

Publisher

Ministry of Social Affairs and Health

Date: 15 June 1999

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Type of publication

Report

Commissioned by

Ministry of Social Affairs and Health

Date of appointing the rapporteurs ad int.

15 February 1999

Title of publication

Strategies of the Policy on Roma

Parts of publication**Summary**

The socio-economic position of the Roma is weak owing to their low education level, and general prejudices and discrimination. The implementation of full and effective equality in the economic, social, political, and cultural areas is still halfway, although it has been secured by legislation through the reform of constitution and international conventions. In practice, however, the situation is different. The state's and municipal authorities' measures to attain de facto equality have been insufficient. The attainment of de facto equality have been insufficient. The attainment of de facto equality and prevention of social exclusion require a considerable investment in the education of Romani children, reducing the prejudices among the majority population and training of authorities in issues of ethnic minorities. Romani culture will be seen in Finland as a richness worth protecting. The United Nations, the European Union and the Council of Europe and other international organisations are paying increasing attention to the protection of national minorities.

Instruction in Romani language must be available from day care and pre-school to adult education. In schools the language instruction groups contribute to supporting the identity of Romani youth, and in particular in lower secondary school language teaching clearly prevents social exclusion. Instruction can be given by a Romani language teacher employed by one municipality or several municipalities who travels from one school to another in an area. The job description of the language teacher can, as far as possible, include a school assistant's and welfare officer's tasks. Education is the most efficient way of preventing social exclusion of the Roma, since the exclusion often begins in childhood. The provisions of the Children's Day Care Decree must be observed. The equality of opportunities must be implemented in practice in the same way as in respect of the children of the majority population. More material on Romani culture should be produced for day care and pre-school education, and the government grants to municipalities have to be earmarked in regard to the education of Roma.

As an important part of the policy on Roma is participation/inclusion and influence. Participation is no more seen as consenting to the cultural values of the majority population but participation essentially involves protection of one's own identity. The Roma must found a central organisation of their own. The strategy of society's policy on Roma must be to enable their participation/inclusion. It requires steering adequate resources to the various forms of cooperation. The strategies of the Roma and society can meet in administration in three different ways: 1) Joint planning can be realised by setting up a working group on Roma in municipalities, whose officeholders and political decision-makers together with Romani people can develop the living conditions and opportunities of participation of the Roma. 2) Municipalities with only a small Romani population should appoint a Romani contact person to convey two-way information. This contact person should receive topical information from authorities and convey it to the Romani people. The contact person should establish contacts with the local co-operation group on client service in respect of rehabilitation with a view to bringing about diversified rehabilitation for Romani people. 3) At the regional government level the most important measure is to establish the status of regional advisory boards.

The Advisory Board on Romani Affairs needs additional resources, in particular as the international contacts and requests for opinion have considerably increased. The Advisory Board on Romani Affairs has been set up by a Government decision and is linked to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The rapporteurs ad int. propose that the appointment of the Advisory Board should be based on a law, and in the same context it should be transferred to the Ministry of Education. This proposal is justified by the need to link the policy on Roma more closely to cultural, language and school policies which are essential for the protection of Romani culture and the prevention of social exclusion of Romani people.

Key words

Romani people/the Roma, policy on Roma, participation/inclusion, social exclusion, equality, discrimination, Romani language, identity, NGOs, legislation, international conventions, education, children's day care, older people, health care, housing, income support, crime, police, media, activities of parishes, history

Other information

Original title Romanipolitiikan strategiat

Title and number of series		ISSN	ISBN
Reports of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2000:8		1236-2115	952-00-0866-7
Number of pages	Language	Price	Publicity
157	English	FIM 40	For public use
Distributor/Orders		Financier	
Ministry of Social Affairs and Health Advisory Board on Romani Affairs tel. +358-9-160 4306		Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	

FOREWORD

Upon the proposal of Advisory Board on Romani Affairs, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health started a report on Romani affairs, to be carried out 15.2.1999 – 15.6.1999. Väinö Lindberg and Kyösti Suonoja were nominated as the Rapporteurs. Their responsibilities would be:

- 1) to present an overview on the present situation and position of Romani population in Finland, Romani culture and its special characteristics and needs, and interest groups of Romani population and their most crucial tasks by sending inquiry forms to Romani organizations and to regional advisory boards, by interviews and by utilizing previous reports;
- 2) find out, from the perception of Romani population, the factors leading to exclusion especially in social welfare and health care, education and culture, work life and housing, with special attention paid to the reform of constitution to facilitate equal opportunities for minority groups to participate in society and different levels of administration;
- 3) find out what is the most equal and appropriate way to care for Romani politics, that means for example clarifying the administrative position of Advisory Board on Romani Affairs and clarifying how to look after the interests of Romani population with regional administration and municipalities;
- 4) based on the above, to draw up a basic plan and suggestions for development for Romani policy, and to draft an expression of opinion to prevent the exclusion of Romani population.

The Rapporteurs were to hear the Romani population of the country, Romani organizations, Advisory Board on Romani Affairs, and representatives of municipal and state administration and other necessary sources.

The Rapporteurs drew up a large inquiry form that was sent to Romani organizations, and regional advisory boards. The inquiry could be used as source material on the present situation of the Roma, and on their opinions. Keeping statistics on the grounds of ethnic origin is forbidden by Personal Data File Act, so exact statistical information is limited to information provided by special inquiries.

The Rapporteurs interviewed the members of regional advisory boards in Oulu, Hämeenlinna, Mikkeli and Jyväskylä. They acquainted themselves with local Romani work in Pori, Forssa and Tammela. They visited a basic school, Mikkola School in Vantaa, where they gained information on the education of Romani pupils. They also visited a Romako-course, short-term educational course provided by Romani Missio in their own establishment in Sipoo. The Rapporteurs also listened to the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs.

The Rapporteurs acquainted themselves with how Romani issues are handled in central administration of the state by visiting the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Finance, Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of the Environment, and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. In addition to that, the Rapporteurs visited the Association of Finnish Regional and Local Authorities. A memo was written about every visit.

Mr. Pekka Harjunoski, Bachelor of Theology, student of political science, and Ms. Krista Virtanen, student of social sciences have assisted the Rapporteurs in collecting material, doing interviews and in writing. Pekka Harjunoski provided valuable assistance in writing chapters about Romani language and culture, but he has also significantly helped in writing the other chapters. Krista Virtanen shared her expertise in writing the chapter about education of Romani people. Her assistance in writing other parts of the book is to be acknowledged.

The employees of the office of Advisory Board on Romani Affairs greatly helped in organizing the practical side of this research.

The Rapporteurs express their gratitude to all the people they met, for their valuable support and sympathy, and they hope this research would give rise to conversation and to concrete action to develop the situation of Romani people and their language and culture. Multiculturalism is a wealth to be treasured. Finland should, especially now that it has the chairmanship of European Union, provide a good example to other countries, and Finland should also implement measures for minority protection and for the promoting of minority issues.

Väinö Lindberg

Kyösti Suonoja

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1. OVERVIEW¹

1.1. Historical Background of Romani Population

India is the country of origin of the Roma. Linguistical research after the 18th century has shown that the Roma originate from Punjab province in India. The exact reasons of emigration are not known, nor is it known if the emigrants were craftsmen, musicians or soldiers. War, famine, epidemics, disasters of nature, or growth of trade have been supposed to be probable reasons. Due to caste system, profession of the group was definitive, because it was in direct relation to their position in society (clergymen, soldiers, farmers, servants, and outcastes). However, it is known that the emigration took place in spurts, the first time was in the fifth century. After this, until the end of the 16th century, the Roma gradually dispersed all over Europe, also to Finland.

The first written notes on the Roma in Europe were found in Crete in an account of a journey from the year 1322. Occasional notes about "vagrant black people" exist from the end of the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th century, but it was only in the 15th century that the notes about the Roma became common. In the beginning the Roma enjoyed a positive attitude from other people, but the attitudes became prejudiced, when the settlement of the Roma brought out their way of life, that differed from the norms of majority. People not only tried to make the Roma adjust to the local culture, but they also tried to expel them from the country. Especially in Western Europe the Roma faced undisguised animosity and strong compulsory adjustment. People tried to make the Roma to give up their vagrant lifestyle, their style of dressing, and their language. In the east the treatment differed from neutral tolerance to adjustment. For example in Slovakia the Roma were considered as useful from the beginning and they were encouraged to settle down. In the Empire of Austria and in the provinces of Rumania the Roma were joined to the serfdom system. In Poland the strict laws and decrees concerning the Roma had to be changed in the end of Middle Ages, because the Roma were popular among ordinary people. The Roma received the most tolerant treatment in Russia, where no strict Romani laws were issued to try to make them adjust. In the end of the 18th century attitudes towards the Roma became more tolerant in the west, too. As the 20th century began, the Roma were either passively accepted or people actively tried to destroy them, for example in the concentration camps of Germany.

Denmark and Sweden were the first Scandinavian countries to receive Romani immigrants in the beginning of the 16th century. The Roma transferred to Finland from Sweden, but also from the east. The first Romani people were seen in the Åland Islands in 1559, and in the town of Turku they were seen in 1580. Also in the Scandinavian countries the Roma were considered unwelcome intruders, whose way of life, culture and looks were shunned as in other parts of Europe. In the 17th century Sweden (Finland was a part of Sweden then) the Roma were attempted to expel from the country. According to a law issued in 1637, it was allowed to kill a Roma who disobeyed the order to leave the country. In the middle of the 17th century Peter Brahe tried to inhabit the Roma near the eastern border of the country. After this attempt failed, church started, by order of senate, to pay attention to improving the position of the Roma. Church started to keep registers on the Roma. Attitudes towards the Roma eased off in the 18th century. A law issued in 1722 attempted to quickly assimilate the Roma to main population. Assimilation continued in the 19th century, when Finland became a part of

¹ Committee Report Number 3/1900, 1-45.

Russian Empire. Assimilation was attempted to carry out by closing all homeless vagrants in workhouses. According to law issued in 1863, all Romani people were ordered from regular workhouses to a penal institution in Hämeenlinna. Clergymen were urged to make the Roma more socially acceptable by giving them religious instruction. It was as late as in 1900, when a so-called Walle's Committee set the goal as the complete assimilation of the Roma to the majority population.

According to the Walle's Committee, it was hard to decide who actually was a Roma. It would have been a lot easier to plan actions for all people wandering around the country, not just for the Roma. So the actions proposed by the committee "mean only vagrant people and people who are actually leading Romani life, people who belong to the Romani population". The committee proposed that governmental office on Romani affairs should be established, to make the registering of the Roma easier, and to start schools for the Roma. The committee report states:

"Bringing up a race should be started in childhood and a child should be brought under control before native racial type has turned into individual character, racial instincts into a habit ... But there is no question that the state would start taking care of Romani childrens' upbringing before they have reached school age, that task is to be left for voluntary action and humanity."

The goal of the committee was to root out and exterminate Romani language. As Romani children learned Romani language at the age of 10 – 12, they were, according to the committee, to be kept at school at that age to prevent them from learning Romani language from older Romani people after school. The language would die and "so the Romani issue would, in a limited sense, be solved".² The main goal was to take the Romani children away from "the bad influence of their kindred people, to cut off traditions".³

Walle's Committee saw the poor circumstances of the Roma and it tried to make the Roma to adjust to Finnish society. Bringing up children, along with registration was the most important means to do that. The Roma can be considered as children to be brought up and supervised in the committee report from 1900. It was unheard of, that people would want to understand the culture and way of life of the Roma, on the contrary, those who showed understanding were punished. The only right way to live was the national Finnish way. Everything else was to be pulled up by the roots.

It took a long time before the state started to clarify Romani politics again. In March 1953 Council of State appointed a committee. The task of the committee was to "clarify the Romani issue, especially making the Roma adjust to normal social life, their employment and their obedience to compulsory education, and to draft proposals for necessary legislative and other actions".⁴ The committee started to call itself the Gypsy Committee. The Roma did not have their own representative in the committee. The Gypsy issue was, according to the perception of the committee, mostly about making gypsies adjust to society and bringing them up to be socially acceptable citizens. To reach that goal, the committee proposed the following methods:

1) establishing new childrens' homes, 2) special homes for young Roma, 3) making sure the Roma finish compulsory education, 4) helping them find full-time employment,

² The same, 119-120.

³ The same, 125.

⁴ Committee Report 1955, number 7.

5) establishing Romani villages that functioned like labour colonies, following the example of Norway. Council of State appointed, in 1956, an Advisory Board on Gypsy Affairs, to follow and supervise the development of social position of the Roma, and to make necessary proposals.

Mr. Paavo Mustala, Senior Inspector of Poor Relief in The Ministry of Social Affairs, acted as a Chairman of the Gypsy Committee. The committee report, that was completed in 1955, stated the goals of society to be the same as fifty years ago, although the Roma had fought in Finnish-Russian War (1939 – 1940) and the Continuation War along with majority population.

Radicalist movement in the 1960's, especially a so-called November Movement, brought out the Roma as an excluded minority along with different groups of sick and poor people. So called one-issue-movements were born, a peace movement called "Ydin" (Core) is still alive. A social magazine of Finnish gypsy Association, *Zirickl*, which was started in the 1960's, was short-lived. A publishing company called Tammi published a significant book "Pakkoauttajat" (Compulsory Helpers) in 1967. The book discussed in public the discrimination of several marginalized groups, including the Roma. Kristin Olsoni brought out discrimination against the Roma in her article "Tummien diskriminointi" (Discrimination of The Dark People). The book, *Compulsory helpers*, got a lot of attention as the mouthpiece of protest movement.⁵ Nowadays many people, who are in leading positions of society, were also the leaders of the radical movement of the 1960's.

A sign of radical times was a petitionary motion made in parliament in 1967 by *George Backlund* and *Arvo Salo*. The petitionary motion was to "appoint a committee to solve the problems of the Gypsies and to allocate a sum for practical implementation". It was the first motion that mentioned attending to the *interests* of the Roma and emphasized the *rights* of minority groups to participate in supervision of their interests and to participate in making plans concerning themselves. This was a public recognition of conflicting interests between Finns and Romani population of Finland. During parliamentary session in 1968 and 1969 government was questioned about discrimination experienced by the Roma, and for the first time state granted an appropriation for the Roma: state support for municipalities to build or to find rental flats for Romani families of limited means.⁶

Council of State had appointed an Advisory Board on Gypsy Affairs in 1956 to follow and supervise development and improvement of social situation of the Roma, and to make, in this purpose, necessary proposals. The Advisory Board on gypsy Affairs was reformed in 1968 and Mr. Jacob Söderman, Licentiate in Laws, was summoned to chair the Board. The Roma were allowed to have their own representatives in this Advisory Board.

The new Advisory Board drafted a report in principle about the Romani issue. The report posed the question how is it possible that a certain minority group has always lived in such a poor social situation, that it can be called misery. The Advisory Board stated that society has always adopted the majority point of view in Gypsy issues and it has failed to approach the issue from the perspective of Gypsy minority culture. The Advisory Board noticed the situation of the Roma is inconsistent with international treaties, with basic human rights,

⁵ Virolainen, Kari: Kansallisvaltioideologia ja romanipolitiikka Suomessa vuosina 1860-1980, lisensiaattityö. Oulun yliopisto 1994, 99. (Virolainen, Kari: National State Ideology and Romani Policy in Finland during the Years 1860-1980, Licentiate's Dissertation, University of Oulu.)

⁶ The same, 107-109.

Declaration of the Rights of Man, and International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, that are in the Charter of the United Nations. The Advisory Board regarded that the Charter of the UN obliges government of Finland, during a period of transition, to take special measures in social, financial and educational issues to enable the minority group in a bad situation to gain equal opportunities with the majority.⁷

The change in thinking can be seen in the 1992 report of Basic Rights Committee, where the starting point was that all people have the right for equal protection of law and their own language and culture.

Today the Roma in Finland have full civil rights and civil duties. The Roma in Finland are both Finns and Romani people. Majority of the Roma lives in cities and they have permanent residences. The unsettled life has come to an end. Majority of the Roma is members of Evangelical Lutheran Church. The Roma are, on the average, in a poorer socio-economical position than other Finns, due to insufficient education, among other things. Big structural change in Finnish society demolished the old farm labourers' jobs that the Roma used to do.

Although there are numerous defects, Finnish society has changed and that way the situation of the Roma has improved during the last few decades. Majority population has gradually started to understand better and to tolerate customs that differ from their own culture. Assimilation policy has changed to social policy, with a goal to equality and respect of different cultures. Society has tried to help without stigmatizing people. Although legislation is unbiased, the Roma are still a marginalized minority group with, relatively speaking, more financial and social problems than in the majority population. Law exists, but attitudes are often old-fashioned and suspicious towards different people and different culture. Marginalized situation influences whole life and it is often passed on from one generation to the next, if something cannot be done to stop it.

