

LOOSE ENDS

*Mapping the roots of youth
marginalization in the underclass*



RESEARCH REPORT

HUNGARY

On the research conducted in
the 'Loose Ends' project



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1. Introduction

Együttható Egyesület – our association- has been operating an Afterschool¹ in Gyöngyös since 2014. From time to time we conduct a research program that assesses local conditions, primarily in the local segregated communities. In 2015, our LEADNFL research used a survey to assess the living situation of young people between the ages of 18 and 25 in the segregated communities of Gyöngyös.

With the research, we would like to understand these phenomena experienced in the Afterschool and, if possible, improve our services based on the results. The Loose Ends project was born out of this aspiration as mentioned.

In recent years, the composition of the students, who are attending the afterschool has changed a lot, even though the majority of the children have always been poor. Our observation is that, that the families where there is at least one earner and the parents live together are excluded from the regular child protection benefits. The number of students from segregated schools has increased, and at the same time we have lost children who are not Roma and/or live in non-segregated conditions. Essentially, only non-Roma children with Special education needs status and/or more severe disabilities remained in the provision of service.

The conversations with newcomers of the afterschool and their family members drew our attention to the fact that the majority of their parents are under 30 years old, and at least one, but in many cases both parents, and even wider adult relatives, were once students of the local special education school. Since we are a youth organization, and considering their age, parents themselves can be involved in youth programs therefore our desire was to find out , what kind of tools are possible to use to address them. Because if young parents are motivated and can be engaged in some activities that is interesting to them, their children's motivations will also improve naturally. At the same time, it is not possible to involve them without a more detailed knowledge of their living conditions.

This was the starting point of the research, the data collection of which was carried out in the summer of 2021. The Loose Ends project is implemented with the support of the Erasmus+ youth program, and with the collaboration of a Romanian and a North Macedonian partner organization. In addition to the research, one of our commitments is to jointly make a policy proposal on how to support Roma young people, who often live in segregation, with youth work - especially international youth work - and thus give them the opportunity for wider social contact.

Due to the results obtained, the thoughts of Judit Durst (2017) regarding research "otthon" ("at home") were formulated in us. In our case, home means the immediate operating environment of the afterschool and the families who are involved in the day to day life of the afterschool:

"This is about the ethnographer's fear of what can be written from all the knowledge he or she has gathered over the years - without harming the group, which is already surrounded by grave stigmas and prejudices. And without making the further research impossible by the fact that after the publication of the text, contrary to its intention of his/her writing takes on an independent life..." (Durst, 2017, p. 4)

¹ Extracurricular activities for children with disadvantaged background in the afternoon, as a nongovernmental organisation



2. Research objectives

With our multifaceted research, we desired to achieve the following goals:

- to learn about the effects of special pedagogy education on the living conditions and labour market position of the respondent Roma youth,
- to find the common motives and patterns that influence their existence outside of school and find which can be influenced by youth work.
- to map the reasons for which they entered special education,
- to find out whether these patterns, phenomenas, or causes exist in the case of their children and what consequences they have for their studies and for their future.

3. Methods

In the research, we used several methods in order to improve the reliability of the obtained data:

- semi-structured interviews with young people who identify themselves as Roma,
- observation log with a questionnaire structure, filled in by the interviewer based on his observations following the interview,
- on the spot photos taken by the interviewers
- a drawing that each interviewee made during the interview in connection with a question of the interview.

We conducted at least 25 semi-structured interviews per country using the snowball method. The research took place in Heves County in Hungary, Krassó-Szörény County in Romania, and Kratovo in North Macedonia. In the final research report, we will present the results of the 75 interviews. In this report, however, we will only present a part of the results of the Hungarian research.

As interviewees, we chose people who met the following criteria:

- young people between the ages of 16 and 30 who self-identify as Roma or identify as someone who has fewer opportunities,
- received special pedagogic education at some stage of their lives.

One of our interviewers was a Roma person from the town, who is also part of our working team in our afterschool. Her task was to search for the interviewees and conducting the interviews. Her presence and her often independent interviewing activities contributed to the young people trusting us and sharing their opinions and thoughts with us. Nowadays, this method is almost fundamental in ethnographic research (Durst, 2017).

We first approached people who were either former students of the afterschool or parents of our current students. In addition, in the search for the first subjects, we visited the assisted living facility in one of the segregated areas and the local special vocational school. The first interviewees recommended two more people who met the participation criteria, so we further expanded the sample to the target amount.

During the interview, the interviewers recorded their observations in an observation log, and with the interviewee's permission, photos were taken of the families' residences.

We asked an average of fifty questions in the interviews. In the first interviews, the number of questions was even less, and then we expanded them until we reached the tenth interview, thus adapting to the



language skills of the interviewee's and deepening the conversations in the direction of the main topics emerging from the first interviews.

As part of the interview, each respondent made a drawing, which we used to help them express themselves. The subject of the drawing: imagined themselves in 10 years.

After the first complete read-through, I provided open codes (in vivo) to the interviews, and then grouped them into categories (focus coding), which were finally assembled into larger categories, creating a theory that is probably true for the sample. I did the coding twice, one month apart.

4. Research results

4.1. The background of the respondents and the circumstances of the interviews

Data collection took place between June 1 and September 11, 2021. **In Hungary 27 interviews were recorded.** 90% of the respondents declared themselves to be of Roma origin.

All young respondents attended a special education school at some point in their lives. The respondents, with the exception of two, all studied at the „EGYMI” Unified Special Education institution during their elementary school years.

The average age of respondents is 25.5 years; the youngest was 16 and the oldest was 30. The majority of young people (92.5%) live in Gyöngyös, and two lived in other settlements of Heves county. Among the residents of Gyöngyös, based on their address, it can be established that the majority of them (78%) lived in one of the segregated areas at the time of the interview, which they themselves refer to as a gypsy settlement in the interviews.

Four of the respondents were previously students of the afterschool.

Other relationships between the interviewees: 11 of the respondents were relatives of our current students, six of whom were parents. In the case of two students - who are siblings by the way - the father and five of his siblings also met the interview criteria and were therefore included in the sample. It can be seen from this that the majority of the interviewees were close to each other in terms of residence and kinship relationships.

None of our Roma and/or students with fewer opportunities currently attend a special education school. So, while a large number of their parents attended special education school, this is not typical for their children.

4.2 Analysis of observation logs

Due to the young people's living conditions and self-expression abilities, the semi-structured interviews, containing an average of fifty questions, were of short duration. The average duration of the observation situation was 40 minutes. The young respondents were almost equally divided by gender: women 52%, men 48%.

At the time of the interview, 18 respondents (66.7%) used both Hungarian and Roma language, 7 (25.9%) spoke exclusively in Hungarian, and 2 (7.4%) communicated exclusively in Roma with family members. The location of the interviews was mostly the yard (11 people) and the kitchen (9 people) within the



houses and flats. In most cases, this was due to lack of space. The kitchen, as a living space, has multiple functions, they serve as a living room and social space for them.

At the time of the interviews, an average of 5 people were present at the location of the interviews. Of these, the average number of children was 2.5. The highest number of children in the houses and flats was 5. It is important to note that not just children living in the same household were present, as it is often typical for several families to live in separate households, but on a common land. Furthermore, there are families in which the number of children is more than five, but not all of them were at home at the time of the interview.

Observation period was not significantly affected by the presence of children at the time of the interview, however, the presence of children often, in 70% of cases, disturbed the recording of the interview, thus naturally affecting the focus and depth of the interviews.

Using non-parametric tests from the observation logs, it can be shown that the number of children has a significant effect on the condition of houses and residences (Table 1.2). In other words, the higher the number of children, the more typical it was that the interviewers judged the building to be in a dilapidated condition.

There were no children at the location of the interviews at the time of the interviews who did not live there, and a young person with a family who was actually homeless with the address card of the location had also participated in the study. He and his partner have already started their own family, but they do not have their own home. Due to the lack of space, they cannot stay with their former family for a long time, so they take turns staying with their own former family or with their partner's former family. These young people wander between the two segregated areas of Gyöngyös while trying to support their own new-born and toddler-age children. They are also directly related to two of our students. Based on the conversation and observation, they actually live together.

