E-QUAL
Qualitative Research on Professional Integration of Vulnerable Categories (13SEE/2014)

www.e-qual-see.ro
July 1st 2014 – December 31st 2016
PARTNERS:

- WEST UNIVERSITY OF TIMISOARA, ROMANIA
- UNIVERSITY OF NORDLAND, BODO, NORWAY
THE TEAM:

- 8 Romanian researchers (3 Phd students);
- 3 Norwegian researchers (1 Postdoctoral student)
PROJECT AIM:

to provide a viable research documented foundation for the current policies and programs addressed to professional integration of vulnerable categories, the final purpose being to facilitate positive changes in the processes of integration of vulnerable groups into the labour market.
TARGET GROUPS:

- ROMA PERSONS
- DISABLED PERSONS
MAIN OBJECTIVES (1):

- **OB 1.** To review the current European and national frameworks and strategies (e.g. policies, institutional setups, and professional competencies) addressed to labour market integration of vulnerable populations (people with disabilities and Roma individuals).

- **OB 2.** To assess the compatibility between the European and national frameworks as a backdrop for empirical analyses.

- **OB 3.** To make research staff familiar with and qualified for using IE as core methodology in the project.

- **OB 4.** To identify, explore and compare the obstacles and barriers experienced by the vulnerable groups (people with disabilities and Roma individuals) in their efforts to access the labour market.

- **OB 5.** To map the institutional relations affecting the efforts of vulnerable populations (people with disabilities and Roma individuals) to access the labour market.
MAIN OBJECTIVES (2):

- **OB 6.** To investigate the institutional relations and structural mechanisms underpinning the hindrances and barriers to employment as experienced by vulnerable populations

- **OB 7.** To analyse successful policies, initiatives, methods and methodologies used by Romanian organizations in the process of professional integration of vulnerable categories

- **OB 8.** To assess the potential for replication of each successful model identified, in order to facilitate their multiplication

- **OB 9.** To provide a viable research documented foundation for the current policies and programs addressed to professional integration of vulnerable categories

- **OB 10.** To enhance the communication between researchers, policy makers and practitioners, in order to ensure a more cohesive and homogenous intervention focused on professional integration of vulnerable categories
WORK PACKAGES AND ACHIEVEMENTS:

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<tr>
<th>WP number:</th>
<th>WP title:</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
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| 1         | Where do we stand? State of the art regarding European and national strategies and institutional frameworks addressing the inclusion and integration of vulnerable populations (people with disabilities and Roma individuals) into the labour market | - Report 1: The compatibility between the current European and Romanian national framework of labour market integration of people with disabilities  
- Report 2: The compatibility between the current European and Romanian national framework of labour market integration of Roma - 2 articles published in journals indexed in at least 3 international databases  
- 6 articles published based on WP1 results  
The reports can be accessed at www.e-qual-see.ro |
- 6 articles published based on WP1 results
WORK PACKAGES AND ACHIEVEMENTS:

