

**BABES-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY**

**FACULTY OF POLITICAL SCIENCES, PUBLIC  
ADMINISTRATION AND COMMUNICATION**

**PHD THESIS**

**MEDIA AND ROMA COMMUNITIES**

**ABSTRACT**

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### **KEYWORDS:**

*media, ethnic media, Roma communities, Roma media, prejudices, media professional codes, media coverage of Roma, European projects.*

The first part of the paper is the theoretical framework structured as following: the general press; aspects of the history and living conditions of the Roma in Romania, and also the main European programs that have as main objective the idea of supporting the ethnic media.

Part two includes the research itself - structured on four types of analysis:

1. Media analysis Roma in Romania;
2. Cluj media analysis on the evacuation of Roma from Pata-Rat coastal road
3. Analysis of a European-funded project has helped develop media Roma in Romania.
4. And, finally, on the edge of the theoretical and analytical results, a series of interviews with experts on the issue of Roma in Romania and abroad were conducted.

**The thesis hypotheses are:**

1. Roma ethnic media cannot provide financial support according to the general principles of media management. Respecting the rules of market competition, due to the costs of organizing editorial, production, distribution and consumption right now, Roma media may not be sustainable (in financial terms).
2. After twenty years of editorial independence and professionalism of journalism, Cluj media present a subjective coverage of the Roma communities. The press uses a set of clichés and stereotypes in describing how events relate to this ethnic minority.
3. After termination of the period of financial support provided by various funding programs, Roma media projects end due to lack of necessary funds.

In the introduction, I motivated why I have chosen this topic and which is its scientific relevance.

In this regard, I referred to the years spent in former Soros Foundation, specifically the Resource Center for Roma Communities in Cluj-Napoca, where I wrote and I coordinated media development projects for Roma communities in Romania. Also in this introduction, I explained that because of years of professional experience in this field, I had access to many different Roma communities where I observed directly the main problems that these communities are facing - I understood that in many situations the level of poverty is so high that access to

running water or electricity is considered a true luxury. And thanks to my expertise gained from the activity in professional journalism, I tried to support the Roma media. The work may also be relevant for addressing a research question that has not yet been widely analyzed - the situation of Roma or Roma media, journalists and projects for development of this press. Currently there are few studies about the relationship between media and Roma communities or dedicated media about the minority.

**The first chapter** includes:

- The main theories of media functions as they are defined in the media literature;
- Then, these theories were adapted to the concrete situation of the Roma communities and the Roma media – (the specific functions of Roma media such as the role of education, social cohesion, etc.)
- Further, we discussed the specific media management for Roma communities - Roma audience is very diverse. In Romania, for example, there are about 15 different Roma communities. There is also the problem of traditional Roma communities where life takes place different from that of modern communities where journalists get very difficult access. I think there are at least two difficulties faced by the Roma Press - low level of education among Roma, and low standard of living (poverty). Also, there is the issue of language in which these programs are made by radio or TV or newspaper articles written - because Roma speak different dialects, depending on the area in which they live.
- Discussion upon the role that journalists have in relation to public Gypsy Roma and non-Roma - on the one hand, ethnic media can create a platform for dialogue within that minority, on the other hand it can provide contact between them and the majority.
- References to press analysis, reports, etc. that show how Roma are seen by the majority - according to them, the majority think about Roma that they steal, robbery, are dirty and lazy.
- Finally the paper presents a series of recommendations made by professional media NGO's (guides of good journalistic practices on Roma issues)

**In Chapter II**, entitled Roma communities in Romania, we presented the main aspects of

historical, social and economic life of the Roma. To this end, we consulted books about Roma history, signed by historians as Viorel Achim, sociologists Elena and Catalin Zamfir, numerous studies on these communities, many of which are coordinated by the Institute for the Study of National Minorities.

The research on the Roma communities in Europe, I have completed the study at the Library of the European Commission in Brussels where I found many studies and reports on the topic - especially with regard to Roma program included in the European Commission's 2020 strategy.

In this part of the paper the main problems faced by Roma communities are presented, according to the bibliographical resources. The most important are considered to be: poverty, lack of education, lack of jobs, housing problems, lack of access to medical services.