Table 1. Number of children and the effect on condition of housing

Kruskal-Wallis tests ranking			
	How many children were in the apartment during the interview?	N	Mean Rank
1.condition of outside of the house	0 children	5	22,20
	1-3 children	15	14,67
	4 or more children	7	6,71
	Total	27	



Table 2. Significance, Number of children and the effect on condition of housing

Test Statistics ^{a,b}	
	1. condition of outside of the house
Kruskal-Wallis H	12,815
df	2
Asymp. Sig.	,002
a. Kruskal Wallis Test	
b. Grouping Variable: 7/B Number of children during the interview	

No such significance can be measured in the case of the interior condition of the residences, however, the next figure (Figure 1.) shows that, where there are more children, the interior condition of the houses are also judged worse by the interviewer. In other words, we can again conclude that the size of the family negatively affects the standard of living, but at the same time, certain factors (e.g. house size, light conditions, level of comfort, ceiling height) are given regardless of the size of the family.

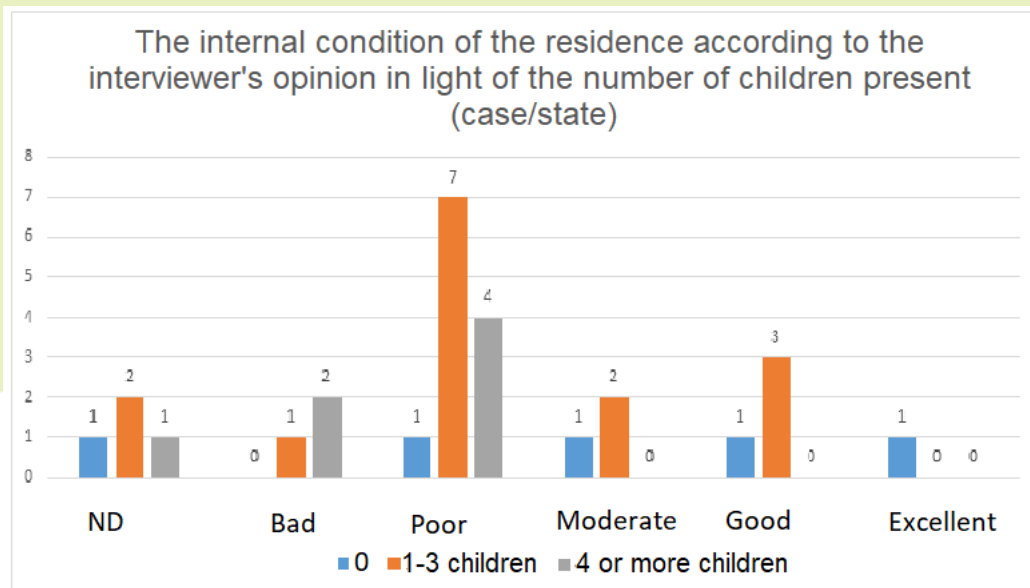


Figure 1. Internal condition of the residence according to the number of children

Quality indicators were provided to determine the condition of the residences in the observation log. Based on these, we get a more detailed picture of what was classified as bad or sufficient when judging the internal and external condition of the house.





Image 1. Multifunctional yard on the edge of a segregated area in the city.

(The picture was taken by the Association Co-Efficient)

Regarding the external appearance of the houses, in eleven cases the interviewers used the indicator of neglected or unkempt quality, in nine cases they judged the yard to be untidy, and in 4 cases they indicated that the house lacks comfort, because there are no piped water and connection to the sewer system, and the toilet is on the yard, these are dry toilets.



Image 2. Yard with a fence made of doors, furniture boards and chairs, with a clothes drying function in one of the city's segregated areas (The image was taken by the Association Co-Efficient)

Cramped impression, if we look at the interior conditions of the residences (Image 3-4). Overcrowded, low, dark, and damp apartments should emerge in our mind, since they were marked as dark in 17 cases (63%), in 11 cases as small area and low ceiling, in 8 cases as crowded, in 5 cases, the interviewers described the homes as wet, mouldy. There were no significant relationship between the interior condition of the house and the number of children.



Tidiness is related to the number of people living in the house, the fewer people who live together, the more they are able to live orderly. Here, orderliness means the living conditions according to the preferences of the observer.

However, the condition of the houses seems to be independent of the number of residents, i.e. even if there were fewer people, they would live in low, cramped, dark and damp apartments.



Image 3 Hall -living room -dining room in one of the city's segregated buildings (The picture was taken by The Association Co-Effitient)



4 Image Shared bedroom by parents and children, in the same segregated house (The picture was taken by The Association Co-Effitient)



4.3. Background information collected from the interviews

The majority of young respondents had a primary school education. Few of them were those who managed to obtain several professions or graduated high school (Figure 2). Two of the young people with a higher education were not Roma, none of them lived in a segregated environment, but all of them have difficulties finding employment, primarily because they are disabled people, although they do not consider themselves to be one. Two of interviewee said that they have comprehension difficulties, in one case the parent confirms that based on different testing procedures the respondent had special educational needs, and in one case the respondent, according to his statement, was diagnosed with autism as a child.

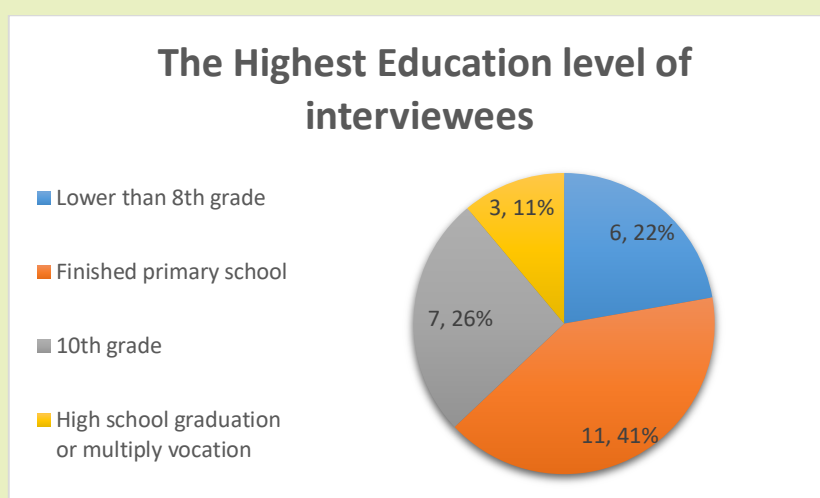


Figure 2. Distribution of the highest level of education amongst the interviewee

Only one person was actually unemployed among those who did not finish primary school.

Several young Roma (11 people) started learning a profession after finishing their special primary school, but dropped out of the vocational school after the first or the second year.

Only four of them started their studies in a local special education vocational school, for the rest of them preparatory class was provided by one of the local integrated vocational school. In relation to the latter, the interviewees unanimously stated that an entire class was thus transferred from the special education school to the mentioned integrated vocational school after the completion of the eighth grade. According to them, after the preparatory class, they would have been divided, and put into different integrated classes based on different professions by their choice.

One of them started at the beginning with integrated vocational training, but he dropped out after the first semester because, according to him he wasn't prepared, he got a lot of homework after class, then he wasn't able to complete these without help, so the school treated him as equal, without providing compensation for the difficulties arising from his conditions.

In total, 17 people dropped out of primary and vocational school for the following reasons:



- Starting a family for 7 people,
- She/he "didn't like going to school": 6 people,
- Death of a family member, care giving of family member: 3 people,
- He had to work: 2 people,
- School failure: 1 person.

The individual reasons cannot always be easily separated based on the statements of the interviewees. For example, there was an interviewee who took over the role of the provider of their family after the death of his father or in an other case, a young mother didn't finish the vocational school after giving birth, because she wasn't successful based on her marks.

Based on our analysis presented later, these are real, although superficial reasons.

At the time of the interview, the majority of young Roma people had a job, however, the number of those jobs at a registered workplace was negligible (Figure 3). *We can state that primary school, secondary education hardly influenced their employment.*

Most of the interviewees living in the settlement have never worked in a registered workplace; if so, then it was public work or some kind of factory work.

There are two types of undeclared jobs: auxiliary work on construction sites in the Capital and seasonal work in local vineyards. The latter is also relatively permanent, as the grapes, according to them, require constant attention. Both jobs are "organized" by important people living in the segregate, to whom they are often related. They are the confidants of those who actually provide the work. However, the youth seemingly do not have a direct relationship with the employer.

The confidants bring the work, collect the people from the segregate, and they also give the salary on a daily or weekly basis, so the actual employer is not involved in the process, but we were able to gain limited insight into this kind of second economy. Discovering and getting to know the informal economy that accompanies life in the segregate is difficult, even if that is a stated goal of a research (Durst, 2017).

Those young people who do not live in the segregated areas, i.e. are not members of this closed community, are either faced with the fact that there is no work in the area, or that they are not needed on the labour market due to their disability.