1.2. Statistical Data

It is difficult to provide exact statistical data, because ethnic definition of the Roma is problematic, and in addition to that, keeping statistics on ethnic grounds is against the law in Finland. Ethnic data is considered delicate information, and it is not allowed to register that kind of information. The latest research estimating the number of the Roma in Finland, is a research done by *Sari Välimäki* on the standard of living of Romani senior citizens in Finland.⁸ The research is based on a two-year senior citizen project of Mustalaislähetys r.y, now Romano Missio, and county government of Central Finland. According to the research, 8,910 Romani people lived in Finland in summer 1995. The following is a breakdown on the amount of the Roma living in different counties of Finland:

⁷ Committee Report B 1971:59, 88; Virolainen, mt., 1994, 113-115.

⁸ Välimäki, Sari: Romanivanhusten elinoloista Suomessa, romanivanhusprojektin loppuraportti, Stakesin Aiheita 38/1997. (Välimäki, Sari: On the Living Conditions of Elderly Roma in Finland. Report on Romani Senior Citizen Project. Stakesin Aiheita 38/1997.)

Amount of the Roma by Counties in 1995⁹

County	Persons	%
County of Häme	1 350	15
County of Keski-Suomi	470	5
County of Kuopio	250	3
County of Kymi	370	4
County of Lappi	230	3
County of Mikkeli	310	3
County of Oulu	540	6
County of Pohjois-Karjala	230	3
County of Turku and Pori	800	9
County of Uusimaa	3 740	42
County of Vaasa	620	7
Total	8 910	100

All municipalities did not answer the questionnaire, but on the other hand, there are many municipalities with no Romani population. Romani population is concentrated in the big towns of southern Finland. County of Uusimaa has the largest Romani population, and 85 % of those people live in the metropolitan area of Helsinki. The situation is the same in other counties; Romani population is concentrated in the biggest towns like Tampere, Turku and Jyväskylä.

1.3. Position of the Roma in Legislation of Finland

1.3.1. Conditions of Collecting Personal Data Files

Personal Data File Act (471/1987) provides the collection, deposition, usage and conveyance of personal data. The sixth clause of the law provides registering of delicate data. According to the clause, collecting and registering of delicate information to personal data files is forbidden. Personal data, that is meant to describe the things listed below, is considered delicate:

- 1) race or ethnic origin;
- 2) social, political, or religious conviction of a person;
- 3) criminal act, penalty, or other type of sanction;
- 4) a person's state of health, illness or disability, or medical treatment and such measures a person has been subjected to;
- 5) sexual behaviour; or
- 6) social services, subsistence support, social assistance, or such services of administration of social welfare.

⁹ The same, 12.

However, data protection authorities can, according to law, permit registering of delicate data, or the person being registered can give his permission. According to Personal Data File Act, it is allowed for authorities of social welfare to keep personal data files that include information on social assistance received, the grounds for the assistance, and condition of health of registered people. Also a doctor, dentist, or other professional person with training in health care can keep personal data files on registered people's condition of health, illness, or disability, or given treatments or other information that is necessary for the treatment of the person. Insurance companies can also keep personal data files with delicate information.

Due to protection provided by Personal Data File Act, there are no statistics on the Roma. Of course, the statistics would also help research and clarify many issues concerning the Roma. On the other hand, the Roma themselves consider it to be a positive thing that no one can be registered on grounds of ethnicity. It has been proved countless times, how these registers can be misused to demolish an ethnic minority. The Advisory Board on Romani Affairs also supports not registering the Roma.

However, the *Finnish League for Human Rights* stated in its February 1999 "shadow report", that was submitted in connection of Finland's report on International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, that there is inconsistent information in Finland about the police's register on the Roma. Finland submitted a fixed-term report Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and this report aroused suspicion that police has a special register on the Roma.¹⁰ According to the Personal Data File Act, 6 § 2 clause, keeping this kind of register is forbidden. Ministry of the Interior has forbidden all registers kept on ethnic groups, but it cannot oversee the existence of registers kept by some policemen. This issue leaked into publicity because some crime investigators kept lists on their own "clients".¹¹

1.3.2. Reform of Constitution in Finland 1995 and the Roma

Basic right is a civil right registered in constitutional law of a nation. Official authorities (legislators and administrators) are not allowed to violate that right. *Human right* is, similarly, an individual right registered in an international treaty. That right is protected also against an individual's country of residence or against country of citizenship.¹²

Reform of constitution, registered in the constitution act, came into force from the beginning of August 1995 (Act Amending the Constitution Act of Finland, 969/1995). The goal of proposal to change civil right decree of constitution (HE 309/1993) was, among other things, to bring closer to each other domestic basic rights system and international human rights obligations Finland is committed to.

¹⁰ Ihmisoikeusliiton kommentit ja lisäinformaatio Suomen hallituksen tekemien rotusyrjintää koskevien 13 ja 14 määräaikaisraporttien osalta YK:n komissiolle, helmikuu 1999. (Comments and Additional Information by Finnish League for Human Rights to the Periodic Report of Finland to UN Commission, regarding 13th and 14th Periodic Reports, February 1999.)

¹¹ Interview of Police Inspector Kalle Kekomäki 20.4.1999.

¹² Scheinin, Martin: Ihmisoikeudet Suomen oikeudessa, yliopistollinen väitöskirja, Jyväskylä 1991, 6. (Scheinin, Martin: Human Rights in Legal System of Finland, Academic Dissertation, Jyväskylä 1991, 6.)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarded the proposal of the committee that prepared the reform of constitution to be correct, considering the international human rights obligations of Finland. Ministry on Social Affairs and Health took a mostly positive stand and regarded the proposal concerning financial, educational and social right as the most significant in the proposal of the committee. Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry also accepted most parts of the proposal. Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Finance gave the most critical evaluations. Ministry of Transport and Communications, Ministry of Labour, and Ministry of the Environment restricted their statements to their own administrative sector, and did not give a general evaluation.¹³ The Advisory Board on Romani Affairs, National Council on Disability and Advisory Board on Human Rights evaluated the reform of constitution necessary.

The most important goal of the reform was to expand and strengthen the constitutional level protection of individual's rights. The goal of the reform was to improve individual person's legal protection both in the sector of traditional right of freedom as well as in the sector of financial, social, and educational rights. The goal was also to create opportunities for people's increasing possibilities to influence in issues concerning themselves and their environment. One more goal for the reform was to increase direct applicability of basic rights in courts and with other authorities, like the authorities handling social welfare issues. The reform significantly increased the responsibilities of official authority, like state and municipalities, in the sector of implementing basic rights.

When considering the Roma, especially significant basic rights are equal treatment, inviolability of human dignity, and protection of individual freedom and rights, protection of private life, social rights, guarantee of due process and the obligation of public authority to protect the realization of basic rights and human rights. Basic rights regulation also includes the principles of international human rights treaties obliging Finland. Limiting basic rights is possible only by exact and precise statutory regulations.

For the Roma, clauses 5 and 14 in constitution are especially important.

The fifth clause forbids discrimination: It is forbidden to put anyone, without an acceptable reason, to an unequal position due to their *origin, language*, religion, convictions, opinions, state of health, disability or other personal reason.¹⁴

Statement of the reasons says that origins mean both national and ethnic and social origins. The word origin is considered to include race and skin colour, too. According to the statement of reasons, discrimination includes also indirect actions, which indirectly would lead to a discriminatory conclusion. That means discrimination should be evaluated on the basis of actual consequences. Thus, the discrimination clause applies to mere segregation, too. Providing even identical services separately to different population groups is forbidden in accordance with statement of reasons in prohibition of discrimination, unless it can be considered justified in certain situations for some other acceptable reason. Favoritism or putting a certain person or group on the first place is to be considered forbidden, if it actually means discrimination that is directed to other people. It is separately mentioned that the clause does not prevent *positive discrimination* necessary for securing equality, in other words,

¹³ Perusoikeustyöryhmä 1992, mietintö, Oikeusministeriön lainvalmisteluosaston julkaisu 2/1993, Helsinki 1993, 20-21. (Report of Committee of Basic Rights 1992. Publication of the Ministry of Justice, Department of Drafting of Legislation, 2/1993, Helsinki.)

¹⁴ Authors' Italics.

actions to improve the situation and circumstances of a certain group (for ex. women, children, and minorities).¹⁵ In that way for example the Roma can, as a minority group, get certain special advantages without it being discrimination of majority population.¹⁶ Discrimination is discussed more in detail in chapter four.

From the perspective of the Roma an important thing in the reform of constitution is that both the Roma and the Sami got a constitutional right to their own language and culture. Section 14, clause 3 provides that *"The Sami as indigenous people and the Roma and all other groups have the right to maintain and develop their own language and culture. The law prescribes the Sami's right to use Sami language with public authorities. The law protects the rights of people who use sign language and disabled people who need interpretation and translation."* The legal provision mentions separately two traditional minority groups in Finnish society, the Sami and the Roma. However, the provision is not restricted to refer to only to traditional minority groups in Finland. On the other hand, any group of people incidentally staying in Finland cannot be considered as a group the clause can be referred to, but the group is expected to have a degree of cohesion and permanence. Target group in the clause is, thereby, mostly the same as concept of "minority" in international human rights treaties. The clause can also be understood as a general protection clause, which obliges public authorities to allow and support the development of own language and culture of the groups the clause refers to. It is to be specially noted that the clause provides a constitutional basis for developing the standard of living, by respecting cultural traditions, of those groups the clause refers to. On the other hand, the clause does not mean that the groups it refers to have the right to depart from the rules imposed by Finnish legal order by appealing to their own culture.¹⁷

Statement of reasons says that the Sami and the Roma represent two traditional minority groups of Finland, and the clause protects both linguistic rights and forms of culture, like the traditional occupations of the Sami. Reasons of the proposal make it clear that the clause obliges public authority to *allow and support the development of own language and culture of the groups*.

Some general influences of the basic rights clauses are:

- ❖ Basic rights reveal generally accepted basic values of society and they should radiate to whole society.
- ❖ The reform does not include a proposal for new system of supervision of basic rights. Constitutional committee of parliament supervises compliance of basic rights in legislative work. In addition to that, the supervision belongs to the Ombudsman of Parliament and to the Chancellor of Justice. The purpose of the reform is to increase the direct applicability of basic rights in courts and with other official authority.
- ❖ The starting point is that reform of constitution does not in itself cause direct increase in expenses to the state or to municipalities.

¹⁵ Concept of Positive Discrimination.

¹⁶ Perusoikeustyöryhmä 1992, mt., 56-57. (Committee of Basic Rights, Memo, 56-57.)

¹⁷ Perusoikeustyöryhmä 1992, mietintö, Oikeusministeriön lainvalmisteluosaston julkaisu 2/1993, Helsinki 1993, 102-103. (Report of Committee of Basic Rights 1992, Publication of the Ministry of Justice, 2/1993, Helsinki 1993, 102-103.)

Excerpts from Detailed Reasons

- ❖ Like the present form of government, the new constitution mentions separately the right to freedom of movement and the right to choose a place of residence. This is connected both with rights to freedom and with social rights. The right to choose a place of residence might require also positive actions from official authority, making the choice of a place of residence actually possible.
- ❖ The passage referring to instruction and education states that everyone has the right to free basic education. In addition to that official authority has to secure, as the law provides, everyone an equal right to get, according to his or her abilities and needs, other than basic education and everyone should be able to develop them so that lack of funds does not prevent it.

In the reasons of this passage the committee on basic rights talked about special educational needs, that can be caused by linguistical issues and by belonging to a minority group, among other things. These reasons are no more included in the statement of reasons in the statute proposal of Basic Rights Working Group 1992. This group was established after committee on basic rights. The main emphasis is on free education and on recognizing the principle of lifelong education. Equal opportunities for education refers to regional equality and equality of Swedish speaking people. From the perspective of the Roma it would have been good to mention that special measures of support might be needed because of people belonging to a minority group, for instance.

Especially when speaking about childrens' well-being, referrals are made to the Convention of the Rights of the Child. The well-being of children is to be understood in a wide sense both material, spiritual and social well-being.

What Reform of Constitution Means to the Roma

According to the constitution, the status of the Roma was, for the first time, protected by legislation in Finland. Although the law itself only mentions the right to maintain and develop their own language; according to reasons the clause obliges official authority to support the development of own language and culture. This is a significant support to all efforts to improve the status of Romani population.

The proposal is well tied to international treaties like the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. These treaties mean a significant protection to minorities.¹⁸

1.3.3. Additional Legislation Concerning the Status of the Roma

General prohibition of discrimination that came into force in connection of the reform of constitution, gets support from *criminal code article 11, section 9*, that states: "... if a person in official act or in client service does not treat everyone equally regardless of race, national or ethnic origin, skin colour, sex, religion, or any similar reason, the person is to be imposed a

¹⁸ Paavo Lounela 12.1.1994, muistio. (Paavo Lounela 12.1.1994, Memo.)

fine or to serve a prison sentence of six months at the maximum." A similar penalty is provided about discrimination at work *criminal code article 47 section 3* where it is provided that aforementioned issues must not be allowed to influence the choice of employees or the employee's treatment at work.

Children's Day Care Act (1336/94) that came into force in 1995, requires, that the language and culture of children from all groups, like children whose mother tongue is Finnish, Swedish, Sami, Romani or sign language, and children of immigrants, is taken into consideration and the languages and cultures are supported in day care programs together with the representatives of the respective cultures.

School legislation on instruction in mother tongue states the following about **comprehensive school (1449/95)**, **higher secondary school and vocational adult education (1450/95)**: pupils/students whose mother tongue is Sami, Romani, sign language or a language of immigrants, can get instruction in their own language at least two hours a week. Specified decree of school legislation (1475/96) states that the mother tongues in question can be taught alternatively as the first language of the pupil/student so, that the other mother tongue is Finnish or Swedish.

The tasks of *Research Centre for Domestic Languages* were defined by a law enacted 1997 (48/1976): "The task of Research Centre for Domestic Languages is to

- 1) research Finnish and Swedish, Sami and other related languages of Finnish and Finnish sign language and Romani language;
- 2) develop and preserve Finnish, Swedish, Sami, Finnish sign language and Romani language."

A Board on Romani Language was appointed 1.6.1997 to work in connection with Research Centre for Domestic Languages. The tasks of the Board are to develop, preserve and research Romani language and to decide on recommendations of the usage of the language in principle or in general.

Amendment of law on Finnish Broadcasting Company came into force 1.1.1999 (1380/1993). The law states that public services must treat equally both Finnish and Swedish speaking people when producing programs. Services must be available also in Sami, Romani and sign languages, and when applicable, to other language groups in the country.

Finnish Broadcasting Company has a weekly twenty-minute news broadcast in Romani language.

1.3.4. Framework Provision of Council of State 1997

Council of State made on 17.2.1997 a decision on *administrational action to increase tolerance and prevent racism*. In the decision it is stated that Finland has become an increasingly multicultural country in the 1990's. However the number of immigrants in Finland is small compared to other EU countries. Difference causes aggressive behaviour among some Finns. The representatives of our national minorities have been, among other people, targets of that aggression.

The above-mentioned framework provision of council of state obliged ministries and the administrations under the ministries to take action, so that direction of development can be reversed so that racism will not be tolerated. All ministries must, according to the decision, take this issue into consideration in education plans and in communication and personnel policies. Actions concerning these issues must be included in these documents. The framework provision of council of state recognized the discrimination against immigrants and ethnic minorities. It is also recognized that the representatives of our national minorities have been targets of racism. Possible offences must be immediately interfered. The Constitution, Associations Act, Freedom of the Press Act, and criminal legislation provide the means to do that.

The Framework Provision of Council of State proposes that it must be made easier to interfere racist acts, good administration is to be promoted, the education plans of ministries are to be improved, and an effort will be made to increase the employment of representatives of different minority groups in ministries and the administrations under the ministries. Recruitment personnel will be informed on the advantages of employing ethnic minorities, for instance the importance of knowledge of languages and knowledge of cultures in different tasks will be emphasized.