To get up-to-date, we introduced the data on Roma in Romania, according to the Census of 2011 - according to this, the Roma represent 3.2% of the total population, or 619,000 people, who are divided into a variable number between 1.1% in Botosani County and 8.8% in Mures county.

**Chapter III** presents the main strategies and funding European programs for ethnic media development. The paper briefly analyzed a series of campaigns conducted by the European Union toward supporting ethnic minorities. Also, a series of good practices and strategies of successful projects (implemented in different European countries) were presented. The chapter also includes a comprehensive study on the issue of media diversity by the European Commission in 2009, which identified the main challenges of media institutions in relation to diversity. Among the final recommendations are:

- *bringing diversity in mainstream media;*
- *using all new media platforms and formats for production and consumption;*
- *permanent response to public demand and expectation;*
- *widening the public;*
- *continuing education and training editorial staff.*

**Chapter IV** contains a description of the research methodology paper - documentation, content analysis, interviews and comparative analysis. On social science research methodology,

sociologist Chelcea Septimiu, in his paper *Sociological research - methods and techniques*, establishes a number of important terminological clarifications. Chelcea mentions that the methodology has six main themes: *the delimitation of the subject in empirical research* - in many phenomena and processes to select the subject (generally, the selection is determined by the relevance of that phenomenon or process); *concept analysis* - explaining and clarifying concepts and their definitions; *analysis methods and techniques of research* - because, ultimately, the findings are representative and have scientific relevance analysis, research methods and techniques are reviewed and followed strictly; *analyze the relationship between methods and techniques* - analysis methodology concerns the relationship of the methods, techniques, procedures, tools of inquiry, their suitability to the object of study; *systematic data from empirical research and formalization of reasoning* - involves formalizing statements.

## Chapter V

### 1. Case Study: Media and Roma communities in Romania

- Case Study: radio and TV programs for the Roma - an analysis of media for Roma communities in Romania:
  - **radio** programs - Radio Targu Mures, produced by the Roma journalist, Rudi Moca, and at Radio Timisoara, show performed by young Roma journalists Carmen Marcu and Valentin Pepenel.
  - **TV programs** - in Romania the main TV public institution produces content for the Roma communities on TVR 1, TVR 2, and the local studios. Another examples presented are the *Roma Caravan* (a weekly television program broadcasted on OTV). Also, the analysis referred to the first television station fully addressing ethnic communities called Bah TV.
  - **print media** (currently in Romania there are few publications addressed to Roma). Examples Romathan: Roma studies or publication Ace of Clubs funded by the state (the publication Roma Party of Romania).
  - **and online media projects** (like the first news agency ROME NEWS)
2. **Monitoring media: media coverage of Roma for Roma and the general** (analysis of print and TV): Case eviction of Roma from the Coast street in Cluj-Napoca to Pata-Rat -

the Roma issue has been analyzed comparing the TVR Cluj Roma program (Transylvania Polychrome) with all the news material broadcasted by TVR Cluj in the main newscasts. The analysis also included the media coverage of the event in three local newspapers: Ziarul Faclia, Ziua de Cluj si Monitorul de Cluj.

3. **Case Study: Roma media development projects** – analysis of a project implemented by the Resource Center for Roma Communities from Cluj-Napoca – ROMA MEDIA; (project focused on developing the Roma media).
4. **Interviews with 16 national and international experts on Roma issues** –
  1. Reynald BLION, Council of Europe Strasbourg, Manager Media & Diversity;
  2. Mihaela Danga, Deputy Director, Center for Independent Journalism
  3. Ilie Dinca - President of the National Agency for Roma in Romania
  4. Péter Eckstein-Kovacs, former presidential adviser on national minorities, former Minister of national minorities
  5. Dezideriu Gergely, President of the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) /
  6. Mihai Goțiu, President of the Association of Professional Press in Cluj-Napoca
  7. István Horváth, Pres. Institute for Research on National Minorities (ISPMN)
  8. George Lăcătuș, President of the Association of Journalists Roma in Romania
  9. Florin Moisă, President of the Resource Center for Roma Communities
  10. Ciprian Necula, Roma activist & journalist, Media Monitoring Agency
  11. Rudi Moca, Roma journalist, Radio Targu Mures
  12. Iulius Rostas, international consultant on issues of Roma, Budapest
  13. Levente Salat, CEO of Ethnocultural Diversity Resource Center (EDRC) and Associate PhD Professor Babes-Bolyai University
  14. Karen Sebesi, former member of the the Romanian National Television Council of Administration, TV producer for minorities
  15. Attila Szasz, former member of the National Audiovisual Council (CNA)
  16. Mircea Toma, President ActiveWatch-Media Monitoring Agency