A young Roma graduate living with autism who wants to be a traffic controller at a Hungarian long-distance bus company - as he is a fan of buses- says that he wrote "a letter to Volanbus that here is my CV, if they accept it, than they accept it, if they don't, then here I go to the mayor's office". When we asked what he would do there at the mayor's office, he replied that he would rake. According to him, there is nothing but public works in the settlement, which is relatively far from larger cities and industrial areas.

Another young man, who has several professions, is now working for his cousin because no one wanted to hire him for eight hours. As a student worker, he previously gained a lot of experience in warehouse work, but because he has disability, all employers offered him part-time jobs, and that is provide less income than he needs. He would like to live separately from his mother and start his own family. In addition to getting a job, his big problem is that he can't find a partner, and there is no organization or platform that would help him to initiate or learn the necessary skills.



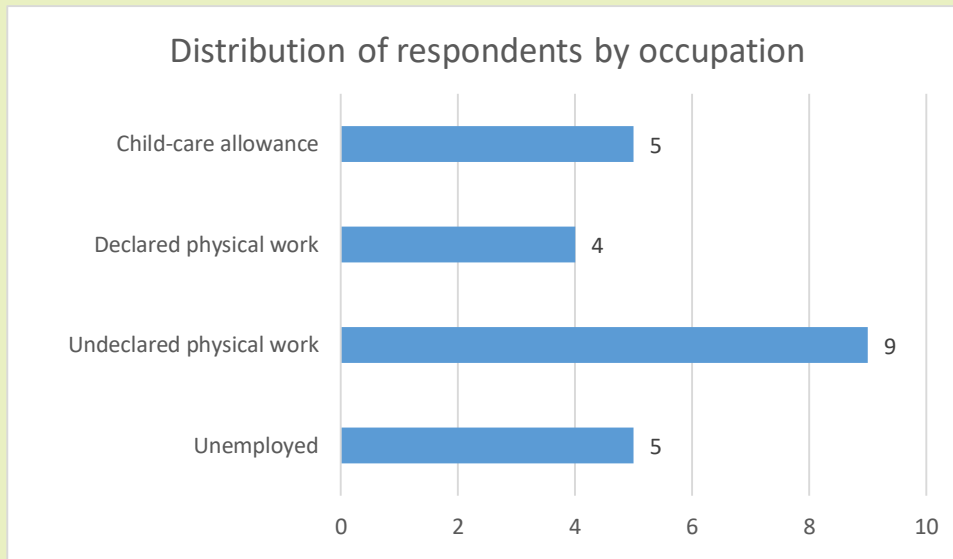


Figure 3. Distribution according to employment among young respondents

Official marriage is not frequent amongst young people in our sample, thirteen people lived in civil partnership and the same amount of them were single at the time. In one case, it was not clear the relationship status of the interviewee. Most of the young people who have children are with their partner and do not raise their children alone. The average number of children in our sample is 1.7, if we look only at those who are living in the segregate, then 2.

In most cases, these are families with 2-3 children, which does not cover a particularly high number of children (Figure 4).

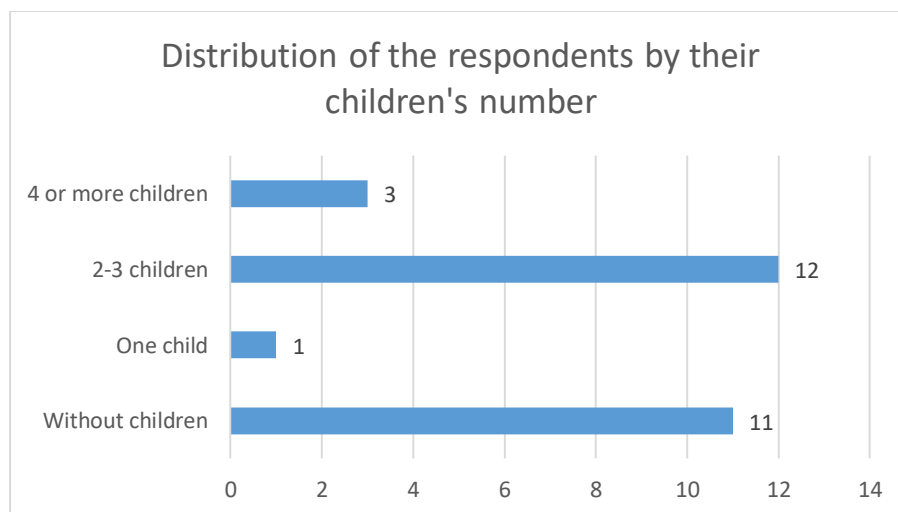


Figure 4. Number of children of the young respondents



4.4 Special education school vs. public school by districts

Almost half of our sample were transferred from a mainstream primary school to special education school. These young people's 52% (11 people) started their school life in special education and 48% (10 people) were transferred from a local public primary school. Four of the sample did not remember why and how they got into the special education school.

Public schools have compulsory enrolment districts based on address – except special schools - in Hungary. Every mainstream school is obliged to enrol a pupil regardless of their origin or status if the pupil registered at the address in their district at the local authority.

Figure 5 shows to whose recommendation were to enter in special education. The vast majority of them were admitted based on the decision of a pedagogical expert committee (testing learning abilities). Some of them stated that their parents had already chosen the special school for them because „this was a Roma school, the others schools were for Hungarians, here they were not afraid of not accepting me because I have Roma origin ”.

The interviewees put forward the following arguments in favour of the parental decision about special schooling:

- this school was closer to their home than the mainstream public school
- their siblings and more distant relatives also attended there,
- many people from the neighbourhood where they lived attended there, so there were more "Gypsy children".

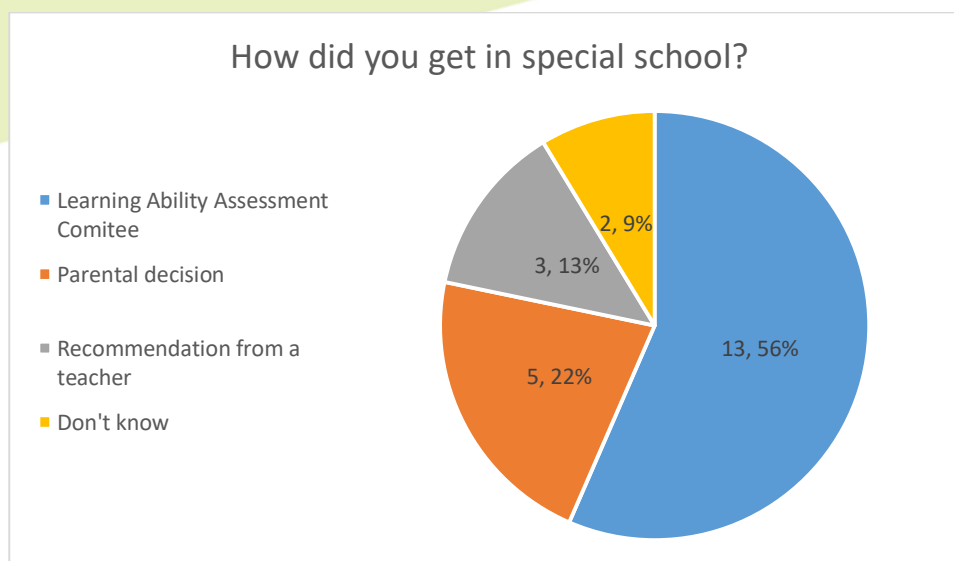


Figure 5. Routes to the special education school

Few said that their kindergarten or primary school teacher recommended the special school to their parents, but they had absolutely no information about whether their school initiated the expert examination. On the other hand, those who were transferred from a mainstream school more often reported that their school results were bad, that they repeated a year for example due to absences, and/or that they experienced racism, discrimination, or/and they were labelled as gypsy ("cigányozás") in the mainstream school:



"Every morning, when I went in, they always said, 'you stinky gypsy'" (27-year-old man)

"There was a lot of absence, I didn't like going there." "Well, I'll tell you the truth, there were too many Hungarians. There was absolutely no Roma in the class and they didn't like Roma at all." (28-year-old woman)

"I have a cousin, also (Same surname), almost (Similar first name to mine), and I got mixed up with him. And I was transferred there. And when it was found out, they put me back." (22-year-old male).

The above mentioned young man was mixed up with a relative and because of this he was sent to a special school, then the special education teachers realized he did not "fit" into the environment, so he was returned to the mainstream school.

More quotes about getting into special education school:

„my brothers have all been up there,...., the older ones. Then my mum sorted it out, because we really didn't know anything there at all. So they said, they gave us a book to read, even though we didn't know a single letter, and then we had to read. And then we failed. And then we went in vain, we just failed, and then my mother arranged for us to go to Eger. Then we went up there. So we were able to learn and read everything." (Thoughts of a 26-year-old woman about how the after a learning ability examination in Eger, how he got into a special education),

"the problem with me was that I didn't like to go to school...I didn't even go for a few months, I had a tantrum, my mother took me to school, I had tantrums, I ran away, then I came home. And then they put me up there".

At another point in the interview, she talks about the mainstream school from which she was "sent" to the special school:

"They were cheeky, they were pushy, they were always hurting the little ones, and they took the pocket money we got, or if we had food, they took it from the little ones. Pencils were taken from us...." (30-year-old woman).

Young Roma who have children, or smaller siblings report similar experiences in today's mainstream schools:

"He complains that there is a teacher who hits him all the time, or when he is bad and she doesn't hit him, still she throws him out of the class." (Report of a 27-year-old woman about her own child's experiences),

"they are not so concerned about them now. So they tend to think it's fine, then they fail, and then they repeat the year again... back in September the teacher said... that she would fail. And the little girl started school then...the teacher doesn't even understand...why they put her in the second grade, when she should have failed the first grade again." (26-year-old woman, about her child's class teacher),



"they looked down on the children, it also became a problem... that they shouted at her" (29-year-old man, who had to go to school and speak up so that his child would not be shouted at),

"There are some teachers who make exceptions...who pays more attention to the Hungarian children,...who care for them more and less of the Roma children ...I heard back from one of the little girls that her teacher teased her. She told her that "Have you looked in the mirror because if you would look in it, it would break." (30-year-old woman, to whom a neighbour girl complained),

"I think it's that they hate the Roma... The teachers. That's right. And the nursery teachers in the kindergarten too." (29-year-old man based on the experiences of his own child),

"he has his classmates and they are not Roma... They are very rude to him, I have already had a couple of arguments with their mother and father... they beat him, there was even a case where he was pushed down the stairs - well, thank God nothing happened... there is somebody for him too, his relatives... they protect each other. Good, that they don't fight. Coz the teacher would then tell me. (28-year-old woman, whose child was labelled as gypsy by his classmates during the break between classes).

Figure 6 shows that around the 2000s (approx. 2000-2005), most of our interviewees went to a special school in such a way that their classmates were close or distant relatives at the same time, and in five cases their parents were also former students of this school. According to the interviewees, the majority of students were Roma at the time in the special school (Figure 7), and the majority of them went to the school from local segregates (Figure 8). In Figure 8, part of the data is missing because this question had not yet arisen in the case of the first interviews. Later, because of a reference in one or two interviews, we asked as a specific question where the children went to the special school regularly. One of the interviews revealed that an assigned school bus transported the children from the more remote segregate to the special school. Then, as their number decreased in the special school, the bus service was discontinued:

"Seventh grade, I think. When we went up there by train, and then on foot from the train station, because a bus came here at the bus stop before that, the the bus stop was in the street, and then the bus always came for us at half past eight in the morning. Because many of us went from here to there." (26-year-old woman).

The mentioned decrease is also indicated by the fact that the younger respondents aged around 16-17 said that there are only few Roma students going to the special school now. The opinions of the older interviewees are also divided on this issue (Figure 9).



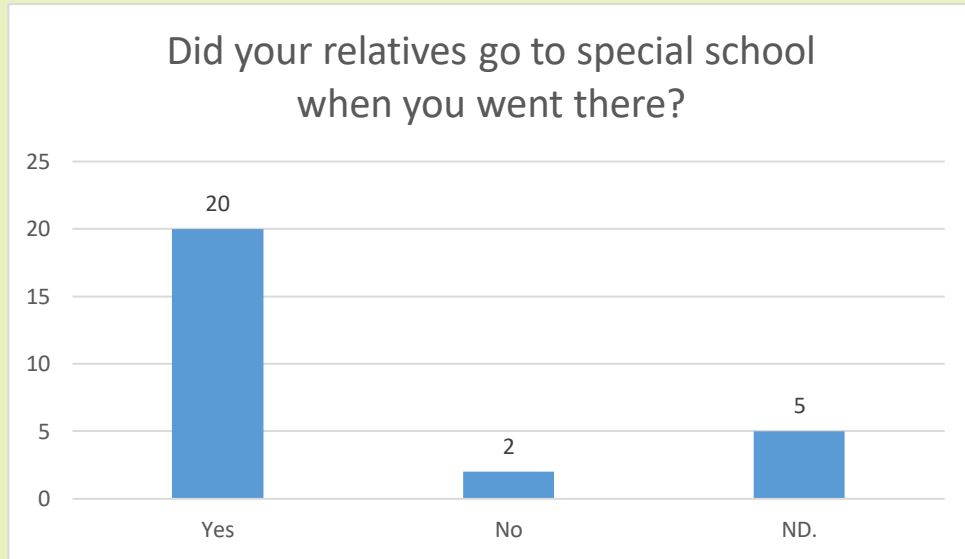


Figure 6. Kinship at school.

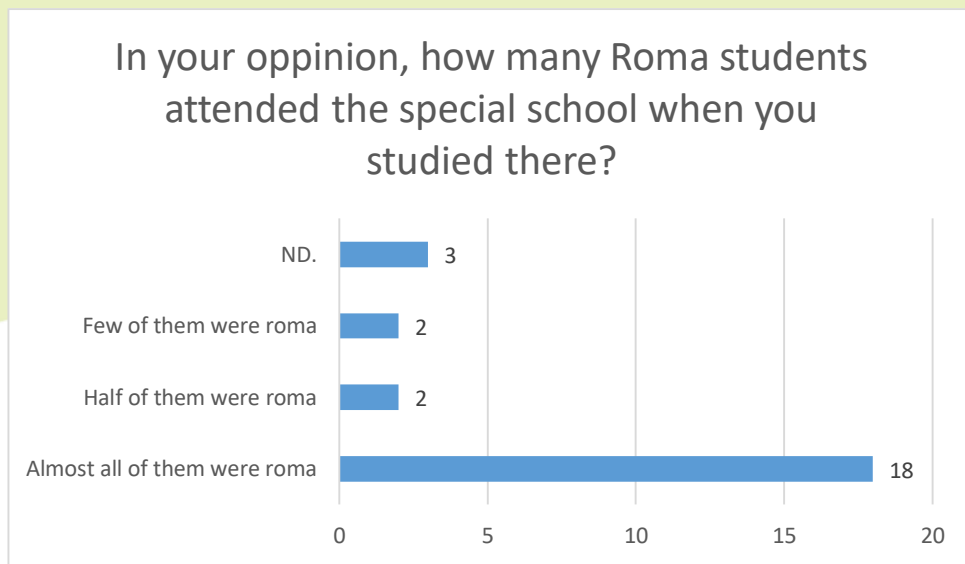


Figure 7. Number of Roma children in the special school.



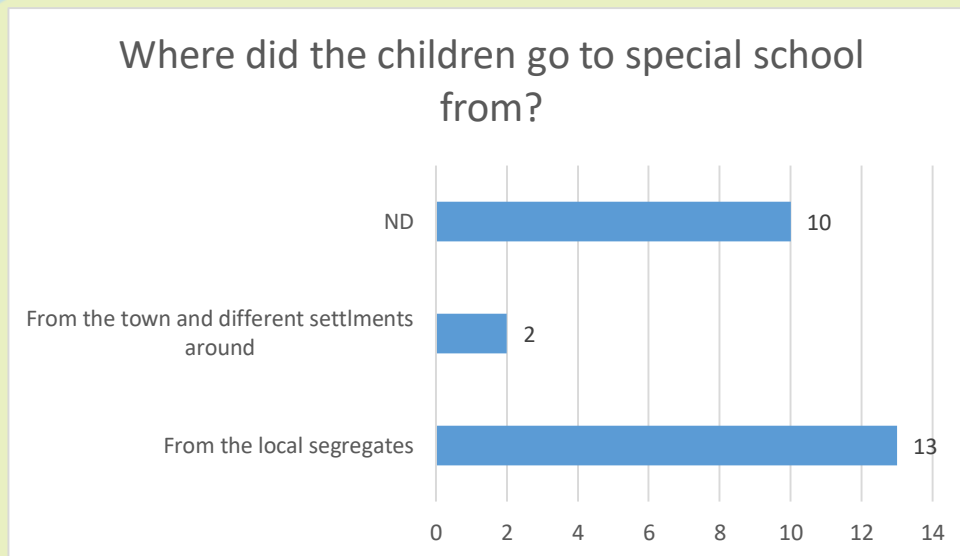


Figure 8. Territorial segregation and ability-based school segregation.

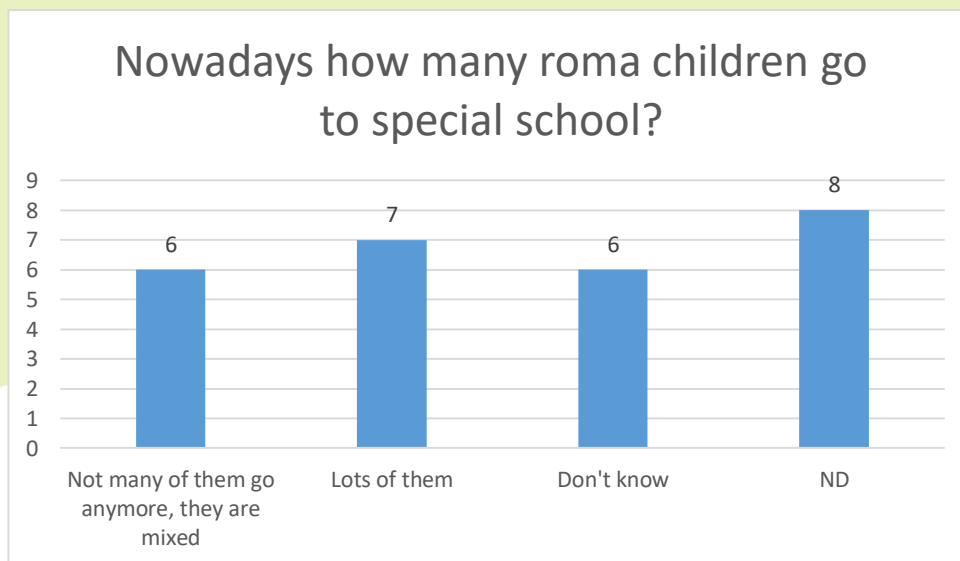


Figure 9. The proportion of Roma students currently in the special education school according to the respondents

Although the respondents express more positive opinions about special schools than about mainstream schools, many answered that they would not enrol their own children there. *We asked this question to 17 people, and 13 answered no.*

In connection with the news about the school, in eleven out of twenty cases it is said that the school is called a "stupid school" in the community, or some form of it is mentioned: idiot school, dumb school, moron school. At the same time, those interviewees who have been here for a longer period did not think that it was stigmatizing for them, and they do not hide this information from anyone in their community.



Only few of them considered that attending this school would have negatively affected their employment or even their further education. Rather, they see it as a disadvantage that they did not finish the school or acquire a profession when they still had the opportunity to do so. They believe that their income would be higher, their work would be easier and their livelihood would be more secure.

Even though they attended special school, they do not consider themselves disabled. Disabled person is one who needs significant support during everyday life according to their view - for example a mobility impairment or Down syndrome- and they do not need such support from their own community.

4.5. Special vocational school

Seven interviewees attended special vocational schools, all at the same institution which is maintained by one of the church. One of them attended after his integrative elementary school studies in special education vocational school, and one of them only spent half a year at the Unified Special Education Methodology Institute², then he was a student of the mentioned Cristian special vocational school.

About this special vocational school, one 22 years old interviewee - who considered himself Roma- said that it was a "gypsy collector", where he did not receive any learning support (assistance or any specific individual development). They spent only a few hours a day at school, and were often sent home at noon because there was no teacher to teach them at all. The majority of those who were employed here as a teacher were already close to retirement, or older by the opinion of this interviewee. With the special vocational school certificate, he could neither get a job nor get a graduation, because those subjects, and that he completed there were not counted in a mainstream vocational school. In order to graduate he had to start the high school from the beginning, which couldn't have to happen if he can continue his secondary studies in mainstream high school at the beginning.

One 28 years old person spent only one semester in a special education primary school, as no other public city school wanted to integrate him. Therefore this young man ended up as a pupil in an integrated small countryside school. His mother were present in the time of the interview and she said that integration meant to fulfil the duties of a pedagogical assistant along her child in school time. So in the morning, she sat in math class and participated in his teaching, after then she could went to work. This young person completed his secondary education in the same special vocational school like the rest of the interviewees, where he received neither development nor assistance. At the end he could not get a job with the certificates he had obtained.

A 22 years old, third young person also became a student of this special vocational school after the special education primary school. She liked the institution very much, she acquired two professions here, as she took advantage of the extended compulsory schooling. During the interview, it turns out that she does not trust that she will have a job in the future.

In the case of all three young people, it can be said that they have never lived in segregated conditions, and their families are also in a better financial situation compared to the majority of the entire sample.

² In Hungarian it is called EGYMI where only SEN children can learn by the decision of the earlier mentioned Learning Assessment Committee, these institutions usually maintain kindergarten, primary school, preparatory classes before secondary education, travelling network of special needs teachers, and sometimes special vocational schools.



They acquired more professions and higher education, nonetheless hard to get them job on the labour market.

Four more of the respondents attended the same special vocational school, but all of them dropped out after few months, years. One of them - at the time of the interview - 16 years old, who studied there a year earlier, dropped out before completing the compulsory education by the law. He said that he studied to be a shop assistant, but he never wanted to be a shop assistant. He applied to this institution because the special primary school recommended it. Teachers told him that there was no other option for him to continue his education. He also had a bad opinion of this school, and reported frequent conflicts with other Roma youths who were not from the segregate, but who were also students of the school. He called them *romungro* and *romungrica*³, but he could not explain how these students differed from him apart from their place of residence.

Based on the interviews, it seems that for the young people in our sample, the certificate of the special vocational school does not open the way either to further education or to labour market integration; and the institutional resources were not sufficient either to develop students' skills or to prevent dropouts.

4.6 What will you be like in 10 years?

The interviewees could not give a clear answer to the question of what they will be like in 10 years due to the abstract nature of the question. By modifying the question about what they want, what they want in 10 years, they usually answered and also made a drawing, after the first surprise.

Apparently, young people are not used to thinking about the distant future in a planned way. In the vast majority of cases, they simply did not know what to say to this at first:

"Well I do not know. I hope it will be good" (laughs) (26-year-old woman),

"Oh my God, I don't even know!... I have no idea... what to draw?" (26-year-old woman),

"Ten years ahead is difficult.... I would, of course. I might win the lottery, I might." (29-year-old man),

"Well, my future? Let them be big, the children will be big, won't they... Well, what can I say.." (27-year-old woman),

"Ten years later? Well, what does it look like... I don't even know. What kind of...?" (28-year-old woman),

"What should I draw?... What will I become? How am I going to look or what? I have everything anyway. My family. That's what I care about, my kids. What else do I need?... I would go somewhere else with my children, or something..." The same young person in relation to employment: *"I could have declared legal work, but I didn't want to. Because I won't get a pension anyway, right? We won't live that long anyway* (laughs). (29-year-old man).

³ A Roma man or a Roma woman who does not speak romanes, and comes from a Roma community which is considered as Hungarian.



The purpose of the drawing activity was to facilitate self-expression, but this was only possible in a limited way. Most of the interviewees from the segregates had difficulty imagining themselves and their situation ten years from now, only two of them were able to depict themselves in the centre of the picture displaying a different type of desire for self-realization from most of them.

Most of the drawings of the responding young Roma from the segregates testify that their most pressing problem is housing. 66% of young people (18 people) drew a house, a house with a car, or a house with their family. Those who drew houses all want to live in a better neighbourhood, away from the segregate, in better conditions.

When we asked if they felt capable of realizing this desire, the majority of them said yes; it's an attainable desire, even given their circumstances presented above - single-earner families, undeclared work, several minor children, lack of education, poor relatives.

As conclusion we can state, that either their estimate of their situation isn't realistic or they don't consciously want to say out loud their obvious hopelessness.

4.7 Social network, youth work

One of our aim of our research was to map out who the young respondents can turn to if they need external help and support, especially we wanted to gain knowledge about their perception of the local social network, and local youth work.

Relatives were often designated as informal actors of the system, as well as residents of the segregate. Those who provide assistance in the previously mentioned undeclared employment.

The help of the institutional network is used on occasion, many did not know exactly what kind of help they could expect from these organizations.

A significant majority of young people could not say what a youth organization does and whether there is such an organization in their neighbourhood. Those who are connected to the after school through their children believed that perhaps our association could be a youth organization, but they were not quite sure about that.

Two respondents believed that one of the known Student work cooperatives –which has a great tradition in Hungary- could be a youth organization, but they were also unsure about this.

Assistance in finding a job, continuing education, and charity work were included in the scope of youth work. These are the main reason why they are connected to different organizations. The local social network carry out such activities and provide this kind of support in the area. However, these organizations are not youth organizations. One of these frequently mentioned institutions is the Maltese community centre in one of the local segregates, from which several people have received help on occasion. Only those, who live close to the institution, can count on donations or humanitarian services



from here, so they cannot support people living in an other segregate or place - according to our interviewees.⁴

These young people have not yet encountered the services belonging to classic youth work, as an activity of a youth organization¹.

Therefore if they were involved in such services, it was not provided by a youth organization.

A specifically non-profit youth organization does not receive targeted, regular local government support, nor does an independent youth office operate, which could implement classic activities in Gyöngyös. The inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities beyond childhood is not discussed in detail in the youth concept. The concept mostly state that it would be good if there were programs and resources that could help the lives of underprivileged young people who are not children (Youth Concept of Gyöngyös City Municipality, 2017-2022, 2017).

The Services of Family Support and Child Welfare Services are rarely used by our interviewees of their own accord.

This is especially true for the Child Welfare Service:

"I am only contacted when the child is absent from school for a few hours. But beyond that, I don't know anything about them, what they would be, because I don't know them."
(27-year-old woman)

Other interviewees also confirm that Child Welfare only comes to them because of school absences; they are warned when a fine is due and when the family allowance will be withdrawn.

People can make phone calls, request an appointment with the doctor or nurse, and they give donation package and provide help to fill out paperwork at the social care centre.

When asked whether these institutions can help them achieve their wishes expressed during the interview - a better place to live-, eleven out of twenty answered clearly that they did not:

"they just say with their mouths that yes, ... but nothing, they don't help." (29-year-old man)

⁴ - supports the self-organization of young people, helps prepare them for self-organization;
- creates the place, time and framework for being together
- specifically encourages the questioning, autonomy and autonomous approach of young people
- customized, voluntary services that do not have a definitive, expected outcome or indicator
- low-threshold services that can be accessed anonymously
- professionals working in this type of work do not have a direct influence on the processes, like a teacher or a social worker, because there is no schedule to follow, no predetermined goals
- non-formal learning
- guidance without demands (Nagy, 2016)



5. Conclusions

Based on the interviews of the young people in the segregate, the main categories shown in Figure 10 emerged.

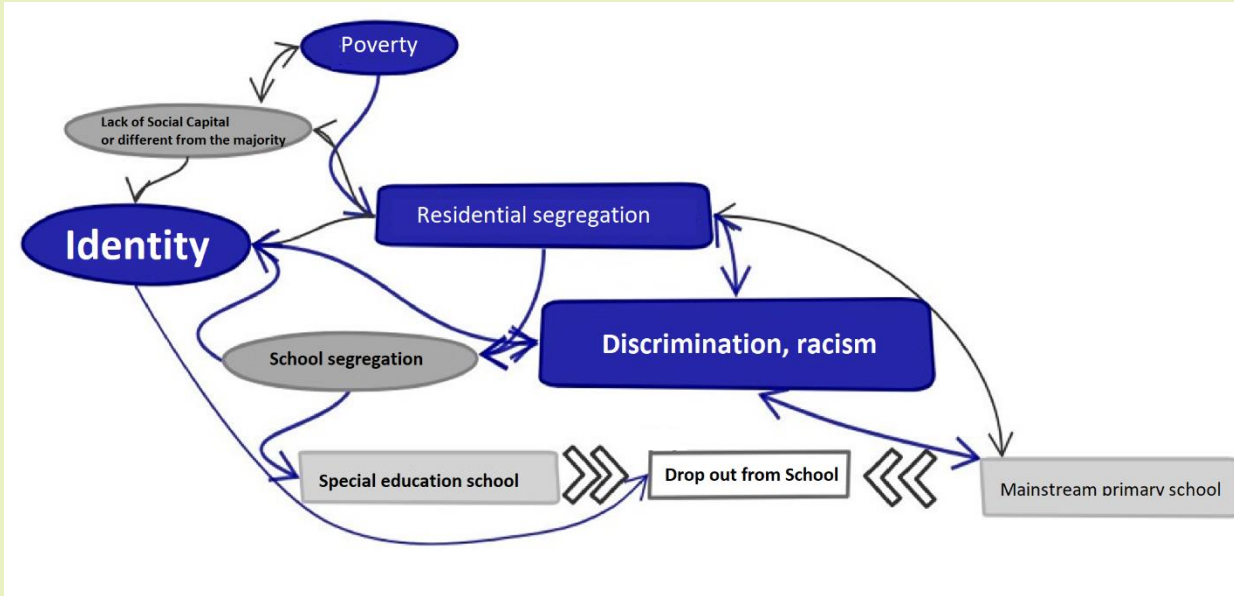


Figure 10. From poverty to school dropout

5.1 Residential segregation and social capital

The biggest problem of the young respondents is residential segregation, and most of them, after some thought, would live elsewhere or at least in different circumstances. The process of the development of residential segregation can be clearly seen on the basis of the interviews.

The majority of the young people living in the segregate were born in Gyöngyös, and they lived in the segregate even in their childhood. Most of those who were in a cohabiting relationship at the time of the interview also chose their partner from the local community: either they met in the segregate, or at school, or through relatives who attended the same school or class.

They can only get out of the segregate through marriage, which is primarily the option of women if the chosen man does not live in one of the segregated areas. The tradition in the local community is that newlyweds move in with the boy's family, the girls go as "maiden" and then, if they can afford it, move into their own apartment or house. However, most of them cannot buy an apartment or a house for themselves - not even in the segregated areas.

A significant part of the respondents lives with their extended relatives - parents, siblings, their children - despite the fact that they already have children of their own. If we only look at the average number of children of those living in the segregated areas, then divided by all respondents it is 2, which compared



to the average number of children present at the time of the interview (2.5), we reach the same conclusion.

Everyone has a certain degree of kinship with each other, and through these kinships the two segregated areas are continuously connected. Intermarriage contributes to the reproduction of the population of the settlements. It's their social capital.

Of course, social capital theories classify the relations of the segregated area as part of social capital, emphasizing that on the one hand these bonds help the community to survive, on the other hand they can have negative economic consequences (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000).

However, this is not the only reason for the regeneration of the population of the segregated areas. The market value of real estate in the segregated areas is well below the average, as the majority of them are areas inhabited by Roma. Therefore, they cannot sell it at such a price that they can buy a place of residence for themselves elsewhere. They cannot accumulate their own capital, they are not creditworthy, and due to the lack of declared work, they are not entitled to the state subsidies introduced in recent years to help with housing construction and renovation. Their poverty preserves their living conditions, from which the state does not provide adequate financial assistance to get out of.

One might think that the registered employment would improve their situation. Declared work does not provide them with the benefits, especially if they have children that we might attribute to it. Due to low education or lack of education, it does not pay more, so their living situation does not change because of it.

In fact, even among the young respondents, those who do not have children, live better.

The only incentive for the declared work would be access to health insurance, which is not a real incentive because their experience is that their family members die at a relatively young age, even when there was universal health insurance for everyone. One interviewee (28-year-old woman) says that her mother was 38 years old when she died, another woman's (26-year-old) father was 43 years old when he died.

5.2 Racism, discrimination

It is clear that the residential segregation contributed to the school segregation, as our interviewees mostly attended the school from the segregated areas.

Despite the fact that the admission was subject to learning ability assessment, the system made sure that the children were placed in the "right" place, since that school was considered as "a school for gypsies". Some refer to it as such; if by chance someone did not go to that school, they could still get in easily, at the request of their parents, or even due to a mix-up of their names.

Due to institutional segregation, we asked them what their experiences with non-Roma are like, how they behave with them in everyday life, on the street, in the city. The phrase that was said the most was "we are taken under one hat". Several (71%) explained that they judge and look down on Roma people,



that they don't work, are lazy, are criminals, have too many children, and go around with "Mercedes". There are young people who are checked twice or three times a week by the police on the street.

5.3 School effects: the real causes of school dropout

Big differences can be observed in the interviews regarding the two schools (Figure 11).

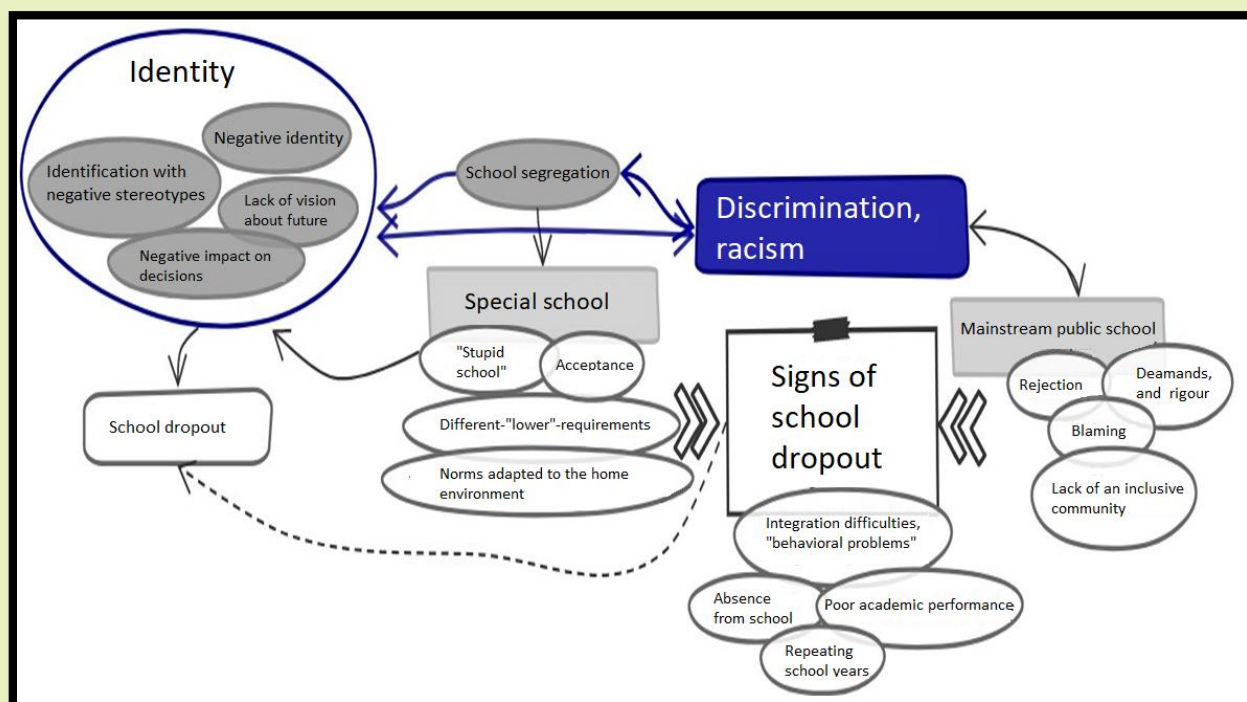


Figure 11. Differences between schools, school dropout rates

The respondents presented the special education school as an accepting environment, where the requirements were low, they didn't have to bring a books, they didn't get homework, there was a lot of free time and the teachers tolerated bad behaviour. According to their knowledge they studied the same subjects as in the district school; except foreign languages.

Some of the respondents were satisfied with the school, they believed that those who wanted, could study. Those who didn't wanted to study also could feel accepted by the teachers. The other part of the young people considered that the low standards, "permissiveness" meant neglect, and that the school's teachers were actually not interested in teaching. Almost every interviewee mentions that the physical education classes at school were the best, because they could try many sports, and those who had a talent for it were supported to compete. Those who excelled in sports were taken to Balaton for camping. There were many trips, they also travelled abroad to Lake Saint-Anna.

The school organized programs in which the children's families could also participate. Every program was free, the families didn't have to pay for them.



Those who completed the eight classes were helped to transfer to a local vocational school, so they strove to put the young people in a "good" place.

Compared to this, the mainstream public school is characterized by strictness and compliance with the rules, despite the injustices experienced – repetitions of class years, lack of help, integration difficulties, and exclusion - this strictness is mostly viewed positively. They identify with the fact that a good school is strict and mandatory, the child must be sent to school well-groomed, this makes this school more "normal" and in this atmosphere they believe that their children learn more. The homework that children take home reinforces their opinion about the quality of education. As a rule, they are given a lot of homework and parents cannot help them to solve them. For this reason, they believe that their children will leave the district school smarter.

In the mainstream school, they⁵ collect quite high class fees, so the school can take the children on trips, and there are many other additional costs, e.g. they have to bring pocket money, food and drink on class trips, sometimes the school ask for money for renovation.

The class-money system and the payment of the additional costs of teaching are incompatible with the promise of compulsory and *free* education for all, and it does not take into account the disadvantaged situation of families, for which the school receives an official decision from the local government.

Based on the interviews, it seems that *school treatment has absolutely no effect on dropout*.

Some interviewees also dropped out of special education school, while those who did not, later dropped out of the secondary vocational education. However, the situation is much more nuanced than that.

Those young people who dropped out - in 5th, 6th grade from the special education primary school- had already reached the age of 15-16, because previously they repeated many school year in the mainstream school. The efforts of the special education school were no longer effective, it was too late to help.

The circumstances of these young people had bigger effect on drop out; some had to go to work, the family depended on their earnings, some had to take care of the sick, some started a family. The same is the case with dropping out of vocational school, by the time they reach grades 9-10. Class, they reached the age of 16-18 and had other obligations.

Learning motivation extinguished in early school age shows its harmful effect in school dropout.

As can be seen, the respondents identify with the school requirements and higher expectations, but as children they could not cope with the lack of support in *learning, negative discrimination, and the lack of an inclusive community*.

5.4 Identity and negative identity – conformity to stereotypes and self-blame

Segregation - both residential and school -, the inability to break out, learning failures, discrimination, and the feeling of rejection lead to respondents unconsciously identifying to the "gypsy image" of the majority. For the same reason, they blame themselves for their school experiences and school-related decisions and/or identify with the position of the majority; possibly developing a negative identity. They distance themselves from those who are "not good" Roma (Kállai, 2014; Szabó, 2018).

⁵ The amount usually is an agreement between the parents at the beginning of the school year.



The following are examples of one or the other phenomena:

- "How does a gypsy grow up? Because you said he grew up like a gypsy, what's that like?"
- *Most of them, almost, are poor.*
- What is it like when someone is rich?
- *Well, that has everything, car, gold⁶, everything." (28-year-old woman)*

- *"Well, we also tell them every day, almost every day, to... go, study, and they won't make a living from communal work. ...Well, it's basic, graduation, and such, it's basic. It's just that the problem is that learning does not wash away your origin..." (22-year-old man)*

- *"rather, Gypsies are usually on that, they build a family, and the busy with this and that, not like the Hungarians... the Hungarians able to spear money, not like the Gypsies. Well, I can say this... Yes, family building... the Hungarians, not now, they have time to get there. At first they finish the schools, high school. Isn't it the high school that counts, so that they have more opportunities than the gypsies now have? Because such gypsies who have a high school education are rare..." (28-year-old woman)*

- "Do you consider yourself to be of Roma?"
- *"Yes. I am a DECENT Roma." (22-year-old male).*

At another point in the interview, this same young Roma says the following about the school and other Roma:

"there were a lot of Roma...and not Roma like me or my relatives, but a much worse circle of people.... if the government drops some noodles, they accept it and vote for it, they give birth at the age of 13, and so on... László Bogdán⁷... He might have saved the Roma. But I think they silenced him, to prevent it..."

- *"Because many gypsies steal, so-and-so, many are in prisons, everything. They steal. Only for this. And then they take us under one hat."*
- Okay, but why do they do this, so why do you think people who are in prison or people who steal do it?
- *"Yeah, because they might be forced to. They do drugs and this and that. But I don't know why." (29-year-old man).*

When asked what the school should do to make it better for children with fewer opportunities, they uncritically repeat what they probably hear from the teachers and the school:

⁶ She means: jewelleryes

⁷ A Hungarian Roma mayor of Cserdi, who died in 2020.



*"it also depends on the child, because some don't pay attention, some pay more attention."
(27-year-old woman),*

"If someone studies well, grades are better" (25-year-old woman),

"parents should also teach them at home. You have to take your time with them a lot and then, like this..." (29-year-old woman),

"the parents are responsible...that's why they're so stupid, they're not involved" (22-year-old man),

"it also depends on the children, whether they pay attention or not" (28-year-old woman),

"Well, parents should teach their children. To prepare them so that when they go to school, they already know how to read and write in the first grade. And ones' behavior should be such that, one has to be really calm..." (30-year-old man).

Emphasizing the responsibility of the individual and the family, without criticizing the activities of the school and the teachers, reinforces the belief that the problem lies only with them, that the school is doing everything well, only they, the Roma, are unable to catch up despite the help of the teachers.

5.5 Can the school lift people out of poverty?

Finally, the processes presented visually above should make it clear that the school, even in an integrated form, has little effect on the school success of students living in a segregated environment. The acquired education does not ensure the rising out of poverty, the ability to move, perhaps it would only provide the opportunity after several generations. And this has no motivating power for young people who currently live in poverty without a vision for the future. Almost all young people with families who dropped out of school said that they now know that they should have finished school and acquired a profession, and if they could, because the state would provide the opportunity, they would continue their studies. However, when we asked at one point in the conversation, if they knew of a training program that would start locally for those who completed the 5th grade, who would take care of their child, who would ensure their daily living, etc.; then it became clear to them that they didn't have a real opportunity for that.

The only sensible reaction of the school would be to accept their already difficult life situation and make it easier by making the school a lovable or liveable, non-violent environment capable of giving positive feedback and make an effectively using classroom environment, so that the self-evaluation that shapes the vision of the future can develop.

"Values and vision are both motivating and behaviour-determining factors, which can develop significantly during adolescence." (Szabó, 2018, p. 74)



6. Recommendations

We are making proposals here that obviously do not solve the structural problems arising from the economic system and the organization of the state.

Residential segregation could clearly be mitigated by expanding the stock of rental housing and other desegregation measures that support this, which is also known to local decision-makers. According to the municipal equal opportunity program, the city is committed to eradicating residential segregation, yet the number of rental housing is decreasing, and new municipal housing is not being built. The goal of the program is not to move out or demolish, but to improve the quality of life in the segregated areas by improving the accessibility of infrastructure and public services (Local Equality Programme, Gyöngyös Municipality, 2018).

In the light of our own analysis, this is certainly positive, but it does not provide adequate answers to the territorial stigmatization resulting from residential segregation and the unfavourable development of student ratios in district schools.

1. Possibilities of obtaining a basic education

The Local Equality Programme document identifies low education as an obstacle to employment. The acquisition of a general education for adults and the provision of vocational educational opportunities are also emphasized and it is established that there are such options for dropouts in the settlement, but there is little interest in the vocational education on the part of those concerned. The program also identifies the presence of discrimination, which is intended to be counterbalanced by positive discrimination, positive examples appearing in local media, and appropriate, ethical behaviour expected from public services (Local Equality Programme, Gyöngyös Municipality, 2018).

Our results suggest that residential segregation and discrimination are closely linked to school failure, so the problem should not be approached solely from the direction of schooling, but vice versa. In our opinion, mitigating residential segregation – and a stable monthly income from the state which is proportional to inflation - could do more for academic success, than the expectation from the school system to tackle poverty.

The people living in the segregated area partly discriminated because of their Roma origin, and partly because of their place of residence. Discrimination appears in all areas of life, and based on the interviews, school is also a space for this: in the name of equal treatment, the difficult circumstances of the students are neglected.

A high degree of poverty, insufficient housing conditions and an overcrowded living environment make it impossible to successfully cope with school expectations.

The identity formed along the lines of stigmatization has a negative impact on the vision of the future, the consequence of which is school dropout. The analysis shows that life management strategies corresponding to this identity and vision are being developed; part of it is casual and informal employment, which ensures survival. And survival does not allow them to dedicate a significant amount of time to finishing school as adults.



Of course the multicultural aware and personalized inclusive support should appear in schools.

Furthermore, it would be worthwhile for the decision makers to consider the possibility of introducing a final exam to obtain certificate about basic education - exclusively - for those who, within the institutional framework, during the period of compulsory education weren't able to obtain their primary education. Obviously, this is not a local measure, but a systemic measure for which the conditions could be created.

Currently, according to Eurydice, primary education for adults is provided by various institutions, but most of them allow the completion of 7-8 classes, because there is less demand for 5-6 classes. As more and more people complete primary school in school-based training, for those who didn't finish it the only possibility is to continue in a larger or different city. In 2019 in Hungary, 453 people graduated from primary school, and in the same academic year, 3,211 people participated in adult primary school education. Another option is the so called Dobbantó program, where young people can obtain a partial vocational qualification in addition to a general education in a vocational school (Eurydice, 2022).

Each program is based on the regular and personal presence of the young person, so none of them take into account the costs and difficulties associated with travel, as well as the living conditions (child upbringing, nursing duties, and contribution to family income) that we outlined in the research report.

The „Dobbantó program” aims to provide support with the role of a mentor-teacher and tries to encourage young people to participate in the program with a scholarship providing 5% of the minimum wage (Eurydice, 2022). This scholarship is probably will prove to be insufficient in dealing with difficulties arising from the earlier mentioned life situations.

Part of our research was to find out about local education services for young people who drop out. One of our colleagues found out from the employment centre in Gyöngyös that they are starting a course to finish elementary school, which is subject to a placement test. Those who participate in the program can receive a monthly allowance of HUF 100,000. The administrator was unable to provide more precise information about this, and when we called, they were unable to give specifics about the education, for example, whether the classes will definitely start, for what duration, and how much time the applicant would need to participate per day. There is no information on the current activities of the employment centres and branches on the website of the Heves county government office.

The option of an exam not tied to regular attendance and the voluntary participation of local civic or other services in the flexible preparation of primary school dropouts would bridge the difficulties arising from living conditions, or at least give another –albeit narrow- motivated group the opportunity to obtain basic education.

2. Inclusive school

Based on their own and their children's experiences, the young respondents say that they often experience marginalising and even abusive behaviour at school. The underlying structural problems in the education system are well known in literature (Fejes; Szűcs, 2018). What could be done at the local level is to create smaller class sizes in the case of the lower grades. The majority of disadvantaged



children enrolled elementary school attend classes of 25-30 students, while the phenomenon of school dropout spans generations in their families, as this research report proves. They need individual, differentiated attention provided by their school, so that they can avoid repeating classes and finish primary school on time. The risk of dropping out increases with each repetition of the year, making vocational schools off the table and putting the completion of primary school in jeopardy. While having a primary school certificate does not make a difference in living situation, as parents the respondents could support their own children in their studies more easily, as in many cases their children could be the first generation to obtain the certificate in a non-special district school. Should we want all these positive effects, schools has to have a positive image, a place worth going to where one receives support, respect and love.

Sensitization programmes focused on what the Roma contributes to the Hungarian society are necessary as opposed to ones where poverty is in the centre of the attention. Should these programmes made available to students as well, the value of Roma culture could be made more visible and increase self-esteem of Roma students.

3. Youth services for young adults

Independent non-profit organizations may be necessary due to the mostly indifferent or negative experiences of the interviewees regarding the public social network. In any case, state-run public service providers often stepping up as authorities has an alarming effect and is not fostering cooperation; this can be inferred from the interviews.

Services of NGOs are not mandatory to use – unlike many of the services offered by child-protection services where cooperation is mandatory or there are legal consequences – and there would probably be a long-term demand for these services. People living in the neighbourhood not only know the community house in one of the segregated areas, but also regularly visit it. In the other segregated area, there is no similar service available, and the family support centre is also relatively far away.

Such a financially stable community centre could employ a person independent of the school, a Roma mentor, who could support the children's school attendance with personal visits in the morning. He could keep contact with the school, mediating between the families and the teachers. Our research also shows that in many cases inefficiencies in communication between families and schools also contributed to dropout, e.g. the experience of exclusion and discrimination often resulted in being absent from school, and the lack of communication related to this is also part of the repetition of class years and finally dropout.

In addition, a school bus could provide additional assistance, especially during the winter, by collecting the children and bringing them to school on time. We believe that the Roma mentor and the school bus together would improve the willingness to go to school and reduce school dropout rates.

Based on the interviews, it can be concluded that the young people do not have reliable access to relevant information about available opportunities and support provided by the education and social system, available organizations do not fully fulfil their role as information providers. Questions and problems often arise during interviews (e.g. student work, dating, community programs, adult training



opportunities, internet use, need for job search advice, etc.) that could be answered by a low-threshold community and youth service within a reasonable distance.

Another important role of such a service could be the promotion of contact with other social groups in both domestic and international youth programs, in which it is possible to develop different abilities and competencies in a non-formal way, in open-ended pedagogical processes.

Such a service, on the other hand, could only survive with predictable and stable funding, which is currently not provided in Hungary; funding depends on the possibilities and decisions of the local governments.

Youth work with disadvantaged young people - and other human services - can contribute to the improvement of the quality of life, but it does not solve marginalization and its consequences, it mostly just blurs the structural problems.



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