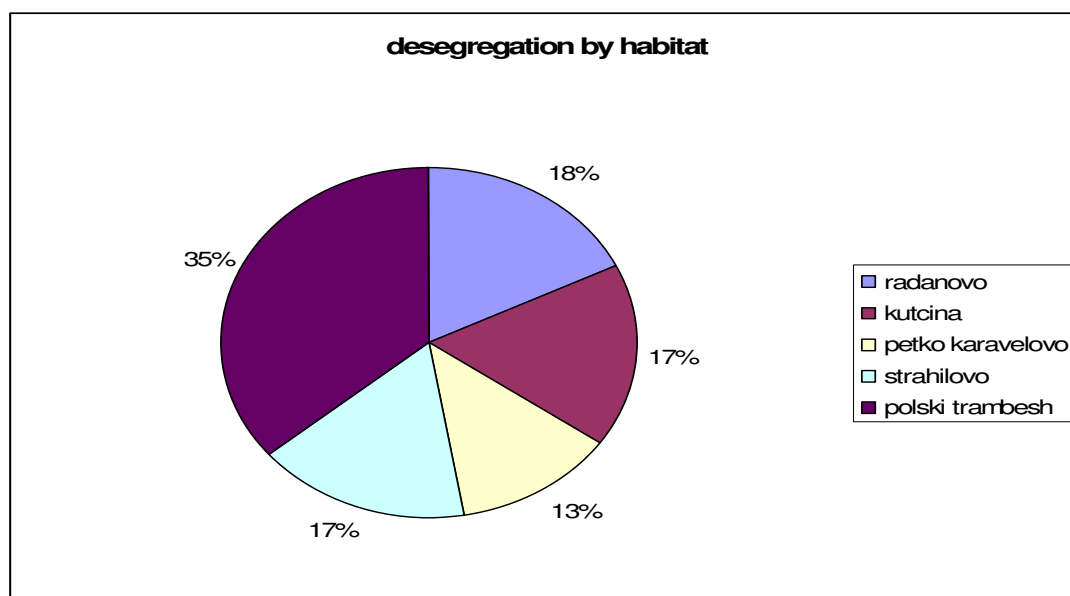


Statistics with respect of different Roma sub-groups

To show inner difference regarding the situation within the different sub-groups in the Roma community we have selected five habitats, that represents different Roma sub groups within the Roma community in the Municipality of Polski Trambesh. The Roma community in the Municipality of Polski Trambesh is consisted by three major Roma sub groups; those are:

1. Horohane Roma, they are the larger numerous group in the Municipality. They settled during the time of the Ottoman Empire – 13th, 14th centuries. They follow Islam, mixed with many Christian elements. They speak the Romany language mixed with a number of Turkish words. Most of them use Turkish along with the Romany language. Most of the Horahane-Roma have preference for Turkish self-identity: and often deny their Romani origin, although both the Bulgarian and Turkish population still perceive them as Roma. This is the most numerous Roma sub-group within the Municipality.
2. Dassikane Roma, they are the second larger group within the Municipality. They settled during the time of the Ottoman Empire – 13th, 14th centuries along with the Horohane Roma. They follow Orthodox Christianity. They speak the Romany language. Most of them use the Bulgarian along with the Romany language. There is a tendency of converting to Bulgarian consciousness among them. This is the second in numbers Roma sub-group within the Municipality.
3. Vlaho Roma are the smallest in number Roma sub group within the Municipality of Polski Trambesh. Their settlement in Bulgarian lands can be dated back to approximately the 17th - 18th centuries when their ancestors came from Wallachia (mostly runaway slaves within the Ottoman Empire). They have preferred Romanian self-consciousness and speak an ancient variant of Romanian language. Their religion is Orthodox Christianity. This is the smallest Roma sub-group in the Municipality.

Figure 1



The village of Radanovo is one of the biggest villages in the Municipality of Polski Trambesh with population of 1, 943 people. This is the village with the most numerous Horohane Roma population within the Municipality of Polski Trambesh, near 850¹ people.

The village of Kutcina is a small village with total population of 695 people; here the Vlaho Roma sub group is represented with near 80 people.

The village of Petko Karavelovo have a total population of 1, 841 people; in this village are represented Horohane and Dassikane Roma sub groups with near 500 people.

The village of Strahilovo have a total population of 1, 109 people; here the Dassikane Roma are represented with near of 400 people.

The administrative center of the Municipality of Polski Trambesh, Town of Polski Trambesh is populated by 5, 561 people. Here two big communities of Dassikane Roma and Horohane Roma numbers together near 1100 people.

Data on the Figure 1 shows share of Roma from particular habitats (with respect to different Roma sub-groups) that have sought assistance from the Roma community mediators. Despite the fact that the village of Kutcina is the smallest by population and with the smallest Roma sub-group from the presented habitats, the overall share of Roma from this village that have approached community mediators for assistance is equal to shares of Roma from larger villages as Radanovo and Strahilovo. To explain this data dependency on number of the population = percentage of Roma seeking assistance formula isn't enough. This formula can't explain also the lowest share of Roma that have approached Roma community mediators from the second numerous village from the presented four – Petko Karavelovo.

This situation can be explained with the different situations of the different Roma sub-groups in the Municipality of Polski Trambesh. Roma community isn't a homogenous group, different sub-groups within it preserved their own ethno social characteristics.

The smallest Roma sub-group within the Municipality of Polski Trambesh, the Vlaho Roma are the most vulnerable from all of the Roma sub-groups. This Roma sub-group is the most closed to the outsiders one, for long period of time they have practiced inner marriages and now they prefer not to mixed with other Roma sub-groups and with the majority. Thus they became dependant only on the internal family lines and to the inner mechanisms of community mutual help. As they are numerous minority in the Municipality of Polski Trambesh these mechanisms for inner community mutual help are insufficient and they are most favor to use and depend on the mediators help.

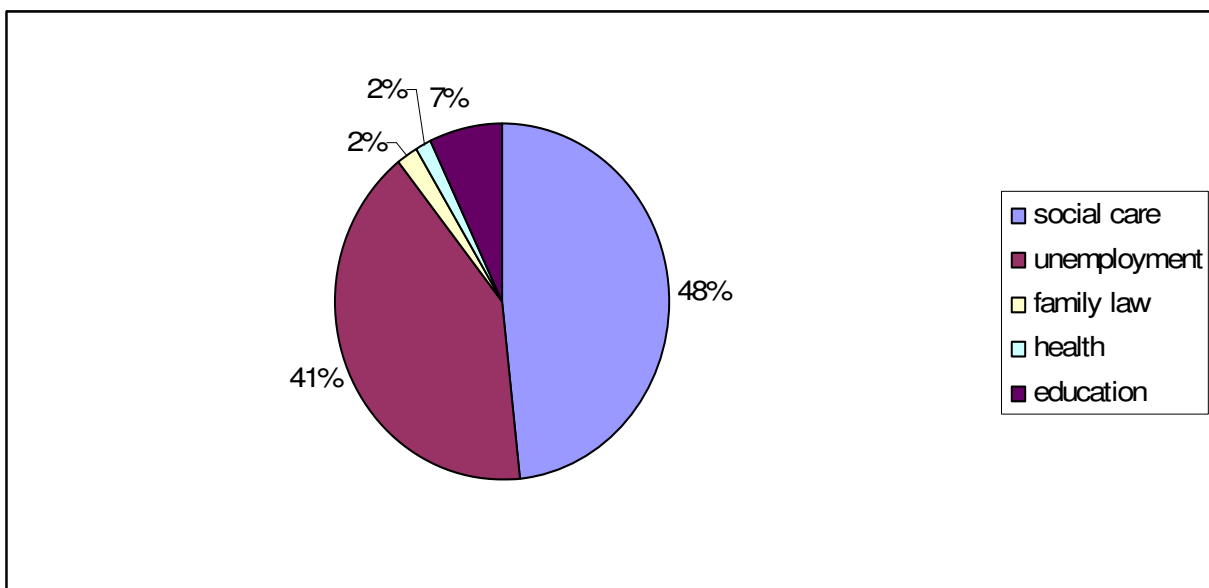
Communities of Horohane and Dassikane Roma on the other hand are most open to the outsiders Roma sub-groups, whereas they prefer mostly to cooperate between themselves and not with other Roma sub-groups as well, but they are open to cooperation with Bulgarians and Turks. In some cases they furiously deny their Roma origin and prefer to be perceived as Bulgarians or Turks. As the most numerous Roma sub-groups they have more possibilities to

¹ Here and after numbers of different Roma communities are gathered by the NGO “Roma - Together”

use inner community mechanisms for mutual help. These factors explain to some extent the lower rate that to be expected comparing the percentage of the Roma community/Majority within the village of Petko Karavelovo *vis-à-vis* other habitats. In this particular village DPS political party (Movement for liberties and freedoms, political party that working toward Turkish minority interests) have a strong influence on the Horohane Roma sub-group. Attitudes to present their identity as Turkish in some extend capsulate their interactions with other Roma sub-groups members. The self consciousness issue is also presented in other presented habitats inhabited by the Horohane Roma such as Polski Trambesh and Radanovo. A difference here lies in the social status of Roma communities within the different habitats. In the Town of Polski Trambesh and Radanovo, Roma lives in segregated neighborhoods (mahala) and suffer from many problems that forcing them more usually to seek assistance, the village of Petko Karavelovo however is populated by Roma integrated families, dispersed among the majority of the population, most of them have regular jobs and are not hardly dependant on the social welfare system what is other factor to stops them in approaching Roma mediators for assistance.

Research on the human rights situation of the local community

Figure 2

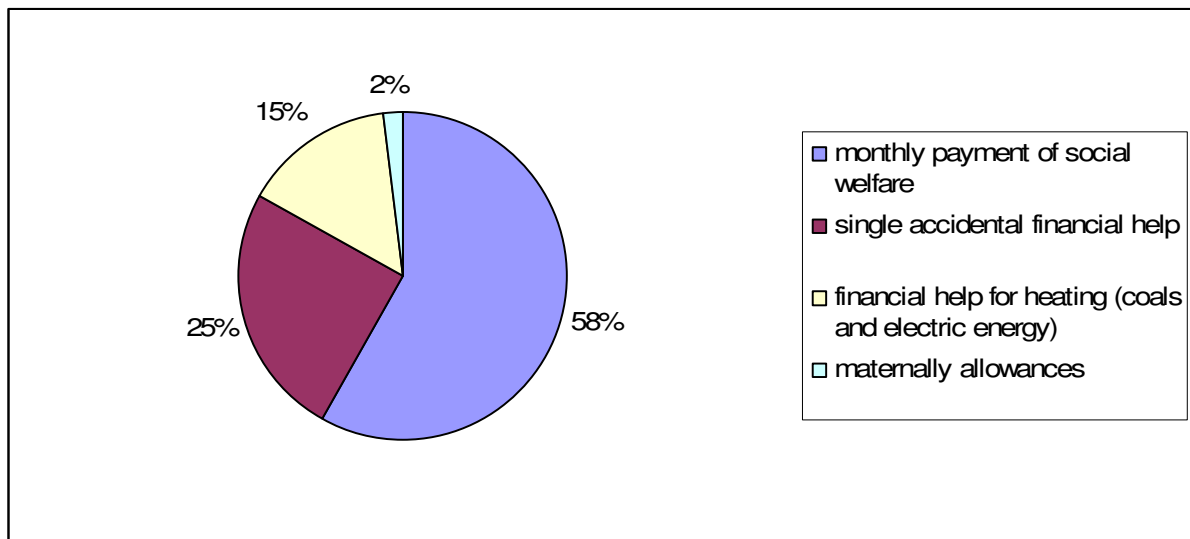


On Figure 2 are presented in shares different problems affecting the local Roma community. Shares' percentage is calculated on the number of cases for each one of the shares from the overall number of cases for 2006th year in that our NGO were engaged by requests from the local Roma. Further breakdown under these general segments provides information on the content of every each of the major shares. This is done with respect mainly to two of our programs – “Roma community mediators” and the program for legal help as the Roma mediators and our legal consultants have maintained everyday contacts with the local Roma, engaging themselves in the different type of Roma problems. Under each segment we do presenting concrete cases along with an overview that illustrates problems and where are the gaps lies in front of the enjoyment of minority human rights.

Under the social care segment are included different issues regarding Roma’s interaction with the local office of the governmental social agency which are mainly connected with monthly payment of social welfare, single accidental financial help, financial help for heating (coals, wood and electric energy) and maternally allowances.

Further break down on the type of the problems regarding social care:

Figure 3



Biggest share of problems under the social cared segment are based on either refusing or cutting out Roma families from their monthly social welfare allowances.

Cases concerning refusing of issuance of the **social welfare monthly allowances** are caused by incorrectly fulfilled forms for registering to the monthly welfare service or due to not presenting of all required necessary documental proofs to this form. These problems are easy to solve but their required a quick reaction for fulfilling of forms and finding of necessary documental proofs in the short period of time. Nevertheless the social agency officials are reluctant to provide further assistance to the local Roma on how to fulfill correctly registration forms. Social agency officials often answers that Roma are so many and it is impossible to give a personal attention to every each of them. However these cases are most easily solved by the Roma community mediators as they required just an explanation to the people applied for the welfare allowances and slightly help in obtaining required documental proofs to their registration forms.

Cases concerning cutting out Roma families from monthly welfare allowances are more complicated. Stopping the social welfare to these that are currently receiving such allowances is an administrative punishment under the Law on Social Welfare and in some circumstances can affect the whole family for the period of one year. Thus the process of solving this problem requires an administrative litigation to be started. Most of the administrative acts that punish the family as stopping their monthly welfare allowances are based on really violations of the Law on Social Welfare by the local Roma. It is a practice within the local Roma community to send younger mans in the cities (or in abroad) as a construction workers or other type of low qualified workers to earn money but the rest of the family, i.e. wives and

children, to continue receive monthly welfare allowances. This is a violation under the Law on Social Welfare and leads to stopping the whole family from the social welfare. Nevertheless testimonies of the local Roma shows that they are often abused by the local social agency officials, i.e. called lazy and layers, but none of this cases were documented, or observed by a third person. However we are concerned on the number of Roma that are systematically cut out from the welfare on the basis of alleged (not proved) violations. In some cases social agency officials pushed the law to fare and use only alleged violations of the Law on Social Welfare as a ground to inflict an administrative punishment. This can be found in the case of Roma from the village of Strahilovo: during the year he and his wife have left the republic of Bulgaria for the period of one month to visit a sanatorium, funds for this were given by their daughter married and working in Belgium for several years. After they're back the local social agency official issuing administrative act with this inflicts administrative punishment against this Roma in stopping him from a social welfare for the period of one year. As it is clearly stated in the Law on Social Welfare "...leaving the Republic of Bulgaria on any self sponsored trip in abroad." is a ground for stopping the person committed it from the social welfare allowances. Local official refuses to believe that the trip of the Roma concerned and his wife was funded by his daughter, despite the fact that he has legal papers to proof that the money for the trip and for the medical treatment were granted by her. An administrative litigation succeeds to that this Roma to be registered again on the social welfare monthly allowances.

Single accidental financial help; Financial help for heating; Maternally allowances

Roma community mediators have been approached repeatedly by the local Roma for assistance in application to the single accidental financial help social service. Under the Law on Social Welfare several opportunities exists to receive single time financial help for accidental purposes such as creating of accessible architecture environment for disability persons within their homes, small grants for purchasing books, clothes and textbooks for pupils if their family can't afford to purchase ones and for any urgent social needs. The amount of these grants is legally banded to five times of the minimal wage but issuance of one is within the power of the director of the local social agency office and is restricted on funds being available. Working in close cooperation with the director of the local social agency office our NGO succeeded to further issuance of such single accidental financial help to several Roma families, mostly as grants for purchasing clothes and textbooks to pupils. Despite the success we account very low level of knowledge among the Roma community for the existing opportunities in receiving such financial help.

Cases regarding the financial help for heating as it provided by the local office of the social agency that concerns Roma are mainly in providing assistance in fulfilling forms for applying to this financial help. Nevertheless some cases were documented that Roma families after receiving of their coals and woods as a grant under this social program, selling them to earn money. Those are particularly poor families, with almost zero incomes and they have used money earned from the sell to buy food and clothes to their children. Despite that this in fact is a violation of the Law on Social Welfare, our NGO lobbying in front of the local office of social agency to prevent these families to be fully cut out from such financial help in the future. If it is going to happen this Roma will provide heating to their homes with wood thefts and illegal felling. A solution to the problem was found – those Roma families weren't punished for this violation and will be provided during the next year with financial help to pay their electricity as a source of heating.

Roma community mediators were approached for assistance to fulfill registration forms for obtaining maternally allowances and to clarify the administrative procedure about the process of receiving of these allowances.

Further break down on the type of the problems regarding unemployment:

Under the unemployment segment are included different issues regarding Roma's interaction with the local Labour Office which are mainly connected with the process of monthly registrations as unemployed persons which is a condition for obtaining monthly social welfare allowances and engagement in different social programs designed to increase number of employed persons, such as “from social welfare to employment” program, different training courses for prequalification and others.

The Roma in Bulgaria are disproportionately affected by the unemployment. Reports tell us that Roma will be denied a job where both Roman and non-Roma apply for it. Thus Roma people became dependent on the social welfare system and start immigrating in search of better job opportunities. Number of the unemployed people in the Municipality of Polski Trambesh have arise at 4,898 from 3, 320 two years ago². Almost eighty percent of the Roma in the Municipality of Polski Trambesh are unemployed.

Problems of Roma under the unemployment segment lies mostly in need of assistance for fulfilling the registration form and clarifying the procedure and administrative punishments inflicted by the Labour office to the local Roma. Not only illiterate Roma have need of assistance in fulfilling forms for registration in the Labour office and clarifying of administrative procedures regarding Labour Office activities, but also those who are literate. This is determined from the very low legal and civic culture among the local Roma. The overall administrative procedure for the registering is unclear to the local Roma. Thus Roma community mediators have provided 1260 consultations during the 2006 year regarding those issues.

Our NGO is highly concerned about participation of great number of Roma in the program “from social welfare to employment” and about the overall structure of this program. “From social welfare to employment” program provides long term unemployed persons with low qualified job positions (sweeping streets and etc.) on a minimal wage for the period of 12 months. From our observations this is a highly inefficient program and it is implemented only to be perceived as substitute of the social welfare program and thus artificially to lower the statistic rate of unemployed persons. This program is granted from the national budget (as well as the social welfare) and doesn't represent any substantial alternative to the social welfare program. Local Roma are involved in low qualified labour that can't give them any asset on the labour market after their participation in the program ends. After they have completed their participation in this program they're back on the social welfare as the only one accessible source of income, but thus the statistics shows that they were employed for the period of 12 months. Workers employed under this program are insufficiently supervised during their work and rarely respect working hours, quality and quantity of work. Thus the long term unemployed Roma hardly can obtain new if any working habits and in fact they

² National employment agency statistics survey

don't make any difference between depending on the social welfare and working under this program.

Our NGO is concerned about the very low participation of the local Roma in designed prequalification programs. During the year local Labour Office had conducted four trainings on computer literacy towards long term unemployed youths. In the first training none Roma were selected. After we do approach the local Labour Office to present us with statistics on how many Roma youths did applied to participate in the program, the statistics presented shows that none Roma were applying to participate in this course. Further investigating the issue we found that information about this upcoming course hasn't been made public and persons that participate in this training were selected directly from the local Labour office official without any competition process for selection of participants in this training to be created. Highly concerned about transparency of the process and about the criteria on which selection of candidates to be made, we start to monitor all following organized prequalification courses and spread the information about such upcoming courses among the local Roma community. This led to participation of five youth Roma in the following organized courses on computer literacy and of four youth Roma in the courses for farmers that were conducted during the year.

Several cases of discrimination of local Roma in the sphere of employment were recorded during the year and litigations before the District court have been started in defending their rights. One of the cases is the case of four Roma women that were hired in local small confection factory with regular contracts after they were guided to this job from the local Labour office. Under the Labour Office regulations all unemployed persons registered in the Labour Office as unemployed should attend job positions that will be offered to them from the Labour office. In case they refused to do so or quit these jobs by their own will they will be punished with banning their right to receive any social welfare for the period of one year. Four Roma women have started work at one and the same time with their Bulgarian fellow also guided to this job by the Labour office. In the end of the month they were paid 45 levas each but the Bulgarian lady who has the same qualification and experience for this particular job as they have, received 180 leva. Furthermore in the beginning of the next month the employer tells the Roma workers that he won't paid for their travel expenses no more and if they don't like this conditions they can leave, but only by their own written request as he won't dismissed them. In such circumstances three Roma women immediately have signed written requests for leaving the position. Litigation was started for the rest of the negotiated in the contracts sum to be paid. But as three of the Roma were sign requests to be dismissed by their own will they won't be able to receive any monthly welfare, even if they won the litigation process as it is impossible to prove that they were forced to leave the job by the employer. Thus for the period of one year they will be cut out from the available sources of incomes despite that they can obtain the rest of the negotiated sum under their contracts (135 leva).

Further break down on cases concerning education, health and family law issues:

As the majority of the cases during the 2006th year concerns social care and unemployment sphere, segments concerning education, family law and health issues will be presented together.

Cases concerning **education** are mainly connected with requests from local Roma to provide financial help in the form of scholarships to their children. Our NGO doesn't provide such grants and we can just assist local Roma in putting them in touch with some of the NGOs that provides such scholarships. We have guided two Roma students from the University of Veliko Tarnavo to the Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program, OSI, Budapest that provides monthly stipend to Roma students. Unfortunately we were not able to help to big number of Roma that have approached us with requests for scholarships for pupils in the comprehensive schools. Cooperating with the Regional Direction of Employment Agency our NGO guides twenty illiterate Roma to the organized by the employment agency educational course aimed to literate adult Roma that have dropped out on early stage from school. All of them have successfully completed this course. As our expertise isn't in the education sphere we do welcomes all projects and programs aimed to combat the illiteracy among Roma and especially to those programs and projects that helps Roma students with providing scholarships.

Cases concerning **health** issues are mainly based on the discrimination in the health system. Several reforms were implemented in the health care system of the Republic of Bulgaria, but the public opinion shows that proper functionality of the health system is still to be expected. In the overall problems of the health system Roma minority health problems are often forgotten. One of the cases that were brought to our organization in some degree represents the overall situation. Sixty year old Roma man, living alone without any relatives and offspring, were totally forgotten from the health authorities. This man has suffered from chronic diseases and disabilities for several of years and literally vegetated, staying alive only because of the good will of his neighbors that fed him and clean his house more or less regular. When we started to investigate the problem we found that he even haven't a medical registration card – document that shows his existence in the health care system – none of the institutions were aware of his literally physically existence. We succeeded with alarming of the case in front of the institutions and with raising of public awareness to the issue to send this man on the expert labour medical commission (TELK), administrative body that assess the disability (in Bulgaria is using the percentage of disability system, depending on what percentage of disability will be evaluated from this commission, examined person obtain different rights, such as monthly financial allowances, free medications, grants for purchasing a wheel chair etc, etc.) and he were found in sixty percent of disability, which allows him to receive some free medications and a monthly pension.

Cases concerning **family law** that were brought to our NGO shows clearly that Roma community still preserves to some extend custom law and custom habits in the sphere of family law related spheres – divorces, marriages, parental rights, obligations and rights under marriage and so one. Many of the Roma married under the Bulgarian civic law once, divorces on custom and more then once, thus Roma that is separated from his first wife for the period of fifteen years, have changed two spouses in time within. Whereas he and his first wife wasn't perceives themselves as a husband and wife, in front of the civic law they were still married, thus they continue to share property on every obtaining during the marriage incomes *ex lege*, on the other hand under the civic law his new wife can be considered only as a concubine and as the Family Law Code doesn't recognize at all this form of cohabitation none of them can claimed any family law related rights based on the fact of cohabitation. This fact often puts Roma in hard situation when they attempted to claim any right of alimony, right on shared property, right of family house or other family law related rights.