are built (Magyari-Vincze 2007).

On the other hand, the so-called Roma palaces are a constant topic in local mass media. A brief review of the local print media brings into the limelight many disagreements (that have often turned into fights) which have arisen because of the houses bought or built in historical neighborhoods. According to the articles, the Roma use to display banners with messages like “This is a house owned by Roma” and to take various intimidating actions for hindering non-Roma people from buying apartments in the respective buildings. Such behavior is also one of the main issues feeding the stereotypes against the Roma community in the city (Lupulescu 2008).

As mentioned by the research earlier cited (Magyari-Vincze 2007), the problems faced by Roma are related to four major fields: housing, employment, education and health.

The main issues corresponding to the first field refer to the lack of identity papers which hinders them from obtaining a dwelling, living in state-owned flats or houses and, thus, running the risk of being evacuated, living in ramshackle cabins built in the fields with no current water, electricity or toilet, the fact that public policies do not prioritize Roma along with other unprivileged categories for obtaining social housing.

When it comes to employment, the main problems faced by Roma revolve around the difficulty to practice traditional crafts (e.g. tinsmithing), the lack of education which reduces the range of options down to black market or unqualified labor, the high percentage of Roma working abroad in the black market which also results in an increase in the number of children having no identity papers, the discrimination against Roma in the labor market, the non-feasibility of the expert training programmes which haven't also created the necessary opportunities for the employment of those trained.

The main barriers impeding proper access to education are: the lack of identity papers which is a major obstacle to the timely enrollment of children in schools and kindergartens; the low level of income determining a significant dropout rate; the seasonal labor migration of parents who take their children abroad; the discrimination against Roma children in schools; segregation; the fact that educational facilitators are not well-enough prepared for properly handling such problems.

Healthcare represents another problematic chapter because of the low income, improper nutrition, lack of medical insurance, the discriminatory treatment applied by the medical staff.

## **Conclusion**

Timișoara proves to be a relevant case study from both the size and the multicultural perspective. Thus, on the one hand, it is the largest city in the West region (and one of the largest in the country) which has a considerable Roma ethnic group that can serve as a solid foundation for a thorough and ample research.

On the other hand, the 29 ethnic groups in the city and the successfully maintained ethnic peace which has become a distinctive local emblem broaden the range of study in the context of an increasing Roma community.

Furthermore, the gap between the rich and the poor Roma in the city adds new facets to the research aimed at getting an insight into the perceptual frames applied to this ethnic group in Timișoara.

## **II.2. Sânpetru Mare**

### **A brief description**

Sânpetru Mare is one of the largest communes in Timiș County, comprised of two villages: Sânpetru Mare and Igrîș.

The former is located 15 km from Sânnicolau Mare (the closest city), 55.5 km from Timișoara and 50 km from Arad.

The latter is very close to the border with Arad County and also to the town of Sânnicolau Mare.

As far as the distance to the Hungarian border is concerned, the locality is 35 km away from the Cenad border crossing. Given its proximity to Arad County, Igrîș village is particularly close to Nădlac crossing (7 km).

The locality dates back to 1333 and is very often mentioned for being home to the first library in Romania.

From an economic point of view, Sânpetru Mare displays a mainly agricultural profile.