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<tr>
<th>WP number</th>
<th>WP title: Methodology adaptation and training Customizing and familiarizing Institutional Ethnography (IE) as core methodology in the project</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
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| 2         | - A three days Course in Institutional Ethnography - IE (PhD students will obtain 5 ECT) held in Norway for min. 6 members of the Romanian research team  
- Refined research design and methodology for the WPs 3 and 4 |
IE training in Norway
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<td>3</td>
<td><strong>What are the problems?</strong> Mapping the hindrances and barriers to employment as experienced by vulnerable populations (people with disabilities and Roma individuals) – phase one of data collection</td>
<td>Report 3: Preliminary report the obstacles and barriers experienced by disabled individuals in their efforts to access or stay in the labour market. Report 4: Preliminary report on obstacles and barriers experienced by Roma individuals in their efforts to access or stay in the labour market. - 1 article published based on WP3 results - Attendance in 2 International Conferences for the dissemination of WP3 results</td>
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The reports can be accessed at [www.e-qual-see.ro](http://www.e-qual-see.ro)
- attendance in 2 International Conferences for the dissemination of WP3 results
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<td>What are the institutional dysfunctions? Investigating the institutional</td>
<td>Report 5: Preliminary report on the institutional frameworks and features affecting the employment of vulnerable populations - disabled</td>
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<td>relations and structural mechanisms underpinning the hindrances and</td>
<td>Report 6: Preliminary report on the institutional frameworks and features affecting the employment of vulnerable populations - Roma</td>
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<td>barriers to employment experienced by vulnerable populations - phase two of</td>
<td>Report 7: Final report on the Institutional Ethnography of labour market integration of vulnerable populations (disabled individuals),</td>
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<td>discussed in relation to European and national policy and research</td>
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<td>Report 8: Final report on the Institutional Ethnography of labour market integration of vulnerable populations (Roma individuals),</td>
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<td>discussed in relation to European and national policy and research</td>
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## Work Packages and Achievements:

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| 7         | Stakeholders` involvement and other horizontal activities | - 1 Opening Conference organised in Romania by WUT – October 31st 2014;  
- 1 Opening Conference organised in Norway by UN – September 9th 2014;  
- 1 web-site created of the project; 1 on-line communication instrument integrated into the project`s web-site – www.e-qual-see.ro;  
- 2 consultative work-groups organised in Romania by WUT |
E-QUAL - Qualitative Research on Professional Integration of Vulnerable Categories, contract no. 13SEE/ 30.06.2014
Financed by the Economic European Area Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 - „Research within Priority Sectors”
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| 8          | Management activities | - Consortium Meetings: 4 meetings in total (2 in Romania and 2 in Norway);  
- Planning documents: General Planning, First year annual plan, Second year annual plan;  
- Individual monthly reports for each team member;  
- Evaluation and reporting: 2 Intermediate Evaluation Reports and 1 Annual Report submitted to PO. |
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Important events to come

- The International Conference **SOCIAL INCLUSION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES – SIEO 2016** (Organized by the West University of Timisoara and University of Nordland): 26-28 October 2016, in Timisoara, Romania. For more details, please access [www.e-qual-see.ro/sieo](http://www.e-qual-see.ro/sieo)

- 6 consultative work-groups for revision of policy/legislation regarding Roma and disabled persons’ employment: February – October 2016

- The post-graduate study program on Employment of vulnerable categories – dedicated to specialists that work with vulnerable categories: April – June 2016, in Timisoara
The research results regarding barriers to employment of Roma persons

- **General situation of Roma population – Romania**
  - Roma population: between 621,573 people (2011 Census) and 2,000,000 (estimations of non-governmental organizations);
  - Living conditions: electricity in 84% of Roma households, regional gas networks cover only 17% of Roma community households, public water supply networks only reach 17% of Roma households, and only 16% can make use of the sewage system (*Roma Inclusion Barometer, 2007*);
  - the proportion of Roma children enrolled in primary education is 64%, as compared to 98.9%, the national average (*Presidential Report, 2009*);

**Employment:**

- In 2011, the **unemployment rate** for Roma was 48.6%, comparing with 7.4% at general population (*Romanian Census, 2011*);
- 53% of Roma men and 23% of Roma women perform **paid work** (*Romanian Presidential report, 2009*);
The cycle of poverty – conditioned by educational attainment and the number of children

- The cycle of poverty among Roma families is influenced by the educational level of the parents and the number of children the family has.
Main research objectives

- Investigating the institutional relations and structural mechanisms underpinning the hindrances and barriers to employment experienced by Roma individuals:
  - Step 1 – The perspective of the Roma individuals
  - Step 2 – The perspective of the professionals working with or for the Roma individuals

- Methodology influenced by *Institutional ethnography* (Dorothy Smith), meaning that we want to learn *from* our interviewees, not *about* them

- What is the major problematic experienced in the everyday life of Roma individuals related to accessing the labour market, and how are these experiences affected by institutional arrangements and practices?
Main obstacles in Roma employment

• Low level of education; unskilled / Low levels of skills
• Lack of social networks they can rely on outside their community
• Discrimination in different institutional encounters (including employment agencies)
• Lack of employment opportunities in the region
• Cultural factors (eq. gender perspectives, family expectations etc.)
The general traits of the “most likely to be unemployed” Roma

- Female, over 25, more than 2 children, coming from a “traditional” family
- Living in a rural area, with a low level of job opportunities
- Poor housing conditions
- No or low educational attainment/professional skills
- Has no job experience or has held various low skilled jobs, for short periods of time
“Breaking the pattern” – The case of Mary

- Female, 34 years, married, two children
- Lives in a rural settlement with Roma people only, poor living conditions
- 8 years in school, eldest sibling – *had to start working early*
- Got employed by a religious organization doing welfare work
- *Recruited by acquaintance*
- Works in a multifunctional centre as a child caretaker and cleaner, has worked there for 5 years
- Has not experienced discrimination herself
- Wants her children to have an education
Factors that support success in Roma employment

- Family influence and work-role expectations (parents as “vehicles” of change)
- Assistance (mainly informal) from their networks
Family influence

- Three main levels of influence that strongly impact the work orientations of youth: the sociopolitical, the economical and the family. (Blustein et al., 2002; Kelloway & Harvey, 1999; Loughlin & Barling, 2001; Vondracek et al., 1986)

- Meaning of the world of work - Children’s perceptions of parental work attitudes and experiences shape the development of their own work beliefs and attitudes (Barling, Dupre, & Hepburn, 1998).

- Inner-city youth, particularly urban racial–ethnic minority youth, who have learned of discrimination and racial and economic inequities through observations and conversations with family members, may expect that they will not be successful in their work lives and anticipate job failure well before entering the workforce (Barling et al., 1998).
Work-role expectations

- Job satisfaction - one of the three most important predictors of overall well-being besides marriage and family satisfaction (Argyle, 1989)

- Qualitative explorations of work among working-class and poor individuals (e.g., Blustein et al., 2002; Phillips, Blustein, Jobin-Davis, & White, 2002) showed that individuals' perspectives on the role of work in their life vary with their socio-economic status:

  - Young adults from higher socioeconomic backgrounds tended to view work as having greater meaning and potential for self-expression – working fulfilled their interests, while young adults from lower socioeconomic backgrounds viewed work primarily as a means of earning a living – they work primarily to ensure survival and not primarily as a means of attaining internal satisfaction (Blustein et al, 2002; Chaves et al, 2004);
Perceptions on work among our informants

- Motivations in getting employed / or starting a revenue-generating activity vary from one informant to another, but, at the same time, tend to cluster around a few central ideas:
  - hope for a better future (for themselves or for their children);
  - responsibility to change the Roma perception pattern among general population;
  - need for a direction in life;
  - representations of revenue-generating activities as the “normal” way of earning a living.

“I would very much like to work. So that they stop saying that we, Romani, don’t work. I would go break rocks to have something better for my children”. (Female, inactive)

“We earn enough for the education of the children, for their progress and…our existence, of the family. For a decent life”. (Male, active)

- The informants who are active on the labour market usually have some account of at least one family member (from their origin family) who had a job and, thus, secured a living.
Parents as “vehicles” of change

- The first aspect noticed from the informants’ accounts is that their parents usually serve as life models – they have been formed, informed, educated, cultivated and shaped by their parents and their parents’ expectations.

“[Should I get it that you liked school?] Yes, my parents made me, I had no choice (the interviewee says smiling).” (Young male, active)

- This is one of the main reasons identified in school drop-out among those who haven’t completed a fair amount of education – the influence of the parents. Usually, the parents are those who either consider that the child had enough school and withdraw them from education, or need someone to care for the other children while they are at work.

“My parents were also a lower family, you know. My father went in the army and my mother went hoeing and I had a 4-year old brother and they stopped me from school to stay at home with my brother.” (Female, inactive)
The current mature generation is the main “vehicle” for the desired change in the perspective on education and employment.

“I think about my children, I encourage them: school, school, school! To have a different thinking, a different job.” (Female, active)

Those who are “victims” of their parents’ decisions to retire them from education at a very early age, feel very strong the importance of an education in one’s level of wellbeing. The feeling is even stronger among those who are currently in employment and understood the limited options they have in evolving professionally or getting a better payment, in absence of a decent educational attainment level. This is why, they are the best advocates for social and educational insertion of their children.

“When I was working, I realized that if I had graduated 12 grades, I could have been line head. But now, the least [we can do for our children] is provide them [with the opportunity to have an education]. To graduate at least 12 grades. We can’t all be teachers, lawyers, but at least to graduate 12 grades. To be willing.” (Female, active)

If the discourse of the informants was to find a way into action, the next generation of Roma will surely no longer be labeled as “disadvantaged”.
The role of networks in accessing employment

- Usually, the phenomenon of persistent joblessness among economically disadvantaged ethnic minorities is explained either through their deficiencies in accessing the mainstream ties and institutions (Smith, 2005), or the lack of social capital that facilitates job finding (Briggs, 1998).

- Because Roma are disproportionately among the long-term unemployed and poor, the popular perception in countries with significant Roma populations is that access to social assistance is not a problem for Roma, which is not always the case. In accessing benefits, Roma do face unique problems, including lack of appropriate documentation, discrimination, and poor communication with service providers (Ringold, 2000).

- Because they are overrepresented among the long-term unemployed, they rarely qualify for unemployment benefits, and thus, their contact with a public employment office is scarce.
Usually, when trying to find employment, the Roma informants mentioned they use to place a spokesman in the main role. Because the direct relations between the Roma community members and the non-members are scarce, they prefer to request mediation from those who are well experienced in relations with the “outside” world.

If you don’t have acquaintances, if you don’t know anybody and don’t allow yourself be known by people, you cannot... You’d go “Hey, I am X. And......, so what if you’re X?” (Male, active)

Those contact persons (spoke men/link persons) are most times from the relatives or acquaintances network and, sometimes, they are well experienced in the labour market, or are even among the representatives of local institutions, clerks they know and trust.

There was another boy from here, from the village, and he told the boss that he will take me to work, too. That guy knew me and that’s how he took me. Because the boy spoke for me to be taken. (Male, inactive)

The spokesman (parent, brother, cousin etc.) talks to the employer about hiring his relative and “vouches” for him by means of filiation: “he’s my kin, hard worker as I am”; “you’ll have no problems with him because he’s my cousin”.

I found the first job given the acquaintances (I had) and the third also like that, (by the help) of my acquaintances. (Male, active)
The “spokesman”

- not necessarily suited for finding solutions for work integration,
- acts in such a way given his position of accessing the information they are unable to access (e.g. social worker of the town hall, school mediator, health mediator, priest, etc.)
- acts also as teacher/trainer of the “newcomer”, teaching him the set of rules needed to “survive” in the new environment (meaning of documents, regulations logic of the organizational field).

Other ways (less frequently used) to find a job, get employed and keep a job, could be through the local organizations’ representatives, like the church or an active local NGO. Some of the informants used the services of such organizations, but usually the organizations were the ones approaching and recruiting them, from the community.

The girls here, at the Foundation, helped me go to get employed (Female, active)
Government intervention programs addressing the main obstacles in Roma employment

- Low level of education; unskilled / Low levels of skills
- Lack of social networks they can rely on outside their community
- Discrimination in different institutional encounters (including employment agencies)
- Lack of employment opportunities in the region
- Cultural factors (eq. gender perspectives, family expectations etc.)
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