**Key findings from the analysis of interviews with experts:**

- Reynold Blion of the Council of Europe believes that information about ethnic minority



groups should be included as any other topic in the media, should not be treated specially, and this news to reach a wide audience, general, not just Roma audience.

- President of the Association of Professionals in Cluj, Michael Goțiu, believes that the challenge would be the formation of competent journalists in this field.
- Ekstein Kovacs Peter believes that negative image in the media is related to Roma tabloidisation, media and political interests - anti-Roma attitude is *trendy*!
- President of ISPMN, István Horváth, shows that it is very difficult to be a journalist to combat the general public and not be afraid of pressure, while in present public opinion is anti-Roma Romania he states.
- Florin Moisă, President of RCRC, believes that there is no justification for negative media coverage of Roma - because no one decides to buy a newspaper to read something negative about Roma! So there is no economic stake.
- With reference to the need for ethical codes or regulations an interesting idea is the one of the international consultant Iulius Rostas - abuse of freedom of expression should be punished, but not necessarily criminal imprisonment or a fine, but simply someone who abuses freedom of expression to be sent to study or to get in touch with the situation in which abused the freedom of expression!
- Why are not sustainable after project funding ends? Because it was designed to talk about minority issues for minority groups and not for a wide audience - considers Reynold Blion of the Council of Europe; and it is a strategic error, he says.

## **Chapter VI**

### **General conclusions of the work**

After conducting the research, it was found that two hypotheses are confirmed, and one negated:

- (Confirmed) - Roma ethnic media cannot provide financial support to the general principles of media management.
- (Negated) - After twenty years of editorial independence and professionalism of journalism, media publicize subjective Cluj Roma communities. In general, with some exceptions, the Cluj press uses appropriate language and objective in describing how events relate to this ethnic minority.

- (Confirmed) - After the end of the period of financial support provided by various funding programs, projects Roma media ends due to lack of necessary funds.

Among the general conclusions of the paper note:

- Media content for Roma must be developed within the public press institutions - or in collaboration with the public media.
- Press for Roma communities in Romania is developed within the general context - I mean primarily social conditions, financial, educational, etc.
- Given the specific conditions of the ethnic communities (poverty, even illiteracy sometimes etc) the development of the Roma media would require a subsidy system;
- any private initiative is very opportune, but I think that there is a risk that materials are developed on the model of journalistic sensationalism, not based on rules and principles of Professional Journalists (because, to resist on the market media must sell at any price!)
- Cluj press, with certain exceptions, deal objectively and professionally Roma issues.
- I found that this type of media management is unique and that the role of journalists in relation to coverage of Roma is very complex.
- in connection with projects funded by international programs aimed primarily supporting the development of ethnic media, the biggest problem in most cases is that their existence ceases as soon as the funding period ends and the reason seems to be one of wrong strategy in relation to the targeted audience - these projects should be designed for a wide audience, not just for the ethnic minorities themselves.
- and it is necessary to train those who initiate such media projects - journalistic training and also management and marketing training could be appropriate.
- all interviewed experts were of the opinion that certain courses introduced into the school curriculum would be very useful and necessary - education can improve the situation!

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## **ATTACHMENTS:**

- 1. Interviews with 16 national and international experts on Roma issues.**
- 2. The analysis of the TVR Cluj Roma program (Transylvania Polychrome).**
- 3. The analysis of the news on Roma issues broadcasted by TVR Cluj (main newscasts).**
- 4. Good Practices Guide – How to Media Cover Minorities in Romanian Media**
- 5. Roma Communities in Romania**
- 6. Roma History**