

The Risks of growing Populism and the European elections:

Roma migration in France:
Free movement in Europe Union or a
threat for the national security

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The period before the local and the European elections in 2014 in France represents a particular example for the rising of the populist movement. Recently the question of the Roma migrants from Romania and Bulgaria became one of the largely discussed and used by populist parties to mobilize voters. The political games put the Roma question as hot topic. Often Roma migrants are presented in negative lights: unwilling and incapable to integrate, burden and threat for the French society. Moreover, the image of the Roma migrants embodies the fear of the migrants from Eastern Europe; it often represents a danger for French social security system. The reality and the positive examples lack the attention of the media and as a result people accept the negative image of the Roma created by the certain political parties together with the medias. Despite the existence of parties that position themselves against the migration and the Roma, there are few parties that take pro-Roma approach. Unfortunately, as the research suggests these claims serves only as a tool for gaining power, not for the Roma integration. Hence, either positive or negative, in both cases the Roma questions in France serves certain populist parties only for their political gain.

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Introduction

The populism by definition is a political philosophy that support the rights and the power of the people in their struggle against the privileged elite². Political parties and politicians often use the terms “populist” in its pejorative connotations. This view sees populism as a way to show empathy with people’s view on certain topic or issue and by doing so to increase the political influence of certain political figure or party over certain electoral group. The term “populism” derives from the Latin word “populus”, which means people in its understanding of nation. This term regards the “elitism” and “aristocracy” as opposite.

In France the first manifestation of populism might be described with the French Revolution led by wealthy intellectuals against the elitist excesses and privileges. The term “Poujadism” is another expression used to describe the French populism, but “pujadism” rather describes a later development of the populist movement. “Pujadism” was created in the 1950s to define the populist movement of the traders and craftsmen against high taxation.

Currently in France several parties are knows to base their ideology onto the populist idea to present themselves as public interest defenders. Often these are parties which have low representation in the government. Different topics are used by their political leaders as strategy to attract the electorate. One of these topic in France is the immigration flow, and more specifically, the Roma migration from Eastern Europe and their integration in France. In fact the powerlessness of politicians to resolve certain social problems such as the high unemployment rate in France has been masked by proposing measures against the immigration.

This paper aims to analyze how the question of Roma migration become a base for the populism before the European elections. It aims to explain how Roma migration flow from Romania and Bulgaria has been used as a political tool to create a negative image of migrants from Eastern Europe and as a consequence to propose politics to limit the immigration flow from these countries. This research intends to analyze the impact of the politicization of the Roma migration in France and how it affects the life of the Roma migrants. In addition, the research aims to analyze the role of the media as political instrument in the process. The current research is based on discourse analysis, semi-structured interview with local authorities, Roma activists and Roma communities, and media monitoring. The focus group includes Roma from Romania

² Collins English Dictionary, HarperCollins, 2003

and Bulgaria situated in municipalities in Ile-de-France because of the concentration of Roma in this region.

In order to describe the how Roma migration in France has been used by populist parties for mobilizing voters and what is the impact on the Roma population I will first present an overview of the historical background of the Roma, their current situation and migration in France, an the social attitude regarding their migration. After, I will present the role of the medias for creating the negative example of the Roma. Third, I will analyze how the political and media discourses Roma have affected the life of the Roma migrants.

I. General presentation of the Roma

Roma population in Europe counts for ten end twelve millions inhabitants, thus forms the biggest ethno-cultural minority in Europe. Roma live mainly in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The country with biggest concentration of Roma community is Romania with approximately 2 million people followed by Bulgaria: 1 million inhabitants. Others countries characterized with high concentration of Roma population are Hungary (600 000), Spain (800 000), Slovakia (500 000), Czech Republic (300.000), 200.000 in Greece.³

According to the data of latest Bulgaria's census (2011) Roma population counts for 4.9 percent of the population. This places them as the third largest ethnic group in Bulgaria, after Bulgarians and Turks. However, several sources estimate that the actual number of Roma is higher. The Council of Europe estimate that more than 750 000 Roma live in Bulgaria, United Nations consider that Roma account for as many as 10 percent of the overall population of the country, national NGO's confirm this statements. Roma population is represented both in urban and rural areas where 3,9% live in urban. Roma represent 8 % of the population in Bulgarian villages. The census data shows that Roma are presented in all regions, where several regions are with high concentration of Roma: Montana, Sliven, Dobrich, and Yambol. Roma living in Bulgaria represent a diversity of religion, dialects and mother tongues . The outcome of the census confirms this statement. The data shows that the biggest part of Roma population in Bulgaria (85 percent) indicate Romani language as their mother tongue, while 7.5 percent speak Bulgarian as their first

³ Petrova, Dimitrina. *The Roma: Between a Myth and the future. Roma rights quaterly*. Number 1, 2004.

language, and 6.7 percent speak Turkish. According to the latest census 6.6 percent of Roma are East-Orthodox, 18.3 percent are Muslim, 10.1 percent are Protestant and their number in the last 2 decades generally among marginalized groups grows considerably. The census of 2011 in Romania shows that Roma people count 3.3% of the total population and represent the second-largest ethnic minority in Romania after Hungarians. According to the 2002-census, 81.9% of Romanian-Romani are Orthodox Christians, 8,1%, are Protestant, 4,9% are Catholics. To highlight, the data collected with the Bulgarian and Romanian census are different than the results of national and international NGO's (which estimate the number of Roma people in Romania on 2-2,5 million inhabitants such as EU observer and Romani CRISS). This gap in data is due partly because of the fact that often Roma do not identify themselves as Roma to avoid the negative negative social perception and rejection.

1) Roma migration. Historical Background

In order to understand how populism developed and used their claims against the Roma migration in France I will introduce the historical processes that led to Roma migration and social exclusion. I will first present the historical reasons that produces myths and prejudices used nowadays by political leaders and medias to create the Roma migrant as potential threat for the society.

Roma came from the North-West of India in the end of the tenth century. They migrate to Europe during 13-14th century and they dispersed with the Ottoman invasion in Eastern and Central Europe. After the 15th century, Roma migration in Europe was provoked by the difficult conditions in the Ottoman Empire. Later, after the abolition of slavery of the Roma in Romania gave the opportunity to some Roma to leave Eastern Europe and migrate to Western and Northern Europe, in a quest of better life. Few are the proves for this movement. The development of the Roma language witness this migration from India to Eastern and Western Europe. Roma language (Rromanes or rromani: Rom-man, husband) is an Indo-European language derived from Prakrit. Spoken in multiple variants in different roma groups the Roma language saves the traces of Roma migration: in several dialects there is an influence of Turkish or Greek, but also an influence from Romanian. Even if there are many dialects of Rromanes (Roma language), an important common terminology is understood by most of the Roma in Europe.

Linguistic researches estimate that Roma are originating from the North-West of India a region which they were forced to leave around the 1000th year because of the Afghan invasion in North India. It is possible to trace their route from the linguistic footprints⁴. Roma people arrive in the Byzantine empire and settle in the Balkans. The second wave arrive with Ottoman Turks in 14th century. Some Roma groups settled in Romania, where they are enslaved until their liberation on February 20, 1856⁵. Some arrive in Western Europe in early fifteenth century after crossing the territory of Slovakia. Manush⁶ who represent 2-3% of Roma population in Europe settle in the German-speaking countries, Gypsies (10%) in the Iberian Peninsula where they are subject to a policy of assimilation from 1499.⁷ Roma are found throughout Europe in 1500, when they begin to settle. In France, the rejection of the Roma began during the ruling of Louis XII and became stronger during the ruling of Louis XIV.⁸ During the twentieth century, they have suffered a particularly cruel persecution: under the National Socialist regime, estimations show that more than 500,000 Roma were victims of racial persecution and genocide.⁹

2) Contemporary migration

The contemporary Roma migration has been provoked by socio-economic reasons as well as by discrimination and acts of hostility towards the Roma. The stereotypes associated with Roma have their historical roots, they perpetuate the hostile approach to Roma population. From their arrival onward Roma have been defined as foreigners, they have received hostile or unequal treatment, so they were forced to migrate.

The origins of contemporary Roma migrations date back to the 1990s. After the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe most of the Roma lost their jobs and their incomes in traditional activities. They plunged into extreme poverty and became the “biggest losers of the transition” to

⁴ Matras, Yaron. *Romani: A Linguistic Introduction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002

⁵ Viorel, Achim, *The Roma in Romanian History*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 2004, pp.27-132.

⁶ Courthiade Marcel, *Introduction à la langue rromani*, INALCO-D.A.S-C.E.B-F.L.E,2009 test edition page 6.

⁷ Kenrick, Donald, *Historical dictionary of the Gypsies (Romanies)*, revue number 7 of Historical dictionary of people and culture, The Scarecrow press, 2007, page XXXIX

⁸ Jean-Pierre Liégeois, *Roms en Europe*, Council of Europe, 2007, pages 109-110

⁹ Hancock, Ian (2005). "True Romanies and the Holocaust: A Re-evaluation and an overview". *The Historiography of the Holocaust*. Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 383–396

capitalism¹⁰ In 2009 in Hungary 70 seventy percent of Roma population is out of the labor market. These economic and discrimination related factors led to the migration of Roma to Western European countries and Canada (already in the 1990s). Many applications for asylum were registered; most of them were motivated from racist violence.

At the beginning of 90s, Germany followed by France, Poland, Austria¹¹ became the main destination for Roma migrants from Romania. For the period 1990-1992, with a total number of 70,000 Romanian refugees, some estimate that Roma comprised 40% among registered asylum seekers in Germany. Migration to Great Britain has only recently brought into existence a significant Roma population coming from Hungary. Most of the Roma from Bulgaria are seasonal migrants. They often choose Greece, Spain, and Italy as destination

II Current situation at European and national level: reasons for Roma migration

1) At European level

Many reasons explain the new migration waves from Eastern to Western Europe. As described above they are mainly economic but in some cases, the migration is provoked by discrimination and racial violence. The European Commission in its April's 2011 Communication states that many Roma face discrimination and social exclusion living in marginalized and very poor socio-economic conditions. In 2009, EU-MIDIS data showed that one out of five of the Roma surveyed face discriminatory experiences when looking for work. In fact, discrimination cases are numerous. For example, a Bulgarian (white skinned individual) is much more likely to be employed than a Roma (dark skinned individual) even if the second corresponds better to the profile. It should be noted, that there are growing number of Roma who have university degree, but face similar attitude.¹² Many of them prefer to go abroad (usually in Western countries) where they hope to meet a society more open to diversity, where they can apply their knowledge and capacities. The current situation of Roma in Romania and Bulgaria explains the reasons which

¹⁰ Soros and Wolfensohn, Sigona / Nidhi 2009, p. 3

¹¹ Braham, M. "*Romani Migrations and E.U. Enlargement*". Cambridge Review of International Affairs , Vol. 13, no. 2. pp. 97-116.

¹² Zahariev.A, "*Becoming*" Roma Intellectual from Eastern Europe. Life strategies and practices. A case study from Budapest, CEU 2013

provoke the migration flow to Western Europe. The migration flow from Romania and Bulgaria became higher after 2007 when these two countries joined the European Union. France became one of the main destinations.

A) Financial resources and work activities

Members of European Union since 2007, Romania and Bulgaria, experience big economic and political difficulties. Economical instability and lack of financial resources reflect directly the unemployment rate. The financial and economic situation in Bulgaria and Romania reflect particularly the life of the Roma. As described above after the fall of communism Roma were first laid off from the labor market. Most of the Roma in the region experience a long-term unemployment which fact affects their standard of living and make them the most socially and economically disadvantaged and stigmatized population in Europe. Bulgaria and Romania are the poorest countries in the European Union, and Roma communities in these two countries are the most disadvantaged during the whole period of transition. The economic crisis of 2008 further complicated the situation of the Roma and increased the competition for jobs and that fact gives even less opportunities to Roma to realize themselves in the labor market. Not only due to their lack of adequate education and skills, but also because of discrimination practices against Roma face a high percentage of the Roma are jobless. Their participation in the formal economy is relatively limited. According to World Bank the risk of poverty in the Roma community in Romania is three times higher than the national average. A World Bank report revealed that approximately 70 percent of the Roma population live on less than US\$4.30 a day. According to the 2002 census, only 23 percent of the Roma population in Romania were employed. A survey of European Agency for fundamental rights shows that 70% of Roma don't have any salary and 40% of Roma families starve. Many Roma are dependent on welfare and other public benefits (pensions and family allowances) to survive. Unemployed Roma have to find alternative ways to meet the two ends. Often, these alternatives are seasonal working or activities on polluted sites, collecting scrap, gathering of herbs, collecting mushrooms, etc. These are temporary and not sustainable activities which do not allow Roma to provide themselves a stable income. These incomes are generally sufficient to cover only the daily expenses related to food, they are dependent on the weather conditions and limited in time.

B) Housing conditions

The limited financial resources of the Roma lead them to live in extremely poor conditions. The FRA, United Nation Development Program, the World Bank and the European Commission survey show considerable differences between Roma and non-Roma households. In Romania for example more than 2.5 live in the same room. Most of the Roma live generally in isolated areas without sufficient housing space. In addition Roma housing often lacks basic equipment. 88% of Roma in Romania comparing to 58% of non-Roma are living in households without at least one of the following basic amenities: indoor kitchen, indoor toilet, indoor shower/bath. This gap is even more striking in Bulgaria where 78% of Roma comparing to 34% Bulgarians lack basic equipments.¹³ The provision of electricity, gas and water is not always assured which is in direct correlation with the hygiene in the Roma ghetto. Amnesty International concludes in its rapport of 2010 that 75 percent of Roma in Romania live in poverty, compared to 24 percent of the general Romanian population. In its rapport the organization states also that health and living conditions of Roma are among the worst in Romania.

C) Education achievement

The educational level of the Roma population in Europe is lower than any other socio-cultural group. En Europe only 15% of the Roma Youth achieves high school education compared to 70% non-Roma. Schooling of Roma children is difficult because of poverty, exclusion and discrimination of which Roma are subject to. It should be noted that when the percentage of Roma in a the class becomes high often non-Roma parents withdraw their children from school, which lead to creation of segregated schools. The former do provide low quality of education that do not allow students access to secondary and higher education. In 2011 United Nations Independent Expert on Minority Issues after visiting Bulgaria stated that 50 percent to 70 percent of Roma children are in segregated schools despite the programs of desegregation. The numbers of Roma children dropping out are estimated on 32%, followed by Bulgarians with 8% and Turks, 6 %¹⁴.

¹³ European union Agency for fundamental rights survey, *The situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States, Survey results at a glance*, 2012

¹⁴ Open Society Foundation, *Beyond Rhetoric: Roma Integration Roadmap for 2020*, Hungary, 2011.

Discrimination and rejection by the teacher is also a major cause which leads to low school attendance of the Roma pupils.

D) Political representation

Roma have political representation in Romania but it is not proportional to the percentage of the Roma population. According to Freedom House's rapport of 2010¹⁵ the political participation by Roma is also low. However, according to the United States Country Reports for 2009, there is one Roma organization represented in parliament, the Roma Party-Pro Europe. In Bulgaria the political representation of Roma is limited to some action of the civil society. There is not any political party to defend the Roma interests in the Parliament. In general, Roma people are badly integrated, they lack representation in the national institutions and continue to facing discrimination according to Human rights committee of United Nations (2008).

2) Free movement in the European Union

Freedom of movement, mobility rights or the right to travel is a part of Universal Declaration for human rights. According the Article 45.1 of the Charta of Fundamental Rights, EU citizens and members of their families have the right to move freely and to stay on the territory of the EU. As European citizen Roma from Bulgaria and Romania benefit from the freedom of movement since 2007. They are allowed to travel and stay on the territory of any member state of the European Union. Since the creation of the European Economic Community , the Treaty of Rome from 1957 have included the free movement of the workers. Article 48 of Treaty of Rome became Article 45 since the Treaty of Lisbon stated that the free movement of workers shall be assured within the Community. It entails the abolition of any discrimination based on nationality between workers of the Member States as regards employment, remuneration and other working conditions. The Treaty of Lisbon permits to European citizens to stay on the territory of the Member States and to be employed in accordance with legislative provisions, regulations and administrative provisions governing the employment of nationals. The Treaty of Maastricht introduces Article 18 which extends the freedom of movement and residence on the territory of the European Union to every citizen of the Union, subject to the limitations and conditions laid down in this Treaty and by the arrangements for its implementation.

¹⁵ Freedom House, *Freedom in the World report*, 2010

3) Roma migrants in France: subject of Populism on national level

Roma migration to France started before 2007 and was accelerated after 1st of January 2007 when Bulgaria and Romania joined the European Union. As European citizens Roma people are beneficiaries of legal right of free movement within European Union. Roma migration become an object to political discussions which creates a negative image of the Roma people and present them as a challenge for the immigration policies. Roma become object of populism especially before elections.

Roma question is used to divide the electorate and to make a distinction between the parties. Raphaël Liogier, a sociologist of religion and professor in sociologist of religions and professor of political science in Aix-en-Provence analyzes the original ingredients of the current populism, fueled by the collective sense of frustration. According to the author the populist speaks on behalf of the people, thus escaping the left / right division , mixing in his speech conservative and liberalist slogans. The sociologist makes a connection between the current populism and the populism in 1930. During this period the populism was based on the idea of ethno-nationalism where traditional enemies were the Jewish race. Later the image of the Mussulman, takes the profile of the enemy of the nation in this ideology. Liogier defines the time when the populist movement gains power as symbolic crises and crises of identity (rejection of the foreigner to defend it proper identity). According to the author the populism is present both in the two political currents: Left and Right. It is based on the notion of a western culture and aims to infuse the entire political class and gradually gnawing the rule of law. The withdrawal of the traditional values in the society such as religion practices, working class motivates politicians to find new ideologies to win larger electoral mass and exceed the traditional political cleavage. The Roma question is suitable to serve the populist idea. The Roma match the profile of the new threat: being Foreigners, coming from Eastern Europe, from post-communist and poor countries. Refusing integration of Roma is equal to refusing all these components.

III. Future development

1) The populism within the political discourses

The approaching of the European elections, the Roma migration has become a hot topic. Both the Right and the Left consider that this subject can be profitable if they take the side of the citizens who are dissatisfied by the presence of Roma. The local elections which predates the European accelerates more the process. Populism claims against Roma migrants continue to gain support with the approach of the local elections in March 2014 when many of the mayors will present themselves for a second mandate. They use the problem of Roma migration in France because it represent the commonly shared fear of migration flow from Eastern European countries. The image of the Roma people serves the populist parties depict the image of the poor worker from post-communist countries, workers who will compete with French citizens in time when the job competition is particularly high or, the migrants will benefit from certain social benefits such as: free medical insurance, family allowances, dole etc. Thus, Roma are considered as burden of the French working society. This is one of the reason why that the new government did not make any efforts to integrate the Roma migrants despite the national strategy for Roma inclusion (signed in 2011) and the fact that Roma face rejection by local authorities concerning housing, employment and education. On the contrary, the Government takes clear position against them. However, there are new political parties that defend Roma interests because this is a way to create an opposition with the mainstream and mobilize certain social groups that support the idea of Roma inclusion. To be more convincing some of these parties includes Roma in their lists but usually those Roma are not given the chance to be elected for representative. After an interview with a representative of such party it become clear that the purpose is not Roma participation in the political process but to create debates and to make Roma question more visible.

Only few thousand Roma are present in France but this question produces such a debate that shakes the Socialist. In a article of 24th September 2013 the newspaper Liberation explains that Roma issue in France is proof of populism practices before the elections. The newspaper notes left indicates that Roma become media topic for parties from the Right and small part of the Left (generally concentrated around Manuel Valls) few time before the elections to present the image of immigration and insecurity. Roma become easy target because of their vulnerability, lack of lobby

and lack of any political representation. This is a strategy for some parties such as UPM (Union for popular movement) and the National Front for instance to introduce the question of immigration. Its president Jean-Francois Copé, uses the social security system as an argument against migrants and shares his intention to cut the medical insurance provided from the state for free to migrants . François Fillon, member of the same party proposes to reduce to a minimum the migration flow. Nathalie Kosciusko-Morizet, member of UPM and candidate for the local elections states that Roma harass the Paris population and his colleague Nadine Morano endorse this statements saying that Roma have to leave the country. Rachida Dati, mayor of the 7th arrondissement in Paris, also claims that Roma harass the French population. His opponent, Anne Hidalgo states: "*Paris could not be a giant camp.*"¹⁶ Thus the position about Roma issue become a tool for distinction between the candidates and the different groups of the French electorate. Luc Jousse, UMP mayor of Roquebrune-sur-Argens and candidate for the local elections, whose remarks, recorded on 12 November 2013, provokes the reaction of the French society and political parties. The mayor was recorded saying that prefer firemen to come later after conflagration in Roma camp. This statement was used by political parties such as National Front and Socialist party as strategy for the elections even if the National Front have a clear anti-Roma position.

2) The impact of populism on the Roma situation

The situation of the Roma migrants in France grabbed the social attention. Often the Roma migrants are misrepresented and defined as beggars, offenders and population unwilling and incapable to integrate, danger and burden of the French society. Their poor condition of livings are often liked to the above mentioned to strengthen the stereotypes regarding the Roma. The negative social attitude towards this community has been recently used by political parties and leaders to increase their popularity and mobilize larger part of the electorate before the election in May.

Roma come in France with the expectation for better life, but face the similar conditions of life and rejection by the society. In spite of the effort of the Roma for integration, the French society do not accept them. In collaboration with the United Nations program for development and The World bank, the European Agency for fundamental rights conduct a survey 2012 in 11

¹⁶ Opinion international, *Entre populisme, manque de volonté politique et réponse européenne*, article, 27th of September 2013

European countries (including France). This study shows that the situation of Roma migrants in France is not better than in their countries of origin. The survey reveals that less than 14% of Roms are employed and 6% of them have a qualification for work . The claims also that 90% of the Roma live in extreme poverty. The results obtained in France are the worst in the whole European union. This statement has been confirmed by the Foreign committee in France in its report for 2012-2013. Its study shows that the situation of Roma does not improve significantly. The author, the French senator BILLOUT Michel, considers that the integration of Roma is possible after fighting the prejudices that Roma are subject to. The Interministerial Delegation for accommodation and access to housing in France also published the results of its second survey on illegal camps in France, conducted in August 2013 and shows that the number of the Roma in France is 40 times less higher than Roma population in Spain. The survey found that 394 camps shelter 16 949 people which more than 4300 are children, a population coming from Bulgaria and Romania. Most of them have lived in France for more than 5 years. These camps are concentrated in a few areas : 39 % of camps installed in Ile -de- France, (which 130 are situated in Seine-Saint-Denis department) the others are situated in Nord-Pas -de- Calais regions , Pays de la Loire , Provence -Alpes- Côte d' Azur, Rhône -Alpes and Languedoc -Roussillon. More than two thirds of the camps are located on public area and more than one third are affected by a judicial decision (decision from the Prefecture which imposed to Roma to leave the area)

Sarcelles, Ile-de-France, The biggest Roma camp



Source of the photo: 20 Minutes

The condition in Roma camps are largely discussed because of the poor and dangerous living conditions that they provide to their inhabitants. More precisely, the camps do not meet the criteria for basic housing, and are the cause of negative consequences for the health.

Recently the Roma camps became an important element of populism in France. The bad living conditions in Roma camps are used to justify the practices of destruction that they are subject to. It is true that Roma accommodation represents sheds constructed with instable materials: lumber, plastic, nylon, which have the family with children, at least 4-5 people. These improvised houses lack space, basic equipment etc. Meeting the hygiene standards is a big challenge in the Roma camp: there is not running water and electricity, space for taking shower, garbage cans. In most of the camp the presence of rat and bedbug are easily noticeable. These living conditions are unacceptable but it is the only solution for Roma. After interviews with Roma families that were made for the current research in Ile-de-France it became clear that Roma want to have a proper accommodation with the necessary living conditions but it is impossible for them to rent proper housing for their families. The accommodation is the main issue that foreigners face in France because of hard conditions to rent it. Each person who wants to rent a flat has to have a guarantee who works in France and receive salary the amount of which covers the amount of the rent. Second condition is the deposit (the amount is equal of the rent for 1 month). Third condition requires providing a document that to justify that the resident has sufficient (for the French standard) income to pay the accommodation. These requirements are achievable only for small group of migrants and practically exclude foreigners from Eastern Europe. It seems that it is used as a tool to limit the migration flow from poor countries. Insignificant number of Roma have an accommodation in the city and normally these people are Roma students, or Roma, integrated in the French society. In these cases Roma often obtain it without revealing their ethnic identity. Even if Roma are financially able to cover the conditions to rent proper accommodation they have a low chance to receive such it if they present themselves as Roma (or their ethnic origin is noticed) because of the prejudices existing in the French society.

Accommodation is the main issue that Roma face in France, but there are many other important issues related to migrants' life: schooling, finding a job, access to medical care. Roma migrate to France with the expectation to find a job and support their families to survive in

Romania and Bulgaria but once arriving they face many barriers which are due partly to the complexity of the French administrative system but also because of the State position regarding the Roma integration. To settle down, finding accommodation is a long procedure. In addition, in order to settle down the migrants needed till 31 December 2013 to have a regular situation: to be employed or student, to have sufficient incomes, to have permanent address, to have medical insurance. Roma people coming to France, could not fulfill the state requirements, they do not have access to proper housing and employment. Without collaboration of the local authorities, and the civil society Roma do not have any other possibilities than to build barracks and survive by begging and collecting scrap. Several Town Councils and NGO propose social assistance to Roma for receiving permanent address which is needed to start all administrative procedures for schooling, learning French, preparing the package of documents for work permit¹⁷ and finding job, but this goes against the position of France regarding immigration, and especially migration from Eastern Europe. Two municipalities in Ile-de-France have taken measures for the Roma integration: municipalities of Montreuil and Bobigny. The local authorities built villages of integration and proposed assistance to Roma for their integration in the society.

After interviews with representatives of these municipalities (who preferred to stay anonymous) few elements related to Roma integration become clear but also the gap between the position of municipalities and the State position about Roma. The municipality of Montreuil suggests a good example for adopting integration strategies and policies as well as example for cooperation between the local authorities and Roma (particularly for the active participation of Roma in the process). A Roma women L.H, activist from Montreuil who was interviewed proves that the local authorities invited her and other Roma to become part of the project of integration of Roma. Owing to municipality's project many Roma received work permit and assistance to find a job, several families receive public housing and most of the children go to school. Because of the favor of the population of Montreuil municipality and the successful results on Roma integration the parties-candidate for local elections adopt positions in favor of the Roma integration. Thus, the Roma question in France is articulated in relation to politics and used to reach certain groups that will favor the Roma integration in France. Once again Roma question has been used for the purposes of the French populism. Furthermore, some parties even includes Roma activists in their list of nominated candidates for the elections in June. Two of my interviewees have clearly

¹⁷ Till 31st of December Bulgarian and Romanian citizens need a work permit for working in France.

supported that claim. One of them pass through the whole process of negotiations. It should be noted that Roma are in the last places in the list and thus they don't have chance to become representatives.

The interviewed person describes the positives outcomes of the local integration policies in Bobigny, particularly in relation to schooling. However, the interviewee also described the conflict between the Town Consul and the Prefecture. According to him the previous Prefect has ordered many times the expulsion of Roma and destruction of their camps. Mister K.B told that the new Prefect continue the evictions and practices the measure to deport them to their countries of origin. The interviewee shared that this action happens every time very fast without the presence of any media and without respecting the law related to deportation of Foreigners. Usually the buses arrive near the camps and Policemen order to Roma to go their and to sign a paper which is completed in advance. Policemen add only the name of the deported person. After a such action a Roma girl (9 years old) stayed alone because the Police deported her parents. It should be noted that Roma who have the needed documentation that allows them to stay in France were also deported. Many times the Town council resolves the conflicts about Roma expulsion with the Prefecture in the Court or by contacting the minister of education. The interviewed person told that the Town Council ensured place for Roma camps and the schooling of children but is not sure that this practice of Roma inclusion will continue after the local elections if a party from the Right for example came in power.

These two examples show that Roma integration is not impossible in France and depend on the willingness of the authorities. France is signed the national strategy for integration of Roma people and have an European funding for it. The French journalist Sylvain Moillard sayd in Liberation newspaper that since 2007 53 integration projects directed to Gens de voyage or people living in camps (also Roma) were co-financed by the European Social Funds for total 4 million euros. But the practice shows that only many Roma are subject to projects of accommodation (villages of insertion/integration) and the evacuations of Roma camps is made without any alternative for housing. The Bobigny's example is proving the conflict between the Municipality and State position about Roma migrants in France. Today Roma remains difficult because of the position of the State regarding the integration of the migrants. It should be noticed that officially France should accept immigrants from other countries of the European Union because of conditions which France accept as a member of the European Union.

The low level of education is discussed as one of the reasons for the difficult position of the Roma in France. They don't have the necessary qualification to work in France and they may be burden of the state because they may benefit from the social security system . On the other hand, France do not take measures, but rather presents obstacles for the education of the Roma. School enrollment of the Roma migrants' pupils becomes a very difficult to achieve, but the reason is not because Roma families are unwilling to enroll their children at school, but because of the lack of collaboration of the school authorities. A schooling mediator from local NGO states that several schools refuse to enroll Roma children. (The interviewee also preferred to stay anonymous because his statement may reflect of his work with French schools.)

Another important issue that impedes children's education are the evictions of the Roma. The latest report of the League of Human Rights (LDH) and the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC), the number of eviction that the government made in 2013 is two times higher than 2011 and 2012 with 165 camps (19 380 people) compared to 9404 people in 2012. This results shows that most of Roma were evicted in 2013. In this context, the act of 26 August was elaborated to propose a methodology for local authorities to find solutions of the question of the Roma evictees. This document specifies that the eviction and reintegration of the Roma should be executed in accordance with the principle of access to education and healthcare (including access to immunization and maternal and child healthcare). In regards to childcare and hosting, the act encourage at first, the provision of temporary accommodation then, provision of longterm accommodation by the State and local authorities. In addition this document suggests, in order to promote employability, taxes paid to the French Office for Immigration and Integration (OFII) by the employers for hiring Romanian and Bulgarian nationals to be removed. Despite the lifting of the restriction for Bulgarians and Romanians migrants to work in EU from 1 January 2014, the access to employment remain almost impossible for Roma. The administrative requirements: the language, the permanent address with its proofs, but also the prejudices regarding Roma are the reasons which do not permit them to be legally employed and present obstacles for their integration.

This act represents some efforts on behalf of French government to facilitate the Roma integration but in reality the practices during and after the eviction show disregarding the claims made in the act. It seems that this document become only a paper without any real application. Saimir Mile, a Roma activist in Ile-de-France, Chairman of the Roma NGO La voix des Rroms (Roma voice) in a interview argues that solutions, measures for integration are proposed for

limited number of Roma people. Often, pregnant women or women with young children are provided short term accommodation in isolated area with limit access to common to transportation. These people are hosted in hotels chosen by the State where the living condition do not meet the basic standard of living. Roma receive rooms in hotels situated in municipalities far from the city , and the original location of the Roma camp. Often Roma refuse to go there because of the distance and the lack of source of income that the suggested area provides. For most of the evictees living in the proposed area equals going abroad, in a unknown territory which will hinder their activities for earning their daily bred: collecting scrab. Beside, those Roma lost connections with the local social assistant or NGO which helps them. The Roma camp of Rosny-sous-Bois proves the above mentioned. Once the camp was destroyed the local NGO lost their traces and stop working with the children to facilitate their integration in French school.

Roma, as citizens of Bulgaria and Romania are also beneficiaries of rights of free movement in European Union. In France this procedures requires Roma to fulfill several preconditions such as incomes that meets the French life standard and medical insurance. The provision of medical insurance become topic for political discussions regarding the immigration and the social security system in France. According to the law Roma may demand the free medical insurance and medical cares. This possibility have been often articulated by political leaders and parties to strengthen the negative attitudes toward Roma, to present them as danger for the public order and burden for the social security system. The insignificant number of few thousand Roma migrants has been used to create a big social issue by political leaders of Left and Right parties.

3) The European election 2014 - a challenge for the cohesion in Europe

European elections of May 2014 already raise concerns related to the risk of low participation of the population and the fact that populist parties are gaining power. Indeed, it seems that the results of the European elections could give " *most Eurosceptic or anti-European Parliament in the history of European institutions*"¹⁸. Christophe Bouillaud, a professor of political science at the Institute of political studies in Grenoble identifies the level of populism: national and European. At European level, the populism may show one direction to all the political parties that do not belong to three major trans-European parties that dominated Europe since 1970s. These three major parties are the European People's Party (EPP), the Party of European Socialists (PES)

¹⁸ Enriko Letta, Italian minister, Le Monde, 2th of November 2013

and the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe. In this context the political parties that do not have significant representation in the Parliament may show an important success during the elections. It seems that to be the logical consequence of the economic, social and political crises across the European Union. However, it is doubtful that those populist parties will gain significant power in the European Parliament, in which the influence of political forces depends on the number of seats, but also of ability to build coalitions with other parties. The populist parties are structurally weak in terms of these two criteria. Hence the quantitative increase of populist parties should not affect the functioning and decision-making of the European Parliament.

On the other hand, populism is not a new phenomenon. At the end of the nineteenth century Boulangism (named after General Boulanger), populist movements between the two wars had attempted to exploit the financial scandals of the representatives of the French Republic. Populism was developed in 1929 because of the financial crises; xenophobia was developed after the reception of immigrants, Jews. After the war, Pierre Poujade, called for revolt against taxes and against the state. Poujadism seems to be the product of economic change in the years of modernization in the transition from a very rural economy to an economy of mass consumption that destroyed the use of small traders and small farmers.

The recent economic crisis of 2008 in Europe has serious consequences on the European economy, the unemployment rate has increased, especially in countries in transition such as those from Eastern Europe. This leads to an increase of the migration flow from Eastern to Western Europe. Western countries are more preferable destinations because of their relative economic stability. But the migration flow contributes to raising the unemployment rate in those countries, and the increase of the populist movements against the migrants from Eastern Europe. France is one of the countries where the share of those political movements is higher, and the measures taken against the migration flow from Eastern countries are more strict. The French political class made the fight against unemployment a priority whereas limiting the migration flow is part of those politics. Thus, the politics in France takes a more ethno-centric approach. The sociologist Rogier compares this phase of populism with 1930 when the raising up of populism based on ethno-nationalism was observed. However, today the European Union adopts and enforces policies to react adequately to economic crises and assures the respect of citizens' rights and meantime to ensure multiculturalism in Europe. Thus, EU acts as an organ that ensures the free movements in Europe and the right of the citizens to work on the territory of the European Union.

European elections could will be the event which will bring opponents from the left of and the right, populist parties, parties that encrease their influence and those that traditionally represent the EU citizens. There, the citizens are invited to reflect upon the plans for the future of Europe such of those that traditionally represent the three major European streams: the Christian Democrats, Socialists and Social Democrats, the Liberals.

In France this phenomenon is also observed. According to a survey IFOP made for the newspaper *Nouvel Observateur* (New observer) the National Front is has higher chances to win the the European Elections in France. This survey shows the raise of rating of the populist parties in the Elections because of the lack of concrete vision regarding EU of their opponents. Only the National Front has a clear position about the European Union and its issue such as the economic crises, the euro, the migration. National Front and the UPM suggest the government to oppose to opening of Schengen¹⁹ for Bulgaria and Romania. Thus, from 2014, according to those parties, the migration flow from those two countries will be limited. In addition, National Front will also resolve the Roma question by simply banning their migration flow to France. Instead of endorsing the government's commitment to the strategy for Roma inclusion, the Government will be able to limit or evict the illegal Roma migrants from Bulgaria and Romania.

The question about introducing proper border control to reduce the migration flow is also discussed by the National Front. It uses Roma issue to better illustrate migration flow and in the same time uses it as a strategy to attract new members. It has a membership form dedicated to position against Roma migrants which aims to attract those against the Roma presence in France. To consolidate more this idea Roma are often presented as a treat for the French society because of their different life standard (and life style) as claimed by the minister of interior Manuel Valls during his speech on 17 September 2013 presented by the national media. According to the minister Roma are determined to return in their home country when they may practice their lifestyle which is different than the French society and thus Valls strengthen the stereotypes related to Roma, especially those related to begging and stealing. Insecurity is often evoked by the same minister during his interview in the Media. Thus, that makes an impression that Roma are danger for the security of the French society. This the Roma question has been overwhelmingly

¹⁹ Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland (not a European Union Member State), Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein (not a European Union Member State), Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway (not a European Union Member State), Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Swiss

discussed in the Media in relation to criminality, homelessness, and to represent the negative impact of the migration for France. Nicolas Sarkozy also uses this question for his political interest to justify the practices of destruction of Roma camps. In an interview in France inter the actual minister of interior Manuel Valls claims that Roma don't have any vocation to integrate the country. In fact the situation is different than the political discourse.

The French journalist Charlotte Chaffanjon explains the factors behind Valls arguments against Roma migrants are his own political interests. According to a survey published in Figaro magazine 33% of French design Valls as a favorite candidate for the Presidential election in 2017 comparing to only 9% who will support Holland, the actual president. The minister uses the question of Roma migration because according to a survey²⁰ 70% of French are in favor Roma to return in their home countries²¹ and say what the population want to hear: less migrants in France for protecting French employment. In reality the unemployment rate is higher, especially among youth (till 25 years old). The measures adopted by the government are not sufficient and the unemployment remains an important issue in France. In this context Foreigners are perceived as rivals for limited number of jobs. The minister's discourse is widely supported by political leaders and politicians from the same party: the Socialist, such as mayor of Evry Francis Chouat. His statement about Roma "*in many camps engaged in illegal trade, child begging, prostitution ...*"²² creates the idea that Roma are offenders and their activities represent danger for the public order. In the same article another politician from the same party, Michel Destot, mayor of Grenoble claims that "*the construction anarchic of Roma camps provokes situations of terrible tension that we can not solve on local level....*" and adds that "*the European Union have to find solutions for these population flow*" which give the feeling that the European Union are responsible for this situation because its migration policies. This message is addressed to those social groups dissatisfied with the European Union and the Euro zone.

Tension between Roma and non-Roma has never been discussed but might be created by those political discourses. The Media underline in its reports the fact that each eviction and destruction of Roma camp happens without any violence, but also suggest that Roma may be violent. The Media are often invited when the authorities proceeds with eviction of Roma thus

²⁰ Harris interactive for current values study

²¹ France inter, 2 October 2013

²² Monde, 26 September 2013

creating the illusion that the French society are subject to huge migration flow of illegal Roma migrants. In fact in 2013 the one particular group of migrants was several time displaced from their camps and the Media has reported it. Many of the reports suggests that first there is large number of Roma migrants, second suggest that these evictions are due to violent behavior of the Roma, and third justify the numerous evictions that the new government, led by the Socialist party, carry out since it is on power (2012).

4)The media as political instrument in the process

The media are the mains tool for dissemination of information to a large number of individuals²³. Medias represent an impersonal institution or a tool for dissemination of information or opinions. They became indispensable for the modern society. In democratic countries the media forms the "fourth power" because of their direct impact on the society.

The presentation of certain pieces of information to a large number of people tend to create a kind of common thoughts and shared opinions. Taking into account this specificity the Media become a target for politicians especially before elections for disseminating their ideas and influence the public opinion. Freedom of the press in democratic countries permit this process but sometimes it leads to misuse of information. Most of the medias have political preferences (for ex. Le Monde (Left), Le Figaro, Right) which fact presents an obstacle for the objectivity of presenting certain information. In other words, different medias adopt different position in relation to their political orientation so they became a factor in the political life of the country and a could be used as means of control or manipulation of public opinions.

Before the election the interest of the media regarding Roma became particularly high. The Roma question is one of those political issue in France where the medias has plaid a major role. As described above Roma have been used to create the negative image of the migrant from Eastern Europe. Often Roma are depicted in negative light. Medias are not only a tool to dissimilate these ideas but also one of the main actors in the process. Owing to numerous and frequent reports concerning Roma evictions, the media has been contributed to representing the Roma from Eastern Europe as danger for the French society. Second, the media become the main channel for dissimilating the idea that Roma are burden promoted by populist parties. Thus, several candidates for the elections get noticed while before supporting such claims they were

²³ Collins English Dictionary, HarperCollins, 2003

not popular. Their position against Roma help them to win the largest parts of the French electorate (that is negative towards migrants in time of post-economic crises).

Owing to the position against immigration several parties (generally from the Right) increase their rating before the election. The National Front become the party that is most likely to win the European elections in France. During the last few months the medias broadcast the evictions of the Roma, while before this period the medias were not interested in this topic. Hence, it seems that certain medias channel the information that certain political figures are willing to transmit to a larger audience and thus to influence the public opinion. The media has become an instrument for the political parties and candidates to disseminate ideas, to spread their political messages against the immigration to France. Often, the medias present Roma as unwilling to and lacking of capacity to integrate.

The positive examples are not popular and rarely presented. During the interview with K.B working at the Town Council in Bobigny (Ile-de-France), K.B confirmed the lack of media interest to present the positive examples for Roma integration. According to the interviewee, the Media has never reported the successes of the Roma integration in this district, the projects of the Town Council, its role to ensure place for Roma camps etc. As K.B argues medias are only interested in presenting the negative events, scandals, criminality particularly when that concerns Roma. Bobigny is a town part of Seine-Saint-Denis departement where are living mostly foreigners from different ethnic background. The largest number of reports about this location are related to criminality which further stigmatize this population. The larger number of report broadcast the negative image of this community - poor, uneducated, burden for the French society, population. The majority of reports concerning Roma are related to evictions or bad living conditions in the Roma camps. These reports influence the public opinion and make an impression that the claims that Roma are using the social security system and are unwilling to integrate are true. Thus, the media contribute to the creation of the negative image of the migrant Roma from Bulgaria and Romania.

The political games put the Roma question as hot topic. Presenting the Roma in negative lights claiming that Roma are burden and threat for the French society, politicians mobilize larger social groups. The reality and the positive examples lack the attention of the media and as a result people accept only the negative image of the Roma created by the certain political parties together with the media. Nevertheless, the political game suggest an opposition as well. Despite the existence of parties that position themselves against the Roma migration, they are parties that take

pro-Roma , pro-migration approach. Unfortunately, as the research suggests these claims serves only as a tool for gaining power, not for the Roma integration. Hence, either positive or negative, in both cases the Roma questions in France serves certain populist parties for their political gain.

IV Conclusion

Recently, the Roma question became essential issue throughout European Union. Several strategies are implemented, which aim to analyze and to tackle problems such as discrimination, social isolation, and segregation that Roma are subject to. The high level of unemployment, the housing and health issues the bad living conditions, the discrimination, the poor level of education are problems, identical for all Roma across Europe. In addition, the bad economic situation in the Balkan's countries troubled furthermore the picture of the Roma life and lead to Roma social exclusion. These social and economic conditions press Roma to leave Eastern Europe and migrate to Western countries. Thus, the Roma migration to Western Europe become an issue.

Defined as burden of the state, potentially dangerous group, prone to criminality, Roma migrants are often a pretext for disseminating ideas against the migration from Eastern Europe. These ideas have been used for political purposes especially before the European elections this year. The French context has become a particular example for the abovementioned.

The growing number of populist parties before elections in France have used the Roma questions for their political gain. The dissatisfaction of the French society with the European policies that grant the right of free movement to its citizen and the fear of migration flow from Central and Eastern European countries to France have been discussed at large by different political formations. The negative attitudes towards the Eastern Europeans was adopted by certain populist parties to mobilize voters. Those parties and political leaders suggest policies that aim to stop the migration flow for Eastern Europe, especially the migration from Bulgaria and Romania. In such discourse, Roma migrants embodied the absolute negative image of the migrant from Eastern Europe, this fact partly explains why Roma are rejected by the French society. The fact that Roma socio-economic conditions are the most difficult in the European union despite the European policies for fighting their isolation have been used to define them as people incapable to integrate. Thus, populist parties define the Roma migrants as danger for the French society.

The impact of these ideas on Roma migrants life is considerable. The growing of the negative representation of the Roma before the European elections led to raising the hostile attitudes towards Roma and the prejudices concerning the migration from Eastern Europe. The Media

contribution is particularly important in the process of creating the image of the Roma as threat for the French public order and social security.

Furthermore, these facts may led to profiling of Roma (similar to Arabian minorities in France), as potential criminals. This situation might be worsened if populist practices against Roma continue to take on national medias. The pro-Roma civil society dial gently with the process and do not oppose openly the government position about Roma. The national NGO's work for betterment of the Roma situation without provoking big social debates.

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