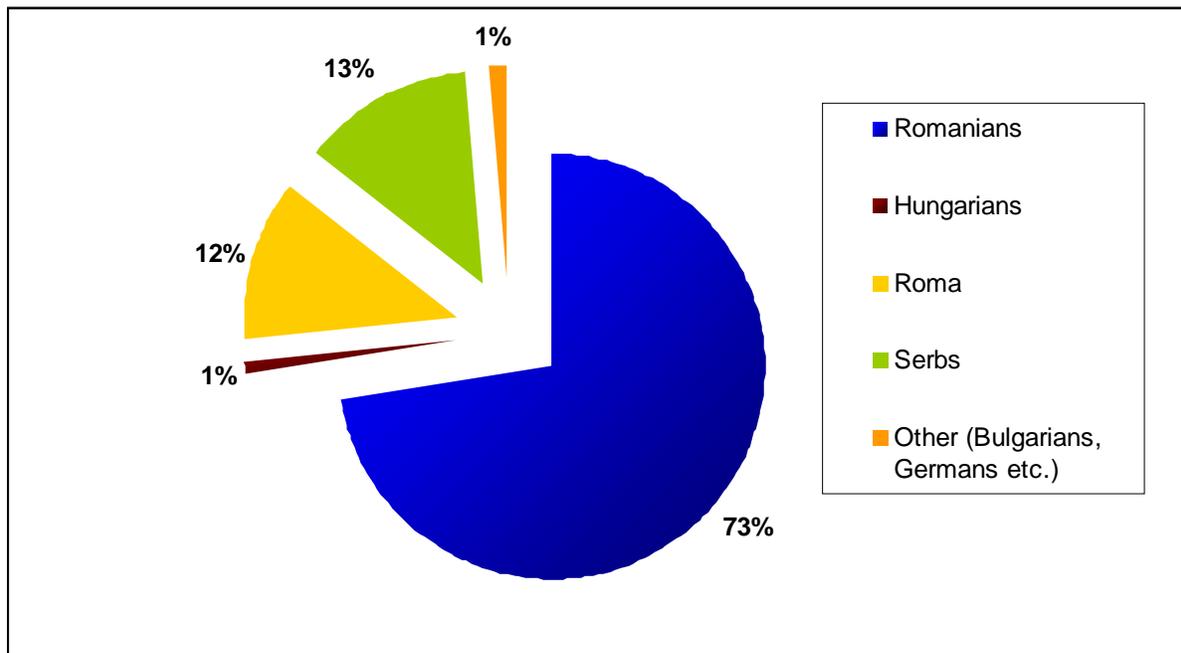
Given its geographical position and ethnic structure, the locality is a member of the Limited Liability European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation Banat – Triplex Confinium (*The City Hall of Sânpetru Mare*).

### **Demographics**

According to the 2002 census, the population of Sânpetru Mare amounts to 5844, out of which 72.51% are Romanians, 13.15% - Serbs and 12.13% - Roma. Consequently, in 2002, the Serbian and Roma ethnic groups had similar size, being second only to Romanians.

The percentage is said to be higher in Igrîș village where Roma accounted for 10% of the population during the same year. However, since 2002, this ethnic group has had a staggering upward trend. According to the monograph written by Florea Jebelean (2009), the Roma people represented 44.4% of the population in 2006, while according to the figures provided by the Timis County Council, the Roma held a share of more than 30% in 2009.

**Fig. II.2.1. Population by ethnic group in Sânpetru Mare**



When shifting to the percentage of people having Romany as a mother tongue, the 2002 census reveals that only 0.92% speak this language. Such data places Romany on the third position of the hierarchy, the first two places being held by Romanian (82.98%) and Serbian (13.02%).

On a county level, the Roma population in Sânpetru Mare accounts for nearly 4.5% of the total Roma population in Timiș County, a ratio which places the locality close to the top of the hierarchy.

### **The social and economic position of the Roma community**

The main weak points of the Roma community in Sânpetru Mare are education, healthcare and employment.

According to the information provided by the City Hall, the locality has two schools: one in Igrîș village and one in Sânpetru Mare village.

In Sânpetru Mare, there are 246 students out of which 179 Romanians, 25 Serbs and 42 Roma. In Igrîș, the number of students amounts to 126, but their ethnic structure is not mentioned. However, considering that Roma hold a significant share in the local population, a significant share is to be found in the educational process also.

The main education-related issues consist of a high dropout rate (having as main reasons the low level of income and the need to work from an early age for ensuring subsistence), the lack of information concerning the importance of education and the facilities Roma children could benefit from in order to complete the educational process, and, last but not least, the uneven treatment which is sometimes applied to Roma children by colleagues or teachers given the negative perception they hold against this ethnic group.

Another field considered to be a major weakness is the local labor market.

On the one hand, Sânpetru Mare is a mainly agricultural area. Therefore, inhabitants look for jobs in nearby localities – Sânnicolau Mare, Periam and even Timișoara – where there is a higher number of entrepreneurs and, consequently, a higher likelihood of job opportunities. However, the lack of education and identity papers doesn't recommend the Roma as eligible candidates, a thing which results in an increasing tendency to work in the black market.

Moreover, the traditional crafts of Roma (e.g. blacksmithing, tinsmithing) are no longer in compliance with the nowadays requirements of the labor market. Hence, there is a major cleavage between the labor supply and demand that can't be bridged given the lack of financial and information resources necessary for retraining.

It is the very same lack of financial and information resources that also triggers the healthcare issues with which Roma are confronted. Mainly, the disease rate is very high because of not complying with basic hygiene and healthy nutrition rules or not going to regular medical check-ups. Moreover, the medical staff operating on the local level is not always prepared to deal with Roma patients. Hence, they sometimes disregard them or do not explain clearly enough the medication prescribed, thus increasing even more the gap between the Roma community and the healthcare institutions.

The problems above emphasized become all the more prominent when analyzing the demographic trend. More precisely, while the overall population of the locality undergoes a downward tendency, the Roma ethnic group has a staggering growth. This implies that the amplitude of the already existing problems will increase taking into account the boost in the number of Roma people under the circumstances of an equally precarious socioeconomic background (*The City Hall of Sânpetru Mare*).

## **Conclusion**

Sânpetru Mare represents a distinct case because of its lower number of inhabitants (5900) and its ethnic structure which places both the Roma and the Serbs second to Romanians.

Thus, unlike the other three localities addressed by the research, Sânpetru Mare allows for a stereotype analysis on a smaller scale, in a cultural background which equally owes its diversity to two ethnic groups – Roma and Serbian.

## **II.3. Sântana**

### **A brief description**

Sântana is a town located in the north-western part of Arad County. The closest cities are Arad (28 km) and Chișineu Criș (22 km), while the closest border crossings with Hungary are Curtici (15 km), Vladimirescu (31 km) and Turnu (45 km). The town originates in an older settlement – Comlăuș (dating back to 1334) which has nowadays become one of its major neighborhoods, and also includes the Caporal Alexa village (*The City Hall of Sântana*).

Sântana displays a promising economic profile given the means of transport ensuring its interconnection with nearby localities and regions as well as due to the investments that foreign

companies (from Austria, Germany, Italy and Hungary) have made in the region since 2008. The investments mainly address the industrial field and are likely to result in higher job opportunities.

This is also one of the reasons for which the local development strategy lays a great emphasis on the estimated growth of the secondary and tertiary sectors despite the town's actual economy which is mainly agricultural. Moreover, specific architecture and historic monuments are considered focal points towards which local tourism development could gravitate provided that these are properly tapped into.

On a larger scale, Sântana is the biggest town of the microregion located in the north-west of Arad County which includes two other cities – Curtici and Pâncota - and 4 villages – Olari, Simand, Zarand, Zimandu Nou.

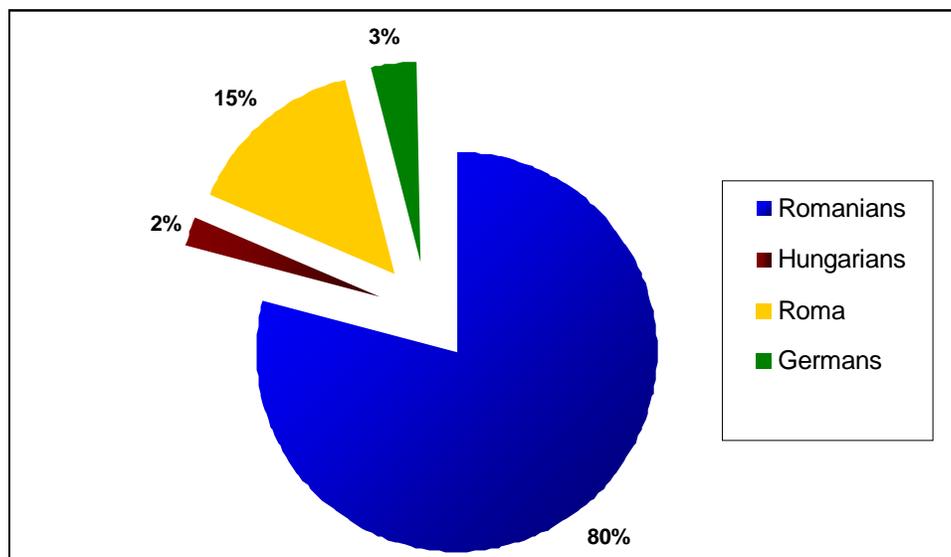
The entire microregion is part of the Danube-Kris-Mureş-Tisa Euroregion (*The City Hall of Sântana*).

### Demographics

The population of Arad County amounts to 461,791 inhabitants and has the following ethnic structure: 82.16% - Romanians, 10.67% - Hungarians, 3.82% - Roma, 1.23% - Slovaks, 1.05% - Germans. Consequently, according to the 2002 census, Roma are the third largest ethnic group in the county. However, considering the statement made by Gheorghe Răducanu (Advisor to the Prefect of Arad County on Roma issues in 2005), the number of Roma is estimated to be almost double given that most of them refuse to state their genuine ethnic origin (Buga 2005).

Sântana has nearly 13,000 inhabitants out of which 14.91% are Roma. These figures place the Roma ethnic group on the second position after Romanians who account for 79.08%. Even though the share they hold in the total population is much lower, the Germans (3.49%) and Hungarians (2.19%) are the two other communities which bring their contribution to the town's multiethnic profile.

**Fig. II.3.1. Population by ethnic group in Sântana**



From a town-county ratio perspective, the Roma people in Sântana represent 11% of the Roma population in Arad County (being the second largest Roma community in the county), while from a microregional perspective, Sântana ranks first.

The population structure by mother tongue reveals that Romany language is spoken by 1.94% of the county's population, ranking third after Romanian (spoken by 84.72%) and Hungarian (10.45%).

In Sântana, the percentage of people having Romany as mother tongue is much higher (10.09%), almost squaring with the number of Roma people mentioned by the official census.

### **The social and economic position of the Roma community**

According to local statistics, the main areas inhabited by Roma people are Comlăuș neighborhood (with over 3000 inhabitants) and Caporal Alexa village (Crețu 2008).

The most prominent issues these communities face are related to the inappropriate infrastructure and mainly consist of unpaved roads and poor water supplies. More precisely, the Roma in Comlăuș neighborhood have to walk long distances for ensuring the water they need in their households for drinking, cooking or breeding animals (Crețu 2008).

As mentioned by the local development strategy, in 2005 the City Hall of Sântana submitted the project "Rehabilitating the road infrastructure in the Roma neighborhood" within the frame of the governmental programme "Partnership for Roma support". Even though the project was approved, the scarce financial resources of the City Hall rendered its implementation impossible.

Aside from the poor road infrastructure, a few hundreds of dwellings inhabited by Roma people in Comlăuș and Caporal Alexa are in an advanced state of decay, undergoing a severe danger of collapse or structural failure. Authorities state that besides not being able to provide adequate shelter, such dwellings are likely to crash in case of prolonged bad weather conditions (Crețu 2008).

The antipode of the shabby houses above described is represented by the so-called palaces that rich Roma afford to build. As stated by the Advisor to the Prefect of Arad County on Roma issues, the impressive size of such buildings is directly linked to the importance that Roma families wish to have in the community. In other words, they are prone to build houses which stand out in order to both flag their social status and make sure there is enough room for all their relatives. However, despite the extravagance displayed, most houses are non-functional or only partially used (Buga 2005).

When alternating their significance with the opinions expressed by the architects in Arad, one discovers that most specialists lay emphasis on the contradiction existing between the heavily-ornamented houses and the architectural style in the region. In their opinion, such buildings shouldn't even be granted a construction permit given the failure to comply with regional and local building codes (Buga 2005).

Another facet of the housing issue is the lack of property title deeds. Many Roma people have transferred property ownership by signing informal agreements in the presence of witnesses, thus avoiding the authentication procedure executed before a notary public. Consequently, ownership transfer can't be neither tracked nor proved.

On the other hand, the lack of property deeds is just one aspect of a wider range of legal paper issues also including the lack of identity cards and birth certificates which apply to a considerable number of Roma people (Crețu 2008).

When it comes to employment, the local print media as well as the county advisor on Roma issues reveal that many Roma families have built their welfare by buying antiques (especially furniture) from the elders in the region and selling them abroad. Also, according to the same sources, there is a

significant share of Roma people who earn their living by practicing traditional crafts – i.e. manufacturing brandy boilers and rainwater pipes (Buga 2008). However, the unemployment rate among Roma people is high given the lack of education and the increasing gap between the existing traditional craft supply and the labor market demand. Such gap is prone to become even wider considering the recent investments which mainly address the industrial field in the region.

## **Conclusion**

The town has been chosen as a target location of the REDUPRE project given its notable Roma community (representing 15% of the local population) which is second only to the Romanian one.

The German and Hungarian groups hold lower shares (3.5%, 2%, respectively) and, therefore, the town can be considered an illustrative case of the prejudices that arise in the communities where the Roma and the Romanians are the two protagonists of the ethnic background.

The discrepancy between the rich and the poor Roma as well as the economic upward trend and its subsequent impact on the local labor market are two additional facets which provide the opportunity for a thorough research of the Roma issues in the area.

## **II.4. Aleşd**

### **A brief description**

Aleşd is a city located in Bihor County (North-Western Romania) which comprises of four localities: Aleşd, Pestiş, Tinaud and Pădurea Neagră.

The proximity to Hungary is marked by the relatively short distances to three border crossings in Bihor County: Aleşd Oradea (40 km), Borş (57 km) and Salonta (76 km).

Among the main strengths that the city displays, a great emphasis is put on the natural resources (mineral springs, thermal water), tourist objectives, cultural events representative for the region as well as on hunting and fishing opportunities. The tourism infrastructure is also positively assessed due to the accommodation establishments, restaurants and thermal water pools which tap into the resources of the region (*The City Hall of Aleşd*).

Despite the impressive tourism potential, the city's economy has been mainly based on the building materials industry (especially cement, lime and refractory materials) which has undergone a steep decline after 1989. In 1998, Aleşd was declared underprivileged area and a major shift occurred to the light industry where new jobs were created given the foreign investments attracted to the region.

Local statistics pinpoint that the workforce is mainly skilled for the light and building materials industries, but it is not qualified for the tourism sector which is inappropriately harnessed (*The City Hall of Aleşd*).

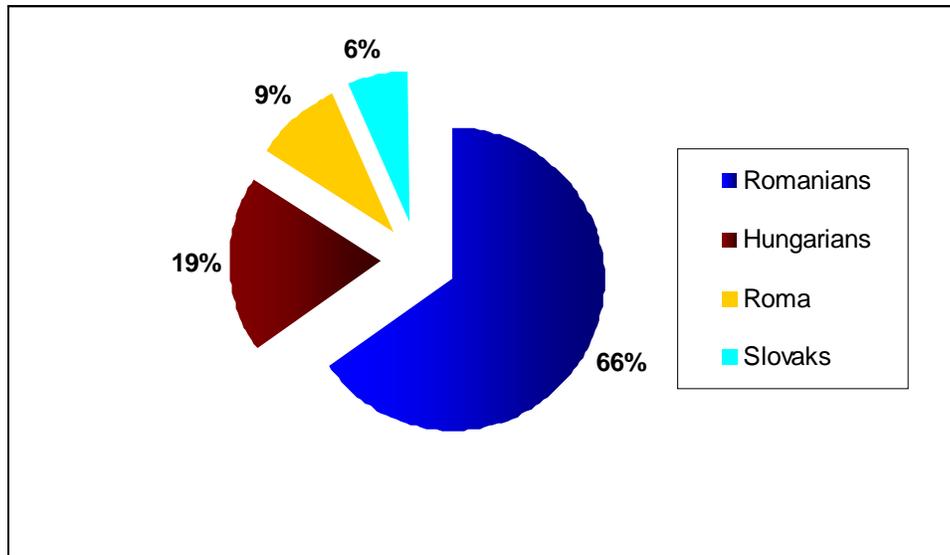
### **Demographics**

Bihor is among the Romanian counties with the largest Roma population. Out of the total number of inhabitants which amounts to 600,246, Roma account for 5.01% (30,089), as stated by the 2002 census.

These figures place the Roma ethnic group on the third position after Romanians (67.38%) and Hungarians (25.96%).

In line with county statistics, the Roma in Aleșd amount to 953, representing 9.15% of the city population (10,415 inhabitants). Therefore, the Roma rank third after the Romanians (65.17%) and Hungarians (19.07%) and are followed by the Slovak ethnic group (6.19%).

**Fig. II.4.1. Population by ethnic group in Aleșd**



Shifting from ethnic to mother tongue structure, the 2002 census reveals that 3.02% people in Bihor County speak Romany, while in Aleșd the percentage increases to 9.11%, closely following the share held by the Roma community in the city population.

When analyzed through the lens of city-county ratio, the statistics above emphasize that the share held by the Roma from Aleșd in the total Roma population of Bihor county amounts to nearly 3.5%.

### **The social and economic position of the Roma community**

Local statistics highlight that the distribution of Roma among the four localities the city comprises favors Aleșd (945 Roma) over Tinaud, Pestiș and Pădurea Neagră. The highest number of Roma can be found in the Obor neighborhood where several projects have been implemented in order to tackle and touch upon the issues this ethnic group is confronted with. However, such projects induced only a slight change and the respective issues continue to be as prominent as they were in the past (*The City Hall of Aleșd*).

First of all, the poor infrastructure significantly lowers the standard of living. One of the major flaws is the lack of electric power which has been addressed in 2007 within the frame of the project “Strengthening the voice of the Roma”, carried out by Ruhama Foundation (Oradea). The project managed to bring electric power to 10 Roma households, but the rest continue to cope with this major lack (*Ruhama Foundation*).

Also, given the scarce financial resources of the Roma families, their dwellings can not provide proper shelter given the advanced state of deterioration.

The flaws of the housing sector also refer to the precarious hygiene which proves to be a major obstacle to obtaining a job or going to school. In this regard, Aleşd Town Hall and Ruhama Foundation have implemented a project whose main result was the Aleşd Multifunctional Center, a social service addressing Roma, which encompasses a children day care and a public bath (Bursaşiu 2009).

The former targets students aged between 6 and 12 who have low school performances, high dropout rates or major social problems like single-parent families, tense relationships with their parents, parents with disabilities or alcohol problems.

The latter targets both children and adults and aims to ensure a better personal hygiene as a first step to better health, higher school attendance and eligibility to work.

The Center will open in spring, 2011, and is said to be correlated with the health education provided by the facilitators from the County Hospital in Oradea.

Other issues related to the Roma group in Aleşd are similar to those mentioned for the previous three locations that the project targets - namely, the lack of education, the lack of identity papers, the gap between the labor supply and demand.

Additionally, the conflicts between the Roma clans which are a constant subject to mass media and the low to almost non-existent participation in the local decision-making processes are also feeding the prejudices against the Roma community whose vulnerability is listed as a weak point by the SWOT analysis in the local development strategy (*The City Hall of Aleşd*).

## **Conclusion**

Aleşd makes a different case because of its Roma community which despite being numerous (9% of the local population) is second to Hungarian (19%) and is closely followed by the Slovak group (6%). Therefore, the town provides the opportunity for analyzing the relationships between the Roma and one other ethnic group which outnumber them as well as the relationships between the Roma and a smaller size ethnic group.

Consequently, the culturally diverse background in Aleşd fosters a broad comparative analysis of the perceptual frames held by several ethnic groups in relation to the same Roma community and brings into the limelight two new entries – the Hungarian and the Slovak communities – which haven't been protagonists in any of the three other localities addressed by the research.

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