The publishing activities of ministries and the administrations under the ministries shall increase discussion on ethnic issues and discrimination. Statistics and research concerning immigrants shall be developed.¹⁹

In the *programme of Lipponen II government* in 1999 it is stated, in chapter "Legal Policy and Equality", that language legislation will be reformed in a way that protects language minorities. The implementation of Sami peoples' linguistic and cultural basic rights will be protected also. There is no mention of the Roma and their culture or language in this connection.²⁰ In chapter "Equality" the government programme states: *"Good ethnic relations among population will be promoted. Increased attention will be paid on actions against discrimination both in legislation and in the actions of public authorities."* Chapter "Education, Science and Culture" states, for instance: *"Exclusion of people and areas will be prevented by providing everyone equal access to the services of information society."* Chapter "Social and Health Policy, Working Life" states, for instance: *"The starting point of the social policy of the government is to maintain the Nordic welfare society. The goal is a developing society, which guarantees everyone the possibility for the control of his or her own life and for active participation. The focus is to promote measures, that prevent and reduce serious problems of poverty, exclusion and accumulation of marginalization."*

Chapter "Prevention of Poverty and Exclusion and Active Social Policy" of the government programme states: *"By prevention of poverty and exclusion solutions are sought especially for people who have been unemployed for a long time, who have mental health- or drug problems, or who are excessively indebted. These people have problems controlling their lives and earning a living. Income taxation, social income transfers payments and services must form a working and encouraging unity... The government promotes the cooperation between administrative sectors to solve the problems that are connected to the living, work, education,*

¹⁹ Valtioneuvoston periaatepäätös hallinnon toimenpiteistä suvaitsevaisuuden lisäämiseksi ja rasismien ehkäisemiseksi, Opetusministeriö 1997. (Decision in Principle of Council of State on Administrative Measures to Increase Tolerance and Prevent Racism. The Ministry of Education 1997.)

²⁰ Paavo Lipposen II hallituksen ohjelma, valtioneuvoston uutiset-tiedote-hallitusohjelma 13.4.1999. (Programme of Lipponen II Government, Information of Council of State 13.4.1999.)

housing, urban structure, surroundings, and service needs of the most marginalized population groups. The government shall also work to prevent exclusion and to extinguish it."

The above-mentioned government programme does not mention the Roma by name, but especially the passages mentioned refer to those problems, that especially people who belong to the Romani population have. So it can be expected that the government make an effort to help the Roma by these actions.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The above-mentioned framework provision, approved by Council of State, *Government Measures to Increase Tolerance and Prevent Racism*, states that The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is active in and takes initiatives to prevent racism and racial discrimination in international connections. The goal is taken into account in the actions of United Nations and its specialized organizations, European Union, Council of Europe, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and in Nordic Council of Ministers. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs supports the action of Mission Against racism that works in connection with the Ministry.

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tarja Halonen, provided 11.11.1998 a report to Foreign Affairs Committee on the human rights policy of Government of Finland. The report states that Finland puts emphasis on minority rights in the prevention of crises and exile. The goal of Finland in the UN is the more effective handling of minority rights and Finland actively participates in the work of minority working group. In Council of Europe and in Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Finland wants to develop supervision of minority rights and especially the realization of the rights of the Roma. Finland supports the efforts of EU to become activated in opposing racism.²¹

The report of Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tarja Halonen, states that protecting the rights of minorities is one of the most crucial human rights issues. People of minority groups become more easily the targets of human rights offences. An integral part of a country's conflicts, or sometimes international conflicts, originates from ethnic juxtapositions and offences of minority rights. Many states are not even willing to acknowledge the existence of minorities within their borders.

Respect of minority rights creates security and prevents crises and exile. However, handling minority rights in international connections have proven to be difficult. Also in the EU and between the Nordic countries there are different opinions of minority policy, for instance how to define a minority. The argument about definitions applies to, on one hand, shall only the traditional minorities, who have stayed in the country for a long time, be protected, or shall the so-called new minorities like immigrants be protected also. According to the terminology approved in the Council of Europe, for instance, the term "national" or traditional minorities will be used.

On the other hand, the definition problems are connected to whether minority rights are individual or collective rights. The view of Finland is that protecting the individual rights of people belonging to minority groups is not meaningful if it is not realized that those rights are

²¹ Ihmisoikeudet ja Suomen ulkopoliittikka, Ulkoasiainministeriön julkaisuja 12/1998. (Human Rights and Foreign Policy of Finland, Publications of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 12/1998.)

often used as a group. Not even all European countries are ready for that, but they only acknowledge individual rights for example to language and culture.

Finland emphasizes especially the rights of women and children belonging to minority groups. Minority groups, too, have to respect human rights principles. For example, hereditary customs do not justify departure from women's or girls' rights.

A declaration on the protection of people belonging to national or ethnic, religious and language minorities was approved in the UN in 1992. Especially the rights of people belonging to minority groups are protected in human rights treaties, in addition to general prohibition of discrimination. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights²² guarantees people belonging to national minority groups the right to practice, together with others, their own culture, religion, and language. For example a human rights committee supervising International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights has on the grounds of this clause, inspected cases concerning the Sami of Finland.

Finland supports, according to the report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a more expansive handling of minority rights in the UN than is presently available. The mandate of UN Working Group on Minorities was decided, in spring 1998, to be changed to a permanent group. Finland had an active role in this case. It is the only organ in the UN that expressly handles minority issues.

The Council of Europe has also successfully created special juridical grounds for minority rights. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, too, has for a long time been active with these issues. The Roma in Europe still have serious problems. This "European minority" still faces a lot of discrimination for instance in labour and housing market and it faces angry outbursts around Europe. Finland supports the actions of the Council of Europe and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe for the benefit of the Roma, for instance. Finland also tries to actively use means of bilateral cooperation in the countries where minority issues are current.

The thirteenth article of Amsterdam Treaty expands action possibilities of the EU in preventing ethnic discrimination. Finland supports the activation of EU anti-discrimination operations. Finland also emphasizes respect of minority rights as one reason for expansion of the EU. Realization of these criteria in those countries that applied for EU membership must be closely followed.²³

The starting point of Finland is that racism should be viewed in connection with human rights questions. Racism does not implement individual rights equally, due to the individual's origin. Opposition to discrimination is in the core of human rights thinking and it is included in most international human rights treaties. Ethnic intolerance is a problem all over the world. Growing racism is a serious problem in Europe too, also in Finland. Finland defines the term "racism" extensively so that it does not only refer to the concept of race – human races cannot be regarded to exist. The concept of "race" is used to mark groups that are separated according to skin colour. So races are either black or white, but they are never "big eared" or "small eared". Races are conceptual and a product of imagination of society, but they are not

²² Kansalaisoikeuksia ja poliittisia oikeuksia koskeva yleissopimus (1966, SopS 7-8/1976). (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.)

²³ Ihmisoikeudet ja Suomen ulkopoliittikka, mt. s. 45-46. (Human Rights and Foreign Policy of Finland, p. 45-46.)

biological realities. Certain additional biological or cultural qualities, with skin colour, are added to the concept of race.²⁴

The concept of race is regarded to include discrimination based on ethnic origin. Especially in the UN racism is often tried to explain as mostly a problem of industrial countries, and racism is directed to its victims on basis of skin colour. The goal of Finland is; however, to expand this political way of presenting this question that is connected to the south-north combination. Problems should be reacted to, no matter where they appear.

The goal of Finland is that also ethnic juxtapositions are taken into account as a part of racism. The meaning of anti-racism work has become emphasized in regional level, too. In EU the Amsterdam Treaty expanded anti-racism action possibilities. The goal of Finland is that this leads to concrete actions also with racism connected to ethnic origins. Finland follows actively the actions of anti-racism supervision center, and Finland strongly supports the already long-standing activities of European Council on behalf of tolerance. Prerequisites of action of European Commission against Racism and Intolerance must be developed. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs follows on behalf of Finland the implementation of international human rights treaties.²⁵

The Ministry of the Interior

The Framework provision of the Council of State says that the police have a central position in preventing and solving occurrences of racism. Issues connected to prevention of racism are taken into account in planning of police work and in the actions of local policemen. Attempts will be made to prevent the culmination of problems in the beginning stages by cooperation of local interest groups and by quickly interfering in the reasons of occurrences of racism. After racist problems have appeared, police acts as a mediator who summons all the parties involved in solving and settling problems on local level. The issues are handled on appropriate forums in police administration, like in police conventions and in work performance reviews.

Police will increase information concerning immigrants and discrimination. Police will also increase attendance to common occasions with immigrants and ethnic minorities. The goal is to decrease ungrounded suspicion towards public authorities. Information is directed to majority population to dispel suspicion towards immigrants.

Police reporting system of offences will be improved and more instructions will be given so that the system will provide information on offences with racist motives. Here the police are planning reforms to crime statistics, because at present the statistics cannot be kept so that ethnic background will appear there. It may be difficult to do such a reform that is in accordance with Personal Data File Act, if a person's ethnic background is noted in the statistics. In keeping crime statistics and other corresponding statistics crimes committed by immigrants and crimes committed by foreign visitors to Finland will be kept separate.

In 1997 The Ministry of the Interior gave police directions that will be discussed more in detail in chapter four. The main issue is that organized and racist action groups will be closely

²⁴ Miles, Robert: *Rasismi, Vastapaino*, Tampere, 1994, 106. (Miles, Robert: *Racism*.)

²⁵ Ihmisoikeudet ja Suomen ulkopoliittikka, mt. s. 53-54. (Human Rights and Foreign Policy of Finland, pages 53-54.)

followed and possible offences will be interfered immediately in a proper way. Interfering racist actions will be made easier. Police administrative training will be developed so that police will be able to interfere racist occurrences, when such occurrences are noticed, with increased efficiency. Active attempt will be made to improve the prerequisites for members of ethnic minorities to apply to service in police administration. Handling of ethnic issues in the publications of police chief administration and police administration will be increased.²⁶

The Ministry of Education

Educational actions are crucial for The Ministry of Education. Increase of tolerance, prevention of racism, and meeting new cultures must be given increasing emphasis to, when reforming and strengthening bases of curriculum. It must also be made sure that the bases do not include any items enabling racism. The need to teach human rights will be cleared up. The actions of the decision of Council of State that guide teaching are mostly connected to the teaching of immigrants.

The Ministry of Education supports, in connection with cultural policy measure, the activities of groups representing minority cultures and it supports civic actions promoting tolerance. Ethnic and linguistic minorities, refugees and immigrants are considered as minority culture groups. Support is given to groups that represent minority cultures so that they can preserve their own culture and language. People belonging to minority cultures must have the right to choose the ways to preserve their cultural identity. Public authorities must, in connection with these activities, accept the order of preference of traditions, customs and norms expressed by minority cultures themselves.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry

The framework provision applies only to immigrants as far as the Ministry is concerned.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health attends to the development of multicultural professional skills and working methods in connection with social- and health services. Statistics compiled by the Ministry include information about immigrants.

The Ministry of Labour

The Ministry of Labour sees to it that discrimination at work can be recognized and it is interfered better than in the past. The Ministry of Labour starts a project with the goal of providing information about the discrimination and forms of discrimination against immigrants and ethnic minorities in labour market. Otherwise the framework decision applies to mostly to immigrants, as far as the Ministry is concerned.

²⁶ Sisäasiainministeriön ohje Suvaitsevaisuuden lisääminen ja rasismien ehkäiseminen poliisissa, 30.6.1997, Dno 15/011/97. (Directions of Ministry of the Interior, Increasing Tolerance and Preventing Racism among Police.)

The Ministry of the Environment

The Ministry of the Environment attends to that the one-sided concentration of immigrants and ethnic minorities to certain areas of municipalities and social, municipal and housing planning prevents the formation of immigrant suburbs. However, the Ministry must implement this goal so that individual rights to choose a place of residence are not offended.

Ministries concerned are responsible, with offices and public services of their administrative sectors, for implementing the Framework Decision of Council of State. A group of ministers founded to prevent racism supervises and guides the implementation of decisions. A working group on preventing racism and The Ministry of Education assist the group of ministers.²⁷

1.4. International Treaties of Minority Protection Ratified by Finland

1.4.1. Minority Groups of Finland:

Swedish-speaking Finns are the largest minority of Finland, 293.691 people (5,7 % of the population) at the turn of the year 1997 – 98. Swedish-speaking Finns live mostly in the coastal areas of South-, Southwestern and West-Finland and in the Åland Islands.

The Sami are the only original population of Finland. In Finland most of the Sami, 4.000 people, live in Lapland in the home district area of the Sami (Utsjoki, Inari, Enontekiö and Lappi reindeer-grazing area of Sodankylä municipality), and in other parts of Finland there are about 2.400 Sami people.

There are about 10.000 *Romani people* in Finland. They live all over the country, but most of them are settled in the densely populated areas of South Finland. The Roma have lived in Finland for almost five hundred years. About 3.000 Finnish Roma people live in Sweden.

There are about 1.300 *Jews* in Finland. They live mostly in Helsinki, Turku and Tampere. There is no exact knowledge about when the Jews arrived to Finland, but there were about two hundred Jews in the 1850's.

Tatars are a Moslem minority with Turkish origins, whose ancestors came to Finland between 1870 – 1920. There are approximately 900 Tatars now. They live mostly in metropolitan Helsinki area.

Old Russians are descendants of Russians who moved to Finland at the turn of last century. The size of this group is hard to estimate, the number of Russian-speaking people in Finland has grown during the last few years due to increased immigration. There are more than 20.000 people who speak Russian as their native language. The number of Old Russians is estimated to be about 5.000 people.

The number of foreigners living in Finland was at the turn of the year 1997 – 98 about 80.600 people. Four largest groups were Russians (14.316), Estonians (9.689), Swedes (7.507), and Somalis (5.238). Ingrians can be mentioned as a special group, who are the descendants of

²⁷ Valtioneuvoston periaatepäätös 1997, mt. (Decision in Principle of Council of State 1997.)

people who moved from Finland to Ingria (in the area of present Russian Federation). Ingria was delivered over to Sweden according to the Peace Treaty of Stolbova in 1617. (Finland was a part of Sweden at that time.) About 20.000 Ingrian Finns moved to Finland during the years 1990 – 1997.²⁸

Protecting the rights and freedom of national minorities and people belonging to these minority groups is an intensive part of protecting human rights internationally, and all this is part of international cooperation. In regard to minority issues, Finland is in cooperation mainly with the following international organizations: UN, Council of Europe, Council of Baltic Sea States, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, ILO and UNESCO.

1.4.2. A List of Crucial Treaties

Finland has ratified the following international treaties that are crucial to the protection of minorities:

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966, SopS 7-8/1976)

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966, SopS 6/1976)

International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965, SopS 37/1970)

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989, SopS 56-60/1991)

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979, SopS 67-68/1986)

European Convention on Human Rights (1950, SopS 18-19/1990)

European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992, SopS 23/1998)

European Social Charter (1961, SopS 43-44/1991)

Treaty of Accession of Finland 3. Minutes (1994)

Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1998, 1-2/1998)

Finland has regularly reported on the above-mentioned treaties to international communities. This report discusses these treaties more in detail in appropriate chapters, depending on their contents.

1.4.3. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights came into force in 1976 and it is supervised so that contracting states give reports at five-year intervals to the Secretary General of the UN on the approved actions that implement the rights acknowledged in the Covenant. Finland gave its fourth regular report in 1995 and it was heard in the UN Human Rights Committee 1.4.1998. Basic Rights Reform of 1995 was emphasized in the hearing. In addition to that, anti-racism actions, minority rights, equality, language issues, the position of foreigners, and the new code of criminal procedure were mentioned. It was stated that there

²⁸ Suomen ensimmäinen raportti kansallisten vähemmistöjen suojelua koskevan puiteyleissopimuksen täytäntöönpanosta. UM:n moniste 4.2.1999. (The First Report of Finland on the Implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.)

are no problems worth mentioning in implementing the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.²⁹

The delegation of Finland emphasized importance of basic rights to the implementation of international human rights obligations. The committee was interested in discrimination against the Roma and foreigners, racist crimes, criminalization of incitement to racial hatred, and other than legislative actions to prevent racism. Discussion on minority rights brought out housing and employment situation of the Roma, and especially minorities' linguistic rights and language instruction at schools. The view of several committee members, that criminal law in Finland has a too strong position, caused a need for clarification.³⁰

The issues the committee was concerned about were almost exclusively in sectors of our legislation with no grounds for admonition. However, in practice there are a lot of negative occurrences, and to prevent them other than legislative actions are necessary. The committee expressed regrets about the discrimination the Roma face in everyday life, especially in private housing market and in labour market. *The committee recommended tolerance instruction for public authorities and immediate actions to prevent discrimination.*³¹

1.4.4. Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

Assembly of parliamentarians in Council of Europe approved in 1993, even before the Framework Convention mentioned in the title, recommendation number 1203 *"On the Situation of The Roma in Europe"*. The recommendation states that the Roma have a special status as a European minority. The recommendation presumes that the governments or public authorities of member states expand actions to develop the status of the Roma in different sectors, like culture, education, information and instruction, equality and everyday life. The Roma have a special status, because they don't have their own native country.³²

Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (SopS 1-2/1998) was approved in ministerial committee of Council of Europe 10.11.1994 and it came into force internationally, also in Finland, 1.2.1998. Until now the Framework Convention has been signed by 37 states, and 24 of the states have ratified it. The Framework Convention is the first legally binding document, which expressly relates to protection of national minorities. It is also the first international document, that is used to implement regionally the 1992 declaration of the UN about the rights of people belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities.

The Framework Convention defines programmatically the principles, which oblige contracting states to protect their national minorities in their own territories. Legal circumstances of people belonging to minority groups must be reduced to a state defined by

²⁹ Ulkoasiainministeriö, oikeudellinen osasto, Päivi Pietarinen, kokousraportti 9.4.1998. (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Päivi Pietarinen, Report on a Meeting 9.4.1998.)

³⁰ The same.

³¹ The same.

³² Romer i Sverige - tillsammans i förändring, Regeringskansliet, Inrikesdepartementet, Stockholm, 1997, 17. (The Roma in Sweden - Together in Change, Secretariate of the Ministry of the Interior, Stockholm.)

the Framework Convention by national legislation, by changing administrative process, or by making bilateral or multilateral contracts.

Supervision of the Framework Convention lies with ministerial committee of Council of Europe. The ministerial committee is assisted by an advisory committee. For purposes of supervision, the contracting states give the advisory committee a report on legislative and other actions, which have been carried out to implement the principles proposed in the Framework Convention. Finland gave its first report in 1999 and it was prepared by the officials in The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and it is based on the statements of different public authorities. The Advisory Board on Romani Affairs gave a statement on the subject. The following minority organizations were also requested to give a statement: Svenska Finlands Folkting, district court session of the Sami, Muslim parish of Finland, Central Council of Jewish Parishes in Finland, and a representative of Old Russians minority group. District court session of the Sami, the representative of Old Russians, and Advisory Board on Romani Affairs gave their statements. The statement of Advisory Board on Romani Affairs was included in the statement of The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

Finland has not defined in connection with ratification, which groups should be considered as "national minorities", because the general view was that the existence of minorities does not depend on the declaration of state, but it depends on the actual situation in the country. In practice Finland has, in the past, reported to the control organizations of the UN on the Sami, the Roma, the Jews, the Tatars, the Old Russians, and the Swedish-speaking Finns.

According to *Framework Convention article 4*

1. Contracting parties agree to guarantee people belonging to national minorities a right to equal position when law is applied and a right to equal protection by law. In this respect all discrimination based on someone's belonging to a national minority is forbidden.
2. Contracting parties agree to, when necessary, take sufficient measures to promote full and effective equality in all sectors of economic and social life, and in all sectors of political life and cultural life between national minorities and majority population. In this respect the contracting parties must take into consideration the special circumstances of people who belong to national minorities.
3. Measures taken in paragraph 2 are not regarded as discrimination.

The Report of Finland drawn up by The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Finland says that special support measures in housing policy have been directed towards some groups. Arranging the housing situation of the Roma in the 1970's is mentioned as an example. The goal of Skolt Law (253/1995) is to promote the living conditions and possibilities of making a living of the Skolt population and the area where they live.

On part of *the Roma* Finland's report on obeying the Framework Convention states that the socio-economic difference between the Roma and other population is still significant. Problems connected to housing, unemployment, low level of education, social problems, and exclusion as a result of all this, are common problems among the Roma.

Actual equality is not realized in housing either. According to a report drawn up in the The Ministry of the Environment on August 1996, major part of the Roma lives in rented apartments of municipalities and non-profit communities. It is very difficult for the Roma, due to their origin and poor economic position to get privately financed dwellings. Every third Romani who applied for an apartment was in an urgent situation.

Framework Convention article 5 states:

1. Contracting parties agree to promote circumstances that are necessary for people belonging to national minorities to be able to maintain and develop their culture and to maintain the essential basic elements of their identities, namely their religion, language, customs, and cultural traditions.
2. Contracting parties refrain from principles or practices directed to involuntary assimilation of people belonging to national minorities, and they protect these people from all actions with the purpose of this kind of assimilation. However, what was stated shall not influence measures taken according to general integration policy.

An interesting thing is how the Roma themselves feel they belong to Finland and Finnish society. Are they a real Finnish minority or Pan-European or international people without a native country, or are they a non-territorial nation, whose identity and solidarity differs from the Finns. At this point Finnish Romani people emphasize the fact that in the first place they are Finns and their national country is Finland. International identity and solidarity with the Roma in other countries are secondary factors, although they are effective somewhere in the background.³³

Although section 14 of constitution guarantees the Roma the right to maintain and develop their own culture and language, the Roma are discriminated against and they get into communication problems when they stick to the special features of their own culture. The customs and other special features of their own culture protect the Roma against the supremacy of majority culture, but on the other hand, for example when Romani women wear their traditional costumes, it often leads to discrimination in employment, and in racist reactions in public places. Romani women may be denied entrance into stores, restaurants, hotels, and public camping grounds during season. When Romani women go shopping, they are often under special surveillance. Security guards in different business enterprises have joined the police in keeping a watch over the Roma. The Roma are a sore spot with the security guards. Public authorities are not as willing to serve and inform the Roma; majority population is served better. Local authorities often lack knowledge on special features connected with housing in Romani culture (report on this in chapter about housing), and thus the housing needs of Romani population cannot be taken into consideration in a proper way. A positive attitude towards foreign cultures is lacking in Finland.

Framework Convention article 6 states, that

1. contracting parties encourage a spirit of tolerance and dialogue between cultures ... and
2. they agree to take proper measures to protect people, who can become targets of discrimination, hostility, or violence, or who can be threatened with these things on basis of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identities.

³³ Selvitysmiesten romanien parissa tehdyt haastattelut ja kysely keväällä 1999. (The Interviews the Rapporteurs did with the Roma and the Inquiry in Spring 1999.)

1.4.5. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (SopS 37/70) was approved in the 1965 UN General Assembly. Parliament was requested to approve the ratification of the Convention. Although the approval of the Parliament was requested, for instance, on grounds individual appeal procedure made possible by optional article 14, and although Foreign Affairs Committee emphasized that a report contract clause refers to should be given "as soon as possible", Finland did not start the individual appeal procedure, made possible by the International Convention and approved by the Parliament, until the year 1994, when Finland acknowledged the Committee on Abolishing Racial Discrimination to be competent to accept and handle individual appeals submitted against Finland (SopS 81/1994).

International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination was, on part of Finland, under inspection in Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on 3–4 March 1999. The report of Finland mainly explains the measures taken by government to improve the situation of the Roma and the Sami.³⁴

The above-mentioned UN committee was also delivered a so-called shadow report of the *Finnish League for Human Rights*. The report tries to survey problems connected with racism and discrimination, and it gives examples of violations. According to the shadow report, incitement against a population group is not yet viewed as a sufficiently serious crime here. It happens too rarely that legal acts are directed to spreaders of racist propaganda. The shadow report expresses concern about the passivity of Ministry of Justice in preparation of legislation concerning racism and discrimination, and in developing a follow-up system. Reforms are wanted especially in recognizing work discrimination and in making intervention easier. *Sufficient funds in the state budget have not been allocated for developing a follow-up system.* As the Amsterdam Treaty comes to force when Finland will have EU-presidency, the view of the Finnish League for Human Rights is that noticeable activity in racial discrimination issues could be expected from government of Finland. EU can, on basis of the Treaty, prepare and approve anti-discrimination legislation that binds all EU member countries.³⁵

The Committee considered the decision in principle on governmental anti-racism actions made by government of Finland in the year 1997 to be significant. The decision in principle is the first relevant regulation of the government. In addition to that, the Committee was interested in a pending plan to change the post of Ombudsman for Aliens to a post of *Discrimination Councillor*. According to the Committee, the reform would increase the possibilities of the Councillor to interfere discrimination more widely and effectively. The Committee was also interested in the housing conditions, high unemployment rate, and educational problems of the Roma. Some members of the Committee expressed their concern about the fact that discrimination, especially discrimination cases at work, are not always sufficiently brought out to be heard in court. The Committee noted that discrimination in restaurants is till commonplace both for the Roma and for the immigrants. UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination asks Finland to undertake sufficient measures so that

³⁴ Scheinin, 1991, mt., 153-154.

³⁵ Ihmisoikeusliiton tiedote 29.3.1999, Suomella vielä matkaa rasismien vastustamisen mallimaaksi. (Notice of Finnish League for Human Rights, Finland Is Still a Long Way from Becoming the Model Country of Anti-Racism Work.)

everyone would have equal possibilities to services offered to all people. Removing actual discrimination in school instruction and in housing- and labour market is still a long way ahead. In the opinion of the Committee the plan to expand the field of activities of Ombudsman for Aliens to apply to discrimination and national minorities also, has not lead to hoped-up results. The Committee requires Finland to report, in future, on practical measures to protect minority groups from discrimination, and to give information about racist crimes, and Finland is supposed to give information about compensations paid to victims of labour market discrimination. *Committee members stated that the police should recruit people having different ethnic backgrounds, too.*

The opinion of the Rapporteurs is that Finland has to create a follow up system to recognize racism and to interfere racism both in individual and collective level.

1.4.6. European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

The document came into force in Finland on the 1st March 1998. The Charter is the first binding international document, which tries to strengthen the status of minority languages. Every week in the world a language dies, so maintaining and developing the existing languages is a wealth to the population of the world. It is a wealth that should be cherished. The Charter divides minority languages into three groups: 1) regional languages and minority languages, 2) official languages that are not spoken widely in state territory, 3) non-territorial languages. Sami language, for example, belongs to the first group, Swedish belongs to the second group, and Romani language belongs to the third group. The term non-territorial languages refers to languages that are traditionally spoken in a certain state, but the people speaking that language do not live in a certain region.

Constitutional section 14, paragraph 3, that was approved in connection with the 1995 Reform of Constitution, is likely to have a positive impact on the status of Romani language. According to the paragraph, the Sami as original population, and the Roma and other groups have the right to maintain and develop their own language and culture. Change of day care decree that came into force in the year 1995, too, should also have a positive impact. According to the decree, pedagogical objectives stated by law on children's day care include also supporting Romani people's own language and culture.

School legislation was changed in the beginning of the year 1995. According to the present legislation, Romani language can be taught as a native language to student at school. The same decree includes in the basic education law, which came into force on the 1st January 1999. The act on Research Centre for Domestic Languages was changed on the 1st November 1996 so that the research and maintaining of Romani language also belongs to the tasks of the Research Centre. Act issued on Finnish Broadcasting Company was changed beginning the 1st January 1999. The act states that the task of public services concerning program policy is to treat equally Finnish and Swedish speaking people and produce services in Sami, Romani and sign language, and when applicable, to other language groups in the country.

The language question of the Roma is discussed more in detail in chapter 2 and their education is discussed in chapter 4.

1.5. Securing the Position of the Roma in Finland and in Europe; Strategic Discussion

Political upheavals during the last few years have brought on significant changes to the living circumstances of nations of Europe. Political reform and democratization of Central and Eastern European countries have broken borders and created a new foundation for the birth of civil societies in former state-run countries. However, at the same time national and ethnic tensions, which have been under surface for decades, have broken out. The Roma have, for a long time, been one of the most vulnerable groups of society in Europe, and they have been in the worst position when it comes to economical changes. In addition to that; they are about to be caught as victims of nationalism and racism everywhere in Europe: all politics aimed at improving their living circumstances is, at the same time, active European policy with the goal of exceeding national and racial borders. Strengthening of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe and maintaining democracy everywhere requires that governments and institutions of Europe take up the task of solving the problems the Roma meet every day. The Roma are the greatest sufferers of the war in former Yugoslavia, and the social position of war refugees has worsened dramatically. Many people who fled from this area want to return to their homes. The Roma who came from Eastern and Central Europe, and who have the status of a refugee in Western Europe, are in similar difficult economic and social situation, until their safe return to home can be guaranteed.³⁶

The Roma are one of the oldest ethnic groups in Europe. They have been living in every European country for hundreds of years. Freedom of movement inside European Union is value of primary importance, because the Roma cross national borders. However, at the moment the Roma are in great danger in this respect, because they rather end up as victims of reforms, instead of being able to benefit from them like other Europeans, especially when they lose their civil rights. In the newly established countries, like in other countries too, the civil rights of the Roma have been refused. A great number of the Roma have been classified as people without native countries, because in many countries citizenship and nationality have been viewed as the same thing. This is a European theme, which all institutions of Europe should discuss. So European Union, Council of Europe, and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe have the responsibility to oversee the juridical position of the Roma and to improve the position of the Roma within the framework of their field of activities. That is the only way to prevent the discrimination of the Roma in the long term, and their social integration can finally succeed in European countries. According to the EU, special attention must paid to judicial administration that has been, in many cases, experienced as selective and discriminating in cases of violence directed towards the Roma for ethnic reasons.³⁷

The Roma of Europe are quite a large non-territorial nation, 6 – 12 million people in all, spread in most European countries, especially in Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe. The downfall of communism has meant a great change to the Roma who have lived in former communist countries. The socio-economic situation of those countries worsened abruptly as societies changed to battlefields for market forces. In the past traditional agriculture for example in kolkhozes or in sovkhoses provided jobs for them, but in the new social economic situation it was hard for them to find jobs. The downfall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe brought about an anti-Roma movement that was sometimes violent. This

³⁶ Euroopan parlamentin 12.7.1996 "pyöreän pöydän" kokouksen ns. Brysselin julistus. (Meeting of European Parliament 12.7.1996, Brussels Declaration.)

³⁷ The same.

movement then led to the awakening of inner ethnic consciousness and mobilization inside Romani community. The rapid growth of Romani peoples' own organizations is one sign of this awakening. The Roma have, in the 1990's, in large groups moved away from countries where they have been treated badly. For example many Romani people from Central Europe have moved to Canada.

The Romani leaders who have come up in the 1990's hold the opinion that the Roma are entering a new phase in their history. Change has forced the Roma to take action as regards political and other regulations that apply to them. The Roma have been issued a challenge, and by facing that challenge they are supposed to enter European politics and get a possibility to represent their people. The Roma are the last ethnic groups in Europe to notice the possibilities and power of ethno nationalism, that can be used to gain political influence.³⁸ There is no doubt that the Roma are now in the most unsteady phase of their European history, they are in a crisis, and the way out of this crisis can lead to a fresh start.

However, as the Roma are scattered in many European countries, they have different views and opinions on how their affairs should be looked after. So the international Romani community itself must define its own political latitude both on national and international level. The Romani community sometimes has heated debates on what is the best strategy to secure human rights and minority rights of the Roma and the continuity of their ethnic and cultural identity, while at the same time they have to meet the needs of everyday life.

Traditions are important for the Roma, and their leaders have been unofficially chosen from strong families. Essential criteria when choosing Romani leaders are age, gender, and family. Often the leaders are old men from well-known families. This model of leadership reflects unwillingness to participate in party-political activities and it reflects distrust of official authority.

*The lack of their own democratic and formal administration has acted as a barrier for the Roma to participate in modern administration and decision-making. So, the challenge of the Romani community is to establish their own official representation and participation system.*³⁹

The Roma themselves speak about Romani elite, but it can also be understood as a new democratic leadership, that struggles to reach unity in Romani movement, and searches for appropriate organization structures for political representation and activities. Romani leaders are, more than ever before, looking for possibilities for expanding cooperation across state borders. This report shall bring out the thoughts of Finnish Romani people on their identity, on the new leadership, and on international activities on the basis of questionnaire sent to different Romani organizations and to regional advisory boards. The report will also explain the interviews and discussions with Romani people.

Based on the questioning of the Rapporteurs it can be said that the Roma of Finland are cautiously directing towards new leadership, because *education and/or age are not considered as mutually exclusive alternatives. Education provides facilities for leadership especially if it is combined with commitment to Romani values. "Leadership can be collective*

³⁸ Mirga, Andrzej ja Gheorghe, Nicolae: Romanipoliitikan suuntaviivat, STM:n monisteita 1998:15, 6. (Mirga, Andrzej and Gheorghe, Nicolae: Guidelines of Romani Policy.)

³⁹ The same.

*leadership, where younger, educated Roma assume the main responsibility under the guidance of older Roma.*⁴⁰

The Roma are a minority group in different countries, and they do not have political unity in spite of shared ethnic background. They do not have their own territory either, but they are scattered around Europe and outside Europe, being a minority everywhere. Social and political exclusion in several countries is a part of their identity. They are stigmatized by negative prejudice, because they are considered as a more or less deviant part of society. The Roma on their part want to defend themselves and they withdraw into their own isolated subculture, a subculture that they want to stay closed for majority population. Members of Romani community are often stuck in a circle of misery in an isolated, inferior, and subjugated position. The Roma might, from the perception of the state, form a threat that competes with the values and norms of society, and even rejects them. A part of totalitarianism is often absoluteness and poor tolerance of difference. The atrocities in Germany brought about by the Fascists can be mentioned as an example. Fascism exists always where people are zealous in support of the superiority of their own way of life compared to another way of life. Communities and societies have their own psychosocial climates that depend, among other things, on the structure of society. Often small, tight village communities demand conformity, whereupon deviation is considered as a threat and it is not accepted. Division of labour and large population centres brought along by industrialization provide the Roma a possibility to live their lives more freely than in the past. Deviation can be, for example, freedom from the demands for high standard of living, a standard that the majority population has created for itself.

The old agrarian community offered work for the Roma (often compulsory labour), but on the other hand, kept them in a subjugated position. Urbanized industrial society provides new opportunities, but it also brings along insecurity.

In Europe the position of the Roma is, as a result of historical development, very different depending on what countries the Roma live in. Two thirds of the Roma nowadays live in Central and Eastern Europe and in the Balkans. This fact has a negative influence on their position. In Western Europe the Roma have never formed such a significant part of the population as in the above-mentioned areas. In western countries the Roma are often considered as non-territorial people, whereas in Central and Eastern Europe the image is that of Romani people living in large ghettos. They have been forced to stay in place as subjugated, poor, and marginalized people.⁴¹

Transition from communist society to market economy and western democracy started a new phase in the history of Central and Eastern Europe. The Roma got the right to participate in public and political life and it lead to a new leadership, with more knowledge and more education about social affairs, emerging among the Roma. The affairs of the Roma were brought out in a new way and the Roma voluntarily started to participate in political activities in great force, for the first time. So, the parties and organizations of the Roma have succeeded to get Romani representatives in parliaments and in governmental advisory boards. The political leadership of the Roma understood, that *democracy requires participation, attendance, and activity both from leaders and from ordinary people and communities. This is probably the greatest challenge ahead of the Roma in the next century.*

⁴⁰ Selvitysmiesten tekemä kysely romanijärjestöille ja alueellisille neuvottelukunnille. (Inquiry of the Rapporteurs to Romani Organizations and Regional Advisory Boards.)

⁴¹ The same, 9.

The Roma in different countries want full acknowledgement of society to the linguistic, cultural, and political rights of the Roma as a minority group. *They demand better bargaining positions with local, national, and international authorities and expanded participation and representation in political organs on all levels. Satisfying these demands is a prerequisite for looking after other, social and economical, problem.* The Roma want to discuss publicly the affairs that apply to ethnic and cultural identity, human rights and minority rights, removing discrimination, and gaining equality. Although in many countries, like in Finland, the ethnicity of the Roma were admitted and acknowledged in the law and the civil rights of the Roma were guaranteed in constitution, in practice they meet discrimination and inequality. *In the past the state defined goals and means of actions that applied to the Roma. The Roma were only subjects of these actions. From an international point of view, a change in this respect has taken place in the 1990's and there are more and more Romani leaders and organizations that have been acknowledged as necessary partners whose voices must be heard by states.* Think about development cooperation policy; increasingly it is a question of companionship and not helping underdeveloped countries from a superior position.

In many respects the Roma are in a more marginalized position than other minority groups. *People do not always want to define them as national minorities, because they do not have a "native country" somewhere in Europe.* In addition to that, the Roma do not live in a certain territory, but they are scattered in a large area or they lead a nomadic life. There are states in Europe, for example France, where legislation does not acknowledge national minorities but where strong basic rights of civil society protect them. However, civil rights do not remove or prevent racial discrimination and inequality.

In Germany legislation acknowledges certain national minorities, like the Danes. The rights of Polish minority in Germany have been acknowledged with bilateral treaties. As it signed the Framework Provision on Minority protection Germany announced, that contractual terms would apply to minority groups that have traditionally lived in Germany, including those Sinti and Roma, who were citizens of Germany.⁴²

More and more member states of Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe have passed laws on minority rights or they have changed their legislation to comply international treaties. Some states especially mention the rights of the Roma in their constitutions: Finland (14 §, 2 – 3 clause), Slovenia (paragraph 65) and Makedonia (paragraphs 48 and 78). Other countries mention the Roma in national minority laws: Hungary 1993 and Austria 1993.

There are several different models in Europe of the Roma participating politically or in other ways. The Roma can be elected from national level party lists of candidates to act in national legislative organs. This has been the case in Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Spain. In Rumania the Roma are elected from their own lists. In Hungary the Roma have the right to form their own governments both on local and on national level. There is also a model where the Roma can be hired to governmental organs looking after the issues concerning the Roma. This is what has been done for example in Bulgaria, Hungary, Rumania, Slovakia, and Finland. It is also possible to create advisory bodies, where the Roma are represented. This is the case for instance in Finland, France, Hungary, and Austria.

⁴² Mirga and Gheorghe, 1998, pages 14-15.

The minority status of the Roma in some states is very visible, because they are a large segment of the population. It is important for the Roma that they be treated legally, either as citizens with the same rights and freedoms as other people, or the Roma should be treated as a minority group that is entitled to protect their own rights. In spite of legislation, the Roma experience discrimination, and unequal treatment as citizens. That is why Romani leadership in many countries demands that society should acknowledge the Roma as a minority group, and the leaders prefer to obtain minority rights. Many Romani leaders believe the strengthening of civil society improve the situation of the Roma, too. They reject the demands for acknowledgement of minority status, and they trust general legislation and rights and freedoms that apply to all citizens. Idea of civil society requires liberal democratic institutions and principles of equal citizenship and individual rights. On the other hand, it also requires that the Roma can organize themselves and assert themselves when several interests fight for the benefits of society.

The idea of civil society is utopia in former communist states, where a national state concept is prevalent. One nation and one language are preferred in those states. This conflict is the reason why the situation of the Roma has become more difficult for example in the Balkans. Ethnic nationalism is not based on the liberal idea of citizenship, but it is based on the idea of membership in a national culture or in heritage.

The different way of thinking among the Roma is reflected by the fact that the Central Council of Sinti and Roma in Germany (Zentralrat) opposes Council of Europe decision no 1203, that was passed largely due to the activity of the Roma. According to the Council of Europe decision, the Roma do not fit the definition of a national minority, and that is why they must be granted a special status as a non-territorial minority. When the limitations set by ethnic nationalism are taken into consideration, it is, according to the Council of Europe decision, quite justified to protect the rights of the Roma with other values than those of civil society. On the basis of this alternative strategy, a special status as a minority must be defined for the Roma and they must be given the same protection as other minorities in the same state, or else Romani minority will be considered as a different minority in relation to other minorities and that is why the Roma must be granted special protection. All Romani people do not want any special status for themselves and for their tribe, because they consider a special status only to label them negatively. Legally valid guarantees of individual rights in the territory of a culture must be provided.⁴³ According to a definition, a national minority must live on "areas planned for housing", a definition that the Roma do not always meet. The Central Council of the Roma in Germany does not accept the said definition of a national minority, but it requires that the Roma be acknowledged as a national minority and as a German ethnic group with a 600-year-long history in Germany, language and culture, with emphasis on Germany as a native country. This stand reflects the patriotism of German Romani people and it reflects the fact that they have more solidarity towards Germany than towards Roma living in other countries. This has caused fragmentation and conflicts among other Romani communities living in Germany, because they were treated differently from those Roma who had lived in Germany for a long time.

At this point it is interesting to compare this thinking to the thinking of Finnish Romani people. The inquiry sent to Romani organization shed light to that. *The Finnish Romani people consider themselves firstly as a national minority. The Finnish Romani people often appeal to that they have lived in Finland since the 16th century, so they are Finns as much as*

⁴³ The same, 19.

any tribes who have lived here for a long time. Of course the answers gave other opinions, too, but an overwhelming majority supported the idea of a Finnish minority instead of a non-territorial multinational tribe without a native country. The idea that Romani people living in Finland are a politically Finnish but ethnically multinational minority was brought out too.⁴⁴

Romani National Congress, RNC, has taken the stand that Romani population needs special protection, because it is a non-territorial European nation without a native country, and it has met racism and persecution through its history. In the opinion of the RNC European countries should draw up and ratify a European treaty on the rights of the Roma. RNC sees that the traditional policy programs directed towards the Roma have failed, and as the integration process of Europe progresses, human rights standards concerning the Roma have deteriorated. So drawing up and enacting laws that guarantee a firm status for the Roma of Europe should stop this conflicting development. Where the Central Council of Sinti and Roma in Germany demands full civil rights, RNC demands special protection for a minority.

Romani Union (RIU) proposes special treatment for the Roma in Europe on the basis that the Roma are a legal part of European culture and society and they have deserved, due to their unique history and problems, a special treatment in Europe. The main argument against this demand is that the idea of legally acknowledging a "European minority" does not fit into present international legal concepts and language. Another problem is brought out by the idea of the Roma as Europeans. Romani communities can be found in Near East, Central Asia, North and South America, and Australia. So why should the Roma be acknowledged as a European or "real European" minority? Some Romani people cherish their Indian roots and some search for their identity in Europe.

Mirga and Gheorghe think that *the idea of Roma as a national minority* has its pros and cons. It strengthens the fragmentation of the Roma into different states. Benefits granted by minority laws are strictly limited to those Roma, who are citizens of their states. In their opinion the Roma have only two choices. The first choice is to strengthen civil society by considering ethnicity as an irrelevant private matter of individuals and groups. They call this approach "*liberal nationalism*".

The other alternative is to pursue such legislation that protects the right of the Roma as equal with other minority groups.

However, the said Romani researches take the stand that although the Roma deserve special attention due to the scope and nature of the problems they meet in most states, the attention must not be given by granting the Roma any additional rights or new privileges, but *attention must be paid to the arrangements to solve the problems.*⁴⁵

International Cooperation

International cooperation in Romani affairs has rapidly grown during the last few years. In Europe, for example, European Union and Council of Europe are both active in Romani affairs. The Advisory Board on Romani Affairs in Finland has given numerous statements about Romani affairs to The Ministry for Foreign Affairs, for example.

⁴⁴ Selvitysmiesten tekemä kysely romanijärjestöille ja alueellisille neuvottelukunnille. (Inquiry of the Rapporteurs.)

⁴⁵ Mirga and Gheorghe, pages 21-23.

Nordic cooperation has been regular and quite lively. Finns had a strong representation in Nordic Romani Council (1973 – 1998), due to the large number of Roma in our country. Nordic cooperation has been considered important, because there are 3.000 Finnish-speaking Romani people living in Sweden. After the Nordic Romani Council was discontinued, Romernas Riksförbund maintains connections between Nordic countries. Suomen Romaniyhdistys r.y. (Finnish Romani Association) has actively participated in the activities of international Romani Union since it was established in 1971. Romani Union has an observer in the UN. One task of the organization is to coordinate a project of the Roma called *international summer school*. The project is a month-long international study- and culture forum of young people.⁴⁶

Estonia also has, during the last few years, joined the traditional Nordic cooperation.

Finnish Romani organizations consider international cooperation important. According to their view, international cooperation should be carried out on official level by different seminars and happening, and unofficially through mutual relationships. An important issue is exchange of information on Romani affairs between different countries. That is the grounds for starting different shared projects for example in the area of language and culture, and even a common European Romani politics can be pursued. This strengthens both supranational Romani identity and national minority identity. In addition to that, Finland's Romani politics can act as an example of successful integration to society to other states. The well-to-do people can help those who are not doing so well.⁴⁷

*The inquiry of the Rapporteurs proved that the Roma consider international activities to be a good possibility to influence the status of the Roma, although this kind of activity requires a well-developed system and common will to pursue common goals. A broadly-based representation is needed so that the voices of all Romani people will be heard. There was some doubt on whether a common will can be found. So the answers were in conditional: should, ought, etc. It looks like there is not enough common will yet. However, international action is considered as an effective forum, because it is not thought possible that any political group on national level would advocate for a relatively small Romani nation. On the other hand, international pressure and advocacy will force majority, and in this case, State of Finland, to take measures to protect minorities, including the Roma. Romani people's own delegate in international action must be a genuine and recognized and educated Roma.*⁴⁸

International action requires funding. According to the inquiry, funding can be obtained from UN, EU, Government of Finland, and from congregations.

It is the opinion of the Rapporteurs that the resources of Advisory Board on Romani Affairs are no longer sufficient for increasing international activities, because to workload required by The Ministry for Foreign Affairs and other quarters is so large that hiring more employees for the Advisory Board is a prerequisite for carrying out all the tasks.

⁴⁶ Suomen romanit. Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriön esitteitä 1993:6; Romanilapsen maailma. Romanilasten päivähoitoryhmän muistio 1991, 68-69. (The Roma of Finland, Brochures of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.)

⁴⁷ Selvitysmiesten tekemä kysely, mt. (Inquiry of the Rapporteurs.)

⁴⁸ The same.

2. ROMANI CULTURE AND ITS SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS

2.1. Position of Romani Language

Romani language is related to Indian Sanskrit and Hindi languages. Linguistic research has proven an almost irreplaceable source of history of the Roma. The language of Romani minorities living in different countries is basically the same, but there are numerous dialects. Dialects include a number of loanwords from Greece and Iran, but the language of the Roma living in Finland has influences from Finnish and Swedish also. Before spreading out to west and north, the Roma had for a long time live in the territory of Greece. The languages spoken in the territory of present Russia have also left traces into the Romani language spoken in Finland.

Although there are not many Romani language speakers in Finland, the language has an obvious task of being an object of identification in national and international connections of the Roma. There is very little knowledge based on research about the usage of Romani language, but it is known that already in the year 1954 about 80 percent of the Roma used Finnish as a conversational language most of the time, or they used it exclusively.⁴⁹ According to the same research, 71 percent of adults knew their own language. About half of young people aged 16 – 19 spoke the language, but 18 percent did not speak it at all.⁵⁰ According to a research done in the year 1981, about 83 percent of Romani youth knew less than 50 words of Romani language.⁵¹

It is often said that one central problem of Romani population is that the Roma do not know well either language. A so-called semilingualism means a situation, where a person is supposed to be bilingual, but in practice that person knows neither language well. Instead of semilingualism, the issue with Roma living in Finland is that young people and children are losing their bilingualism. Romani language cannot be considered as the actual cause for semilingualism. The Roma consider Finnish to be their native language. Written presentation of the Roma is weaker than the presentation of the majority population. The reasons for that are low level of education and other cultural factors. A native language is necessary to keep up Romani culture and identity. It is needed as a tool of interaction inside Romani community, and to hand down traditions. *Supporting and strengthening instruction in Romani language can be considered as an intrinsic goal to be pursued on the grounds of multiculturalism and keeping up the richness of a culture.*⁵²

Semilingualism has sometimes been considered the reason for insufficient readiness of the Roma to go to school. Insufficient knowledge of Finnish, especially written presentation, seems to become an even bigger worry than semilingualism in the 1990's. The language issue is ambivalent. Instruction of Finnish to the Roma should be supported to help them adjust to society and to help prevent exclusion. However, this is readily opposed, because identity and a language of one's own are almost inseparable. Language reflects way of life and thinking. Language is a tool to identify oneself, and it is also a tool to isolate oneself when necessary. If the Roma are afraid they are going to assimilate with majority population, their language

⁴⁹ *Mustalaiset vähemmistönä suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa*. Mustalaisasiain neuvottelukunta 1981, 58. (Gypsies as a Minority in Finnish Society, Advisory Board on Gypsy Affairs 1981, 58.)

⁵⁰ Koivisto 1994, ix.

⁵¹ Jokela 1992, 22.

⁵² See Koivisto 1994, ix-x; *The Gypsies as a Minority in Finnish Society*, pages 58-60.

provides a natural shelter. Own language increases relations inside a community. The rules of that community will remain unknown to majority population.⁵³ Reasons for strengthening the position of Romani language are connected to the protection of culture and identity, whereas instruction of Finnish can be explained by prevention of exclusion.⁵⁴

Educational legislation of Finland has paid attention to minorities. Decree on Day Care (1336/94) that came into force in the year 1995, provides that *the pedagogical objects stated by Day Care Decree paragraph 2a include supporting the own language and culture of children who belong to Finnish or Swedish-speaking, Sami, Romani or immigrant groups, in cooperation with representatives of the cultures in question*. All educational legislation follows this line of thinking. *Act on Comprehensive School (1448/95), Act on Higher Secondary School (1449/95) and Act on Adult Education in Higher Secondary Schools (1450/95) provide that students whose native language is Sami, Romani, or a foreign language, can be taught their own language as a native language*.

Decree on Comprehensive School (1457/96) provides that Sami, Romani, and foreign language speaking students, who are being taught their own language as a native language, shall be taught Finnish or Swedish as a second domestic language. According to Decree on Higher Secondary School (1458/95) in high schools where Sami, Romani, and foreign language speaking students are being taught their own language as a native language, Swedish or Finnish must be optional subjects. Decree on Adult Education in Higher Secondary Schools (1459/95) provides that Sami, Romani, and foreign language speaking students who are being taught their own language as a native language, must be taught Finnish or Swedish as a second domestic language. Instead of second domestic language these aforementioned students can be taught Finnish or Swedish as a native language, too. In addition to that, curriculum must include Swedish or Finnish as optional subjects for the said students.

However, the aforementioned law and a newer Act on basic Education (1998) paragraph 12 does not, in any way, oblige municipalities to arrange instruction of native language in Romani language. Instruction of native language of students who speak Romani language or a foreign language is, at present, usually arranged on grounds of decision (248/1995). This decision is about allocating state grants to further education provided by The Ministry of Education. State refunds municipalities for such instruction of native language. About 220 students out of 1.500 – 1.700 Romani children, who were obliged by compulsory school attendance, participated in instruction of Romani language in eight municipalities in the year 1998.⁵⁵

Advisory Board on Romani Language was established the 1st June 1997, to work in connection with Research Centre for Domestic Languages. The task of the Advisory Board is development, maintenance, and research of Romani language. However, there is no office to maintain and research Romani language. It is also not possible to study Romani language on university level.

⁵³ Gypsies as a Minority in Finnish Society, 58-60.

⁵⁴ See Guidelines of Romani Policy 1998, 29.

⁵⁵ Suomen ensimmäinen raportti kansallisten vähemmistöjen suojelua koskevan puiteyleissopimuksen täytäntöönpanosta (4/2/99). (The First Report of Finland on the Implementation of Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.)

Lack of learning material has previously been considered, in Finland, to be an obstacle to instruction of Romani language. Nowadays some material is available.⁵⁶ Romani organizations have arranged instruction of Romani language, and at the end of the 1980's, instruction has been arranged in some comprehensive schools. There are about 30 – 40 teachers of Romani language presently.⁵⁷ Usually municipalities have formed small groups out of students who attend schools, and in those groups Romani children have received instruction in culture and language for two hours a week. Curricula have been drawn up for those Romani people who dropped out of school. The curricula included studies of own language and culture. Those who dropped out of comprehensive school have been able to study Romani language and culture also in adult education, folk high schools, open colleges, workers' institutes, and prisons. Romani language summer schools are popular. These two-week-long courses have been arranged in different folk high schools.

The position of Romani language is often compared to Sami language (there are 1.500–3.000 speakers of Sami language, depending on how it is counted). The position of Sami language was strengthened due to amendment of law in the year 1992. Sami language is now used as a language of public authorities, and the Sami can receive instruction in their own language. It is understandable that Romani organizations pursue an equal position with Sami language, because about 30 percent⁵⁸ of adult population know Romani language. A problem with the language issue is that how to make compatible the views of defending a culture and preventing exclusion.⁵⁹

European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages came into force in Finland on the 1st March 1998. The Charter is the first binding international document, which tries to strengthen the position of minority languages. Every week a language dies in the world, so maintaining and developing existing languages is for the population of the world a treasure to be cherished. In the Charter minority languages are divided into three groups: territorial languages and minority languages, languages that are not widely spoken in the territory of a state, and non-territorial languages. The first group includes, for instance, Sami language, the second group includes Swedish, and the third group includes Romani language. Non-territorial languages refer to languages that are traditionally spoken in a certain state, but the users of that language do not live in a certain territory.

The task of Romani Education Unit that works in National Board of Education is to develop and carry out instruction Romani population on national level, and to promote Romani language and culture. Educational and informational activities also belong to the tasks. So the Education Unit provides seminars, courses and conventions both to the Roma and to majority population. It also trains contact people and it carries out publishing activities. An example of publishing activities is their own information booklet ("Latso Diives"), and learning material they have produced.

Romani culture has taken a more positive attitude towards education, as time has passed. Education is no more considered a threat to preservation of culture. Getting an education in

⁵⁶ An ABC Book in Romani language, *Drabibosko ta raniboskobyrjida* was published in 1982, and a grammar book, *Rakkavaha Romanes*, was published in 1987. In addition to that, Viljo Koivisto authored a Romani-Finnish-English dictionary, published in 1994.

⁵⁷ Granqvist 1999.

⁵⁸ Hagert 1997, 111.

⁵⁹ See Guidelines of Romani Policy 1998, for example. Page 29.

Finnish is acceptable, and it is often considered necessary.⁶⁰ However, at the same time the value of Romani language becomes more pronounced, because other mechanisms maintaining ethnic restrictions continue to weaken. Former protection mechanisms against assimilation to majority culture, like illiteracy and not getting an education, are seen as dated principles to be given up since situation has changed. However, education and social activity must not conflict with traditional values. Respecting older people, traditions of purity, and own language might, for example, be considered traditional values. Romani language can exist and flourish on the basis of its symbolic value. It might be very difficult, if not impossible, to revive the language to become the first native language of the Roma.⁶¹

2.2. Identity

Due to Romani diaspora (scattered Romani nation), searching for the identity of the Roma must be separated from national states or ethnic territories. The identity of Romani nation has been outlined by studying the concept of "nation" rather as a political idea than an idea of a united nation located in a certain territory. However, this does not need to mean an unreasonably wide definition of identity, especially because the adversities caused by majority population seem to have shaped the identity of the Roma, regardless of where they live.⁶²

Two simultaneous layers can be separated in the ethnic identity of the Roma in Finland. On one hand, it is a question of an identity that is strongly Finnish, and emphasizing patriotism is often connected to that. Participation of the Roma in national defence in the past wars and readiness to do that in the future is a central expression of Finnish identity of the Roma. Similarity in relation to the Finns is emphasized by referrals to voting rights, other civil rights, and civic duties. In certain situations, like in athletic contest, nationality expands to a wider feeling of unity than rights and duties. On the other hand, the identity of the Roma is based on original dress code, language, sense of community, and culture. The criteria that the Roma use to stand out from majority population is multiform, but can be roughly outlined into biological and cultural factors.⁶³

These two layered identities are to be understood only as rough models, which individual people can continually shape. However, it is essential to note that according to way of thinking, identity is built between the tension of these two cultures – Romani culture and majority culture. *According to this constructive thinking, Romani identity is something more than an individual can build and produce rather than something that can be found or lost. Identity is born as a product of an ongoing process. The process is going on in everyday situations, like for example in work life, at school or in family relations. The criteria defined by the Roma themselves, building blocks of ethnicity of their own, are born biologically, by dress code, from language, sense of community, and culture. By culture the Roma seem to mean mostly customs⁶⁴ and the ideology of respecting older people. It is a part of building a*

⁶⁰ See Inquiry of the Rapporteurs, item 5.

⁶¹ Jokela 1992, 23; Kopsa-Schön 1996, 43.

⁶² Romanipoliitiikan suuntaviivat 1998, 17-18. (Guidelines of Romani Policy 1998, 17-18.)

⁶³ Rantala & Huttunen 1993, 45, 117.

⁶⁴ Romani customs means for example purity, moral customs and respect. See for example *Mustalaiset vähemmistönä suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa (Gypsies as a Minority in Finnish Society)*. Advisory Board of Gypsy Affairs, 1981, 34.)

constructive identity that singular life situations or areas of life are equal and one single characteristic of an identity cannot be considered more dominant than the other.⁶⁵

A certain dualism is a central part of an identity of a nation or a group. All that is believed or experienced to be a part of group character belongs to a person's own identity. The other world is strange, extraneous, and does not belong to self. The identity of a nation or a group is based on subjective experience that is always collective: the way environment treats minority creates group experience of their status and value.⁶⁶ Dualism clearly shows itself in the shaping of Romani identity. On one hand, their own identity is expressed in Romani community, which in itself includes a dualistic view of the world (pure/impure). Among majority population identity is expressed in a complex unity, that is viewed as an environment of competition, selfishness, pluralism, and unscrupulousness.⁶⁷

So that the concept of *dualism* in connection with identity can be understood in the right way as a symbolic expression, it is justified to look at the ideal type of Romani (Gypsy) and that of majority population (Non-Gypsy). *Mythical Gypsy* is, according to Romani people's own description, a warm, emotional, caring, musical person, who follows customs, respects older people, wears Romani dress, and speaks a little Romani language. *Mythical Non-Gypsy* is largely defined as an opposite to the mythical Romani: Non-Gypsy is a badly behaving and selfish person. These categories are more myths than stereotypes, because they keep changing. It looks like Romani identity is born, in a basic way, through recurring reinterpretation of these myths. Identity of one's own is defined, on one hand, in relation to majority population, mythical Non-Gypsy, and on the other hand, in relation to mythical, correct Romani.⁶⁸

Although this kind of dualism in life is obvious, an ability to act more or less smoothly in both ethno communities is, more obviously than before, connected to the present way of life of the Roma. In fear of assimilating to majority population, the Roma have traditionally been active with majority population only in economic affairs. Economics has been considered an area, where it is culturally safe to keep connections. *A newer channel for contact between the Roma and majority population seems to have formed on the level of ideology, religion, and cultural politics. In these areas the Roma have often been available to influence. Especially the contact caused by religion can be viewed to have shaped the moral identity of the Roma. Ideological or religious interaction with majority population is suitable to be used as a contact channel, because there such a sense of community, that closely belong under the traditional Romani culture, can come true.* Sometimes sense of community is considered to be part of biological genotype of Romani population. Sense of community is described as mutual concern and longing, humanity, or caring.⁶⁹

As Romani identity is viewed as a constructive quality and not as some primarily inherited "ready" quality, the question about assimilation to majority population does not threat Romani identity the same way as if the identity were clearly defined and quite unchanging. The continuous reinterpretation of identity of one's own changes the concepts of mythical Romani and mythical Non-Gypsy. Romani identity can survive, although the person adopts some

⁶⁵ Rantala & Huttunen 1993, 112-113.

⁶⁶ Ketonen 1980, 101.

⁶⁷ Kopsa-Schön 1996, 130.

⁶⁸ Rantala & Huttunen 1993, 114. See also Kopsa-Schön 1996, 62.

⁶⁹ Rantala & Huttunen 1993, 62-63.

characteristics of majority culture.⁷⁰ Especially young generation Romani people interpret "mythical gypsyism", and keep finding new meanings. Romani identity in the 20th century seems to look for new possibilities to adjust to Finnish society as a Roma.⁷¹

If Romani identity is understood to be shaped and born as a result of choices in everyday life, the situation where choice is made can be characterized by the following choices: remaining a Roma – adjusting to society and doing well in it. However, Romani people's own descriptions of their own identity are an implicit proof of biculturalism, where these opposites are within each other, not opposite each other. Romani identity is still looking for its form by activating both layers of identity. Everyday life with family and relatives is shown as the stage of Romani identity, where sense of community, caring for each other, and respect of older people are virtues. *Choosing Romani identity in everyday life is a kind of sanctuary in modern world, where competition and economic values are emphasized.* However, going to school and wage work are accepted from majority population culture, because sufficient economic well being cannot be reached by former Romani trades. Lack of education is a bigger threat than education. Jurists, doctors, and people with academic degrees can be genuine Romani people, and the more educated people belong to Romani community, the prouder they can be about being Romani people.⁷² Biculturalism means commitment to Finnish society as a respectable citizen, if only citizenship can mean remaining a genuine Romani. So, mythical gypsyism works both as tool to differentiate oneself from majority population, as a tool inside Romani community: "becoming a Non-Gypsy" is still an efficient way to criticize the way of life of other Romani people.⁷³

2.3. Value of Traditions in Romani Culture

The position of the Roma has been described as difficult, because the values of Romani culture and values of the culture of majority population have been considered to be in conflict with each other. This means that unselfishness, openness, respect of older people, and experience of freedom are defined as typical values of Romani culture. Health, peace, independence, economic subsistence, or nature's staying unpolluted are often mentioned as values of majority population. More meaningful than the juxtaposition of these single, hardly measurable values, might be to study the value hierarchy Romani culture is based on. The value of preservation of Romani population and culture has been mentioned as the most significant goal in Romani culture. Many instrumental values seem to set in a hierarchical order in respect to that goal. It can be stated that Romani culture is built on this goal of preserving culture. The meaning of culture thus gets the status that belongs to it in the way of life of the Roma. The Roma will assimilate to majority population, if this value of preserving culture is given up. If the Roma change and start to pursue the values of majority culture, it is obvious that the whole Romani culture is in danger to disappear. So, the Roma must have distinction methods. The existence of the Roma seems, in a very central way, to be based on this goal.⁷⁴ Tuula Kopsa-Schön hits upon the right thing when she states that "The common thing among the Gypsies has rather been the continuity of gypsiness rather than its unity."⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Guidelines of Romani Policy 1998, 29.

⁷¹ Rantala & Huttunen 1993, 117.

⁷² See the Inquiry by the Rapporteurs 1999, item 5.

⁷³ Rantala & Huttunen 1993, 117.

⁷⁴ Jokela 1992, 17.

⁷⁵ Kopsa-Schön 1996, 63.

Perhaps one of the strongest forms of expression to preserve a culture, in addition to language, are usage and customs, dressing, and music. However, the detailed contents of usage and customs have not been strictly restricted. It is a question of norms about purity, cooking, and general modesty, that are used for making a distinction to majority population, and for defining yet again the "correct" Romani identity. For example, old peoples's clothes cannot be washed at the same time in the same washing machine with younger people's clothes, and men's clothes cannot be washed with women's clothes. When going to sauna, the age and gender categories have to be followed too.⁷⁶

Dressing is a good example of the adaptability of "correct" Romani culture and it is an indication of the partial mythical character of Romani identity. As late as in the end of the 19th century the dress of Romani women did not differ from the dress of an ordinary Finnish woman, except in respect to shawl and colours. It is said that even black velvet became common as late as in the 1960's. A common visual culture or a widely common way of life cannot be found by studying history. Instead of that, the reputation of Romani life and common past lives strongly in cultural identity of the Roma. It is not justified to closely define the original source of Romani culture, because the Roma have had contact with several cultures for over a thousand years. The Roma have been carriers of these cultural influences, but first of all, they have been adapters of these influences. For this reason, looking for differences between the culture of majority population and Romani culture is a limited approach. To understand the character of Romani culture, it is important to note the interaction of an ethnic minority, and a certain culture. This may help to see, what in Romani culture is basically undeliverable, and therefore; valuable.⁷⁷

The adaptability of culture that is expressed in dressing must not be considered as an indication of weakness or thinness of a culture, but it is an expression of the value hierarchy described before. The goal of preservation of Romani culture is a primary value in relation to secondary values, like a certain way to behave or think. During different periods, the Roma have used different distinction methods to protect their cultural identity. Customs and usage can, in other words, adapt to serve the upper levels of value hierarchy – protection of Romani culture. This does not mean giving up the values or norms of Romani culture, but a continuing reinterpretation in changing circumstances. This way of thinking does not remove possible conflicts in values in the cultures of Romani population and majority population, but it can help to see those conflicts that have real meaning in respect to preservation of Romani culture / integration into culture of majority population. At least education or participation in society does not seem to form a decisive threat to Romani culture, when it comes to this primary value.⁷⁸

The vanishing of traditional Romani trades has brought out the question of Romani culture's commercial value. However, it is problematic profile a minority culture so that it would seem valuable to majority culture. First, making visible different sides of a cultural identity could be meaningless to the minority itself, because profiling would happen on terms of majority culture anyway. Secondly, there is a danger that profiling a culture would bring out characteristics that are not living tradition of today, but characteristics collected, as the need arises, from cultural "storage". Making a product of a culture thus arises big conflicts. However, part of young Romani generation is ready to use this common property of Romani

⁷⁶ Rantala & Huttunen 1993, 50.

⁷⁷ Kopsa-Schön 1996, 63-64.

⁷⁸ See the Inquiry of the Rapporteurs 1999, items 4, 5 and 6.

nation to earn a living. When it comes to the conflicts, it is clearly a question of permanence of the limits of "genuine Gypsy". A battle is fought between individualism and collectivity, cultural policy and spontanec emotionality, and between future and past.⁷⁹

2.4. Developmental Needs of Language and Culture

Reform of Constitution in the year 1995 provided ethnic minorities the rights to develop and maintain their language and their culture. The basic factors of in developing minority groups' own culture and preserving their identity, that means their religion, language, traditional customs, and cultural traditions are stated in the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (chapter 1.4.4.).

The question of developing a language and a culture must be studied in relation to Romani identity, and thus, also education of the Roma. Education unavoidably means changing identity, and in that sense it is not impartial. *Education is a key both to successful competition with majority population and to preserving own identity, and that is why education of the Roma must be further developed.* The previously seen strong conflict between these things is disappearing. Education is, at present, considered to prevent assimilation to majority population, and enable the preservation of a functioning identity.⁸⁰ At the same time education strengthens the social status of the Roma in a way that can positively promote integration. This view has become popular also when outlining the guidelines of international Romani politics.⁸¹

When it comes to influencing attitudes, the most natural way to disseminate correct information is to make the multiplicity of Romani culture known to majority population. A culture can develop, if the representatives of the culture have a strong and active identity. In many Romani politics future visions an active Romani identity is outlined to follow the constructive model just described.⁸² In respect of developing a culture the most important question might be *how can majority population accept the richness of Romani culture – biculturalism.* The question of mobility of Romani identity is in key position again. The question is, how do the Roma understand the stability of their own identity, and how can majority population see the larger picture beyond "mythical gypsyism".

The Ministry of Education budget has an allocation of two million Fmks to subsidize minority cultures. The allocation is granted for preservation of own culture and identity of groups representing minority cultures. Allocations can be granted for preserving native language, to cover the expenses of events that keep up cultural traditions, for needs of internal communication of minority groups, for individual art interests and other cultural interests, for cultural exchange and strengthening of interaction between minority culture and culture of majority population, for the needs of information services handling minority questions, and for activities that prevent racism and intolerance.

On part of *Romani language*, Report of Finland states, that Committee on Romani Language was established on June 1st 1997, to work in connection with Research Centre for Domestic

⁷⁹ Kopsa-Schön 1996, 141-143.

⁸⁰ See the Inquiry of the Rapporteurs 1999, items 4, 5 and 6.

⁸¹ Romanipolitiikan suuntaviivat (Guidelines of Romani Policy) 1998, 29.

⁸² Guidelines of Romani Policy 1998, 29; Kopsa-Schön 1996, 191; Rantala & Huttunen 1993, 126.

Languages. The task of the Committee is development, maintenance, and research of Romani language. The law on Research Centre for Domestic Languages was amended from November 1st 1996 so that research and maintenance of Romani language belong to the tasks of the Centre, too. However, there is no office for the maintenance and research of Romani language. This problem reflects to the instruction of Romani language, too. Instruction of Romani language is impeded by several factors, like economy measures of municipalities, lack of instructors, and insufficient training of instructors. Working conditions of Romani instructors are difficult, because there are only a few students and they live far from each other, whereupon the instructors have an unreasonably long way to work, and the traveling is not reimbursed. Payment plan of Romani language instructors in municipalities is often tied to school terms, and they get no reimbursement for vacation periods. *State grant system must be changed so, that state grants can be directed to the hiring and training of Romani language instructors who work in day care and comprehensive school. Traveling expenses, if they occur, must be reimbursed. In that way the contract of employment of Romani instructors in municipalities becomes equal with other instructors.*

The problem is also, that there is no learning material available for high school, neither in Romani language nor about Romani language. *Allocations must be directed for high school instruction. Learning material for instruction of native language shall be produced with the help of the allocations. Students of Romani language must be given the choice of taking a final exam in their native language as a part of matriculation examination.*

According to Framework Convention article 11 every person who belongs to a national minority, has the right to use first names and family names that are in minority language, and the person has the right to get them officially acknowledged. Name legislation of Finland sets no obstacles for people belonging to national minorities using names in a minority language. Finnish Romani people often use first names that are typical to the group, although those names cannot be found in calendars.

First names in Romani language must be taken into Finnish name day calendar like other names.

According to constitution, paragraph 13, everyone has the right for free basic education. According to Act on Basic Education (628/1998) a municipality with both Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking inhabitants, is obliged to arrange basic education separately for both language groups.

Framework Convention article 14 requires that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to learn the language of that minority. The report of Finland states that according to Act on Basic Education (628/1998), paragraph 10, the language of instruction of a school is either Finnish or Swedish. The language of instruction can also be Sami language, Romani language, or sign language. School legislation was amended from the beginning of the year 1995. According to the amendment Romani language can be taught to a student as a native language at school. The same provision is included in Act on Basic Education that came into force on January 1st 1999. According to basic Act on Basic Education paragraph 12, Finnish, Swedish, or Sami languages are taught as a native language, according to language of instruction of the student. Romani language, sign language or other native language of the student can also be taught as a native language, according to the choice of the person having the care and custody of the student. The same provisions are in Act on Higher Secondary School, paragraphs 6 and 8.

The aforementioned Act on Basic Education paragraph 12 does not oblige municipalities to arrange instruction of native language in Romani language. Instruction of native language of students who speak Romani language or a foreign language is, at present, usually arranged on grounds of decision (248/1995). This decision is about allocating state grants to further education provided by The Ministry of Education. State refunds municipalities 86 percent of the costs for such instruction of native language. Consequently, municipalities should have economic resources to arrange instruction, although getting this instruction in practice depends on the economic planning of the municipality.

Romani Education Unit in National Board of Education has published, among other things, the following textbooks and additional learning material to support Romani language and culture:

- Romani - English - Finnish -dictionary, 1994
- A textbook on the basics of Romani language, to be used at comprehensive schools, 1995
- A guide and grammar book for instructors of Romani language, 1996
- Romani student at school, inspiring material for the use of school personnel (in Finnish), 1997
- A video presenting home and culture of Romani pupil, to be used at schools, 1997
- A booklet and a tape presenting childrens' songs in Romani language, to be used at day care and in junior grades of comprehensive school, 1997.

In addition to that, Romani Education Unit has started an EU-funded project, which collects biographies recorded from Romani population, and fairy tales. Finnish League for Human Rights has, in the year 1995, published a book called "Vankkurikansan perilliset" (Successors of Wagon People). The book presents history and social status of the Roma. The book is used as a textbook for Romani children in senior grades of comprehensive school.

Romani children are obliged to compulsory attendance at school, like other children in Finland. They are placed, in relation to other children, more often in special education or in adapted education. The reason for this is, most of the time, problems related to language, and cultural differences and lack of understanding those differences. It has been noted in connection of Romani language instruction, that the Finnish used in Romani homes is very constricted in grammar and concepts. Due to poor education of parents, homes cannot provide the linguistic facilities required at school. This might be one of the biggest reasons for school problems of Romani children, and for dropouts. Thus the insufficient command of their own minority language among younger people, and insufficient command of majority population language together cause exclusion and continuation of unequal position in society.

Law on funding instruction and cultural activity, that is included in the reform of our school legislation, does not secure sufficient resources for instruction of Romani language. Protection of small minority languages, that is based on basic rights and school legislation, does not come true, unless the funding of instruction is taken care of so that upkeeper of educational establishment receives a reimbursement that, within reason, covers additional costs. *When state grants are paid, municipalities should get a subsidy that is directed to the instruction of Romani language. Municipalities must hire either a part time or a full time school assistant for Romani children. The assistant can, at the same time, act as an instructor of Romani language. Teaching programmes of instructors and special instructors of Romani culture must be completed soon to guarantee sufficiency of professional instructors of Romani language.*

Romako-project, supported by European Social Fund (ESF), is meant for Romani people aged 25 – 55, who want to get education or find employment. The project is carried out by Tuusula Labour Office and Tuusulan sosiaalialan oppilaitos (Tuusula Social Services Vocational School). The project makes it possible to get vocational qualification in the field of social and health care, that means qualification of a practical nurse in a special education program specially designed for the Roma. This guarantees possibilities for institutional care and open care to understand Romani culture, and to serve the Roma, if need arises, in their own language.

3. ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE ROMA

3.1. Number, Size and Geographical Division of Romani Organizations

The Roma have, at present, five national organizations. The oldest one is *Romano Missio* (former gypsy Mission), that was established in the year 1906. Romano Missio has about 400 members, and the core of the activities are christian child welfare work and social work. The operations model of the association seems to be a balancing act between spiritual instruction and social work. The association has, at present, the greatest financial resources and relations enabling cooperation in Romani work. The association is a member for instance in the following national organizations: Central Union for Child Welfare in Finland, Finnish Federation for Social Welfare and Health, Finnish Slot Machine Association, and Finnish Bible Society. Especially cooperation with evangelical lutheran local parishes provides Romano Missio with possibilities for extensive activity. The following forms of social work were being done in the year 1998: a project preventing exclusion of Romani youth "Aina ammattiin asti" (Towards a Profession), a project called "Romaneiden päihdetyön kehittäminen" (Developing Social Work with Intoxicant Abusers), family home in Lahti, Päiväkumpu Children's Home (in Hämeenkoski), Kotimäki Children's Home (in Sipoo), and Mäntsälä Family Group Home. As spiritual activities can be considered, for example, church services in Romani language in different places in Finland, summer camps in cooperation with local parishes, and translating Bible to Romani language. Romano Missio is active all over Finland, but there is no cooperation group in Northern Finland yet. The association publishes a magazine called *Romano Bodos*. The magazine has articles in Romani language, too.⁸³ The magazine is the most notable culture, information, evangelical, news, and opinion magazine of the Roma in Finland.

Suomen Vapaa Romanilähetys (Finnish Free Romani Mission) was established in the year 1964 to convene christian Romani people who represent other religious beliefs than established state religion. The association does spiritual and social work among the Roma. The association is of evangelical character, but during the last few years, educational and social tasks have increased. The association has several committees, like committee on children's and young people's affairs, music committee, exhibition committee, internal mission committee, working committee, and spiritual work committee. The association Finnish Free Romani Mission does missionary work in Baltic countries, Central Europe, Russia, India, and Pakistan. publishes a magazine called *Elämä ja Valo* (Life and Light), there are four issues a year.

⁸³ See for example the Annual Report of Romano Missio 1996, 1997, and 1998.

Suomen Romaniyhdistys r.y. (Finnish Romani Association) is an interest group of the Roma, with an emphasis on social affairs. The association is the only actual interest group, which acts as a pressure group towards public authority and the government. Secondly, the Association disseminates information both to the Roma and to the majority population. Third task is to supervise implementation of racial discrimination legislation in practice. Fourth, the Association maintains cultural traditions of Finnish Roma. The Association was established in the year 1967. At that time there was an immediate need to improve poor living circumstances of the Roma. The Association has been specially interested in housing and education, and promoting Romani language and culture.

Ryhdyt r.y. is an association for contact persons who work with the Roma. It was established in the year 1993. There were about 28 contact persons in the year 1999. The contact persons in the association develop, for the Roma, youth work, activities for elderly people, and they work with intoxicant abusers. Contact persons work as interpreters between local authorities and the Roma. Their purpose is to guide local authorities in Romani affairs, and guide the Roma in dealing with authorities. Contact people work almost all over Finland, from metropolitan Helsinki area to as north as Oulu. A contact person has worked in Sweden, among Finnish Romani people, since the year 1997. This is voluntary work. City of Helsinki has given an office for the use of a contact person. Ryhdys r.y. has received small grants from The Ministry of Education and from Finnish Slot Machine Association.

Gypsies future is an auxiliary, established in the year 1998, for young Romani people. The association does volunteer work in child welfare, and provides support person activities. Finnish Slot Machine Association granted Gypsies future 200.000 Fmks to be used in the years 1998 – 2000. The grant will be used for social training project of Romani children and youth who have grown up in foster care.

In addition to national level associations, local associations and cooperation groups were born in the 1990's. All of them seem to advocate for the same things as the national level organizations. All local associations or cooperation groups have not got organized officially, and this means their position, when it comes to funding and activities, is changeable and partly unclear. However, it looks like the associations try to disseminate information on Romani culture, and that way, prevent discrimination of the Roma.⁸⁴ Municipal groups have been established, in area of Central Finland, at least in Karstula, Keuruu, Pihtipudas, and Äänekoski. Municipal groups were born, because Romani population is, in increasing numbers, concentrating in towns and in population centres. The few Romani families living in scattered settlement areas have received suggestions about moving to the nearest municipal group. The groups have concentrated on pre-school training of children and in basic education. Information meeting have been arranged for Romani parents, with emphasis on the importance of pre school training to improve readiness for school. Municipal groups in other counties have also emphasized the importance of educational issues.⁸⁵

Grassroot level activities might become a significant channel for societal activities, if the activities become permanent, and organizations become efficient. *An especially significant task for local associations could be increasing Romani population's knowledge of society and how society functions.* There is an obvious need for "civics" among Romani population, so that the Roma among Romani population, so that the Roma could get a better concept about

⁸⁴ See the Brochure of Tampere Romani Association.

⁸⁵ Välimäki 1993, 43-45.

their place and status in society. This need has been stated often in different discussions with regional advisory boards, for instance. This would enable the creation of real channels of influence that could be used, for example, advocating for the Roma in municipal decisionmaking.

National Board of Education must, together with the Association of Finnish Regional and Local Authorities, organize the training of Romani contact people, so that they can act as intermediaries between the Roma and public authorities.

The Role of Romani Organizations in Society

Romani organizations are mainly cultural and spiritual organizations. Social activities have a significant position in these organizations. The inquiry carried out by the Rapporteurs brought out that the role of Romani organizations has changed. The organizations provide more services than in the past, because social services have been cut down. The Roma are afraid they are excluded from social services, so they want their own organizations to provide these services. Financial support from society is needed for this purpose. Romani organizations can find the best ways to help their own people. Majority population does not know how to bring out the support of family for example in drug and alcohol problems, child care or care of elderly people. Majority population does not know the different time concept of the Roma. The Roma live in the here and now, and so they often do not have long term plans.

Presently Romani organizations receive financial support for different projects, social services, spiritual work, fieldwork, publishing, and for linguistic, cultural and information support. The organizations get the support from Finnish Slot Machine Association, state, municipalities, church, and private organizations.⁸⁶

Society must use Romani organizations as supply organizations, where society can purchase, for instance, training services, child care, care for the elderly, domestic help, cleaning, and such services like emergency service, security- and transportation services.

3.2. Do We Need a Central Organization for Romani Organizations?

The Sami have a right for cultural self-administration. On the plea of this situation, it is good to discuss if the Roma should, as another significant national minority, have in Finland a similar organ of cultural self-administration in the form of Romani parliament, or Romani court sessions, that public authorities should hear before making decisions that affect the situation of the Roma. How to elect representatives to this organ, and how to define a Roma? The Sami have problems in defining who is a Sami. It would be the same problem with the Roma, due to mixed marriages. It could be agreed that a central organization of the Roma would be established among the Roma. The organization would act as an intermediary between existing Romani organizations and it would represent the Roma in relations to State of Finland, and to international organizations.

⁸⁶ The Inquiry of the Rapporteurs.

When it comes to the Roma, the Report of Finland "The Implementation of Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities" states that Romani population was, increasingly, heard in parliament both when legislative drafts were done, and during debate in committee. The hearings were carried out in different ways, but mostly it happened through Advisory Board on Romani Affairs. Thus the Roma do not have their own national representative administrative system, but Advisory Board on Romani Affairs, a joint organ of state authorities and the Roma, represents the Roma in relation to State of Finland and international organizations.

On the grounds of the inquiry done by the Rapporteurs, the Roma consider their own umbrella organization to be possible, even necessary. Regional Advisory Board in the County of Oulu proposed that the tasks of a central organization would be advocacy and acting as an expert body, and hold elections, where only a real Romani can vote, to elect members to an administrative organ of the central organization. It was also proposed, that Romani organizations would elect representatives to the administration of the central organization. At present only a small part of the Romani population participates in organizational activities, so according to the proposal, the central organization should extensively convene the Roma to participate in activities. The central organization should not displace the activities of present organizations. A possible central organizations could be divided into regional organizations, and those regional organizations could elect representatives to different organizations of municipality or county. The central organization would represent the Roma towards state central administration. According to the inquiry, it would be important to strive for regional representation, and to listen to the opinions of local Romani population.⁸⁷

The Rapporteurs propose that a central organization of the Roma will be established. Administrative organ for the organization would be elected according to elections made by national and regional organizations. State must provide support to start the activities of a central organization of the Roma.

Self-Administration of the Sami

According to constitution of Finland, paragraph 51 a, The Sami shall, as original inhabitants, be guaranteed in the home district of the Sami, cultural self-administration concerning their own language and culture. This shall be implemented as laid down by the law. This provision of constitution, concerning administrative circumstances of the Sami, came into force from the beginning of the year 1996.

The goal of the provision concerning cultural self-administration is to create for the Sami such an administrative and political position guaranteed by the constitution, that they can use to influence, more extensively than in the past, the preparation and decision making in affairs that are specially related to them. As this goal comes true, it will promote the possibilities of the Sami to take care of, maintain, and develop their language and culture, and their social and economic circumstances. The goal is that future legislation prescribes, when it comes to affairs concerning the language and culture of the Sami, institutions, scope of authority, and duties to Sami administration, municipal self-administration, and state administration. The scope of cultural self-administration of the Sami is prescribed the same way as constitutional

⁸⁷ The Inquiry of the Rapporteurs.

guarantee for municipal self-administration. Cultural self-administration of the Sami is meant to be dynamic and the Sami develop it themselves.⁸⁸

Paragraph 51 a in constitution makes it possible to adopt matters concerning Sami cultural self-administration to municipal or state legislation in Sami home district. It is also possible to refer these duties from municipal and state administration to special Sami administration. According to the provision, this arrangement creates possibilities to improve the position of the Sami in municipal self-administration, state administration, and in special Sami administration, concurrently as Sami cultural self-administration and concurrent administrative services are being developed in legislation. The provision also obliges state to take legislative measures to implement Sami cultural self-administration. Sami court sessions implements Sami cultural autonomy.⁸⁹

Sami court sessions is a cultural self-administration institution of the Sami, prescribed by law (974/95). It began activities from the beginning of the year 1996. Sami court sessions is the highest political and administrative institution of the Sami in Finland, that is active in the administrative sector of Ministry of Justice. It is not a part of state administration in Finland. The nature of Sami court sessions is representative, because its 21 members and 4 deputy members are elected among the Sami in elections that are arranged every four years. Sami court sessions is the only institution in Finland that can express the official opinion of the Sami in affairs that are related to them, because it is a democratically elected institution and all members are Sami people. Sami court sessions represents, according to Act on Sami Court Sessions, the Sami both in national and international connections.

The most important organs of Sami Court Sessions are assembly of the court sessions, board of directors, and a full-time chairman. In addition to that, there are six committees that are part of the organization: business and judicial committee, education and learning material committee, culture committee, Sami language committee, committee on social and health affairs, and election committee. The activities of the court sessions are funded by state of Finland. Secretariat of Sami court sessions is divided into general office, Sami language office, and education and learning material office. The secretariat presently employs ten officials on permanent appointment, and a few officials on appointment for a fixed term.⁹⁰

The duty of Sami court sessions is to maintain the language and culture of the Sami, and to attend to the affairs of the Sami as Natives. Within the scope of its duties, the court sessions can take initiatives to and present proposals to authorities, and give statements. In addition to that, Sami court sessions also uses power of decision as prescribed by laws related to the court sessions or as prescribed by other legislation. The Sami also must be heard in affairs related to them in special committee of parliament.

According to Parliament Act paragraph 52 a, the Sami must be heard in affairs that specially apply to them, as far as procedure of parliament prescribes. The procedure prescribes that representatives of the Sami must be given a chance to be heard. Public authorities must

⁸⁸ HE 248/1994 vp pages 14, 16.

⁸⁹ HE 248/94 vp pages 20-21.

⁹⁰ Magga, Ristenrauna: Saamelaiden vammaisten, vanhusten ja pitkäaikaissairaiden tiedotus- ja tukiprojektin loppuraportti, Saamelaiskäräjät ja Kynnys r.y, Inari 1999, 11-12. (Magga, Ristenrauna: Report of Information and Support Project to Sami Disabled People, Elderly, and Chronically Ill, pages 11-12.)

negotiate with the Sami on all expansive and significant measures, which can influence the position of the Sami.

Furthermore, public authorities have, according to Act on Sami Court Sessions paragraph 9, an obligation to negotiate with Sami Court Sessions about all expansive and significant measures, which can directly and in a special way influence the position of the Sami as Natives. The same obligation applies to measures that are about developing social and health services, among other things, in the home district of the Sami. The said obligation to negotiate means, according to Constitutional Committee of Parliament, almost as good protection as the right of a party to be heard in matters concerning themselves. That right is based on law on administrative process. Public authorities must reserve Sami Court Sessions a chance to be heard in and to negotiate about an issue under consideration, when implementing that issue would influence the position of the Sami.⁹¹

3.3. Social Participation of the Roma

There are no special minority parties in Finland, if Swedish People's Party is not counted as such a party. However, Finnish Swedes are also members or supporters of other parties than Swedish People's Party. There are no separate seats reserved for minorities in Parliament, except one seat that is reserved for representative of Province of Åland. In practice it is not possible for small ethnic groups to get a seat in Parliament. This means that for example the Sami do not have their own representative in Parliament; neither do the Roma have a representative. There are almost twenty members of parliament who are Finnish Swedes. However, on municipal level the representatives of small groups can get so many votes, that they can be elected. The Sami, the Roma, Tatars, and Finnish Swedes have representatives on municipal level. It is justified to ask, *why do the Roma and the Sami as traditional minority nations not have their own representatives in parliament of Finland?* The number of the Roma and the Sami is about the same as the number of population in province of Åland. Future may bring along a question about the Roma getting increased influence on parliamentary level, especially after the democratic organizational activities of the Roma have developed to such a form, that they have their own decision-making body. This means that the ethnic national minorities of the Sami and the Roma might, in cooperation, propose that their own representative, or maybe a representative of both groups, should be appointed as the representative of the Roma and the Sami.

Romani people do not have their own party-political activities, as some immigrants, for example, have. Participation of the Roma in the activities of different political groups has been small. The Roma feel themselves cautious to participate in political activities with majority population. However, the Roma have been elected to municipal institutions on municipal level. The Roma do not have a tradition of political participation and insufficient reading and writing skills are also an obstacle. It has been the view of the Roma, that participation in public forums will reverse a positive purpose into a negative one.⁹²

Improvement of legislative position of the Roma in the 1990's has awakened the Roma to realize their own political possibilities. It has been proposed that the task of regional advisory boards could be defending basic rights that are related to development of language and

⁹¹ The same, 12.

⁹² The Rapporteurs' Interviews with Romani Population in Spring 1999.

culture. Although all the rights specified in Reform of Constitution are not implemented in every case, it looks like constitutional reform has created activities with the goal of implementing these rights.

Also *Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities*, signed by Finland, demands measures to create adequate circumstances, where a minority can express, maintain, and develop this identity. This in addition to respecting the ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious identity of a minority group. It looks like the position of the Roma is secured through a so-called *negative freedom*: there are no obstacles for expression of freedom. On the contrary, *freedom positively* defined, in the sense of existence of possibilities and chances, is not yet fully realized.⁹³

On the grounds of inquiry done by the Rapporteurs, it can be said that the Roma are rather passive politically. There are many reasons for that. The Roma are supporters of traditional administration, and they are only beginning to learn the basics of democracy. Their leaders are not elected by vote or elections. The leaders rise, following tradition, from certain families on the basis of age and experience. Moreover, the Roma are scattered in different election districts, and that is why they do not have much political influence. Weak social position also makes them passive. However, the Roma have a positive attitude towards possible political activities and organizing. It is their opinion that participation is a method to influence decision, that political parties and groups now make without the Roma. The opinion of the Roma is that political initiative should be made by a single Roma, who should, for example, run for a seat in municipal council.⁹⁴

The Roma do not know very well even their own Romani organizations, neither do they know the Roma people who are active in the administration of these organizations. The Roma have no knowledge about the goals or administrative systems of these organizations. The problem is that the same people keep influencing in the same organizations, year after year, and other people are excluded. It is a challenge for Romani organizations to find better use for the whole potential. The Roma have some kind of personal union, where different organizations are connected through the same people. These people are members of several Romani organizations, and affairs can be taken care of by old boy's network.

On grounds of the inquiry of the Rapporteurs, it looks like development of Romani culture could easily be connected with some kind of participation in society. It is believed that Romani culture develops concurrently with increased participation in society. It is considered important to provide young Romani people with possibilities for participation. Old experts of Romani politics have to know how to step aside when the time comes. Organizational activities are considered a natural channel for developing culture and participating in society. Although the Roma are not very active politically, those who do get involved in politics, nowadays get the support of the Roma.⁹⁵

Real and genuine equality requires continuous, tight interaction between different population groups. Interaction can be started as early as in day care, and it can be continued at school,

⁹³ See for example Romaniväestön osallistumisen mahdollisuudet aluehallinnossa 1999, 10. (Romani Population's Opportunities for Participation in Regional Administration 1999, 10.) Positive and negative freedom see for example Pursiainen, Terho: Isänmaallisuus, Helsinki 1997. (Pursiainen, Terho: Patriotism, Helsinki 1997.)

⁹⁴ The Inquiry of the Rapporteurs.

⁹⁵ The Inquiry of the Rapporteurs.

in workplaces, and in social sector and in hobby circles. Living together is a requisite for getting rid of prejudice. State and society must create favorable opportunities for The Roma and majority population to live together.

3.4. The Roma and Congregational Activities

Majority of the Roma living in Finland (about 90 percent in the year 1996) belong to evangelical lutheran church. The Roma have usually adopted the majority religion of their country of residence. In Finland the relation between the Roma and church is, in the 1990's, changing towards real interaction and mutual respect.

Church of Sweden decided in the year 1594 that it shall not baptize, marry, administer Communion, or bury Romani population. Church showed some favour to the Roma in the 17th century, due to order of Senate. However, not until the year 1868 did Church Code prescribe, that Romani children could be baptized at the request of their parents. Spiritual instruction of the Roma pursued changing their way of life to "christian", this means similar to the way of life of majority population.

Relations between evangelical lutheran church of independent Finland and the Roma have also been very problematic until the 1990's. Lutheran church has given the Roma a very discriminatory treatment. A pursuit of assimilation has for a long time dominated church policy, as well as minority policy. Lutheran church has supported cultural assimilation, but it has not practised clear, in principle racism during independence of Finland. Church probably meant well, but still it did not know how ask what is the opinion of other party on what is good for them and what is their way of life really about. It was the strong way church became intern ationalized in the 1990's along with ecumenical movement that, at the latest, changed the attitude towards minorities in the country. This was some kind of byproduct when pursuing unity between churches. At that time it was possible to note, how christian faith is always connected with the context of local culture and interpretations formed by the culture. *Adjusted difference*, probably the most central concept of ecumenic movement, means respecting the wealth of cultures, and preserving it so that misunderstandings and differences have been adjusted. In other words, *all special features of a culture, that do not damage others, must be accepted.*⁹⁶ This provided the possibility to look at national minorities in a totally new way. The process seems to have started also when it comes to the relation of church to the Roma. In the first Kirkko ja romanit (Church and the Roma) seminar in the year 1995, a representative of church presented an apology for the way church has treated the Roma during its history.

Although this kind of acceptance of difference seems modest and it looks like it is tolerance in principle only, it has significant influence. Change of opinion is a sign of the thorough reevaluation the church has done in its relation to difference. There is reason to see possible influence of that reevaluation to be as strong as intolerance has been, as its worst. Interaction between the Roma and church is only in the beginning stages, and there are some things where obstacles for tolerance are rather inability and difficulty to talk, rather than unwillingness to do so.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Pihkala 1999.

⁹⁷ See Pihkala 1999.

During the last few years the Roma themselves have been active in promoting development of relations between church and the Roma. Centre for Social Work of the Church established in the 1980's a working group to draw up a guideline for Romani work in parishes. Report of the working group, *Kirkko ja mustalaiset* (Church and Gypsies) was published in the year 1987. A problem in the Romani work has been that the work has been supervised without representatives of Romani population. Increasing the participation of the Roma themselves has been the main goal in the 1990's. A working group *Kirkko ja romanit* (Church and The Roma), that was set up in 1994, has prepared a publication to employees of lutheran church. The publication explains the history, culture, and religious customs of the Roma. The publication tries to help employees of church to meet the needs of the Roma, and to enable active participation of the Roma in the activities of local parishes.⁹⁸

The Roma are active in other churches, too, especially in the Pentecostal church. Free churches offer a channel to openly express religious feelings and experiences. Religious issues can be openly discussed in Romani culture, and often seems to coincide with religious nature found in pentecostalism. *Mustalaislähetys r.y.* (Gypsy Mission) or the present *Romano Missio* has its beginnings in free christian revival. It was established in the year 1906 with the goal to save the Roma from both spiritual and economic decay. Protestant revival of the Roma in Europe spreaded to Finland in the 1960's. This strongly fundamental movement created, in the year 1964, Suomen Vapaa Evankelinen Romanilähetys r.y. (Finnish Free Evangelical Romani Mission), Pentecostal church, Baptist church, and Free Church belong to Finnish Free Evangelical Romani Mission. Resources of the association are sufficient for evangelical work. Evangelical lutheran church has not been involved with the activities of this association, but it has been in cooperation with Romano Missio.⁹⁹

Spiritual Romani work is now often carried out in cooperation with evangelical lutheran parishes. Most typical forms of Romani work in parishes are camps for young people and teenagers, music camps and family camps, and social work of the church. Different parishes and Suomen Vapaa Sisälähetysseura (Finnish Free Mission) fund the activities. Romano Missio gets grants from National Ecclesiastical Board. Since Evangelical Lutheran Church gives grants to Romani work, it is the most natural cooperation partner in spiritual work of the Roma. One of the biggest problems in Romani work of Evangelical Lutheran parishes is the strength of emotion and strong reorganizing of life that are connected to religious revival. Due to this, local Evangelical Lutheran parishes try to cooperate with Romani preachers to be able to reach the nature of such religiousness that touches the Roma, but is not very common in Lutheran national church.¹⁰⁰

The parishes of Free Church of Finland have Romani people participating in their activities in different regions of the country. Free Church started to work with the Roma in the beginning of the 20th century. Oskari Jalkio, a member of Tampere Free Church parish, got a calling to do missionary work with the Roma living in Finland, instead of doing the work abroad. The purpose of Free Church was to meet the needs the Roma had when it came to housing, child welfare, ability to read, and spiritual needs. Participation in the activities of Free Church has acted as a ground for equal interaction between the Roma and majority population. The Roma have been able to act as workers in Free Church, not only as subjects of that work.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Romanit ja Kirkko (The Roma and Church) 1999.

⁹⁹ Kopsa-Schön 1996, 150-152.

¹⁰⁰ The Roma and Church 1999; Kopsa-Schön 1996, 154-155.

¹⁰¹ Kuusinen 1999.

Interaction between the Roma and churches is increasing and this makes possible cooperation, where the Roma develop activities of their parishes as equal partners. This requires that the special character of Romani culture be noted in activities, services, church social work, and camp activities. The Roma have been active in this purpose, and they have made a guideline for parish worker on how to work and communicate with the Roma. This guideline was published in Pori Church Assembly in the year 1999. The guideline will be sent to parishes during the year 1999. *Parishes with a lot of Roma living in the region should establish a working group for Romani work, so that the work can be developed from the needs of the Roma. The Roma should also be encouraged to participate in the decision making of a parish, for example as elected officials in parish councils.*

3.5. Open Participation - A New Opening towards Society

Conception of Human Being

There are different conceptions and images of human beings. Relation between an individual and community is often fruitful, but at the same time, problematic. Individuality refers to selfishness and communality refers to socialization. Both are needed in right proportions. So the competition between individualism and collectivism is like a line drawn in water, or like wave motion. Sometimes the trend is individualism, and sometimes it is collectivism. There is no absolute truth in this issue. By participation and individual gets involved with the affairs of a community, and that way makes a commitment to become a member. There are compulsory "memberships", that come naturally, like membership in a municipality, and there are voluntary "memberships" in different organizations. The activity of people to participate in the activities of different communities varies, depending on the individual and the community. Social science considers social needs to be part of human needs. Need for togetherness, need for love, and need for acknowledgement are counted as social needs. A community can reward or punish its members, and individuals are thankful to be rewarded and bitter to be punished.

Family and relatives are important communities for the Roma, but such communities as municipality of residence and state are less significant except when it comes to physical support. The Roma often consider they belong first to their own family and relatives, and only after that do they belong to municipality or state. One of the great ideas of ancient Greeks was that a human being has "nature", a unity of physical and spiritual expressions. Rousseau considered freedom to be part of human nature. Rousseau's conception of freedom applies to the Roma. A human being has his nature, and freedom is consequence of human nature. No one has, on grounds of nature, authority towards the others, but legal authority is based on an agreement, and part of that agreement is reciprocity. Looking after one's own existence belongs to human nature also.

Rousseau writes:

"Man must find a form of confluence, that with all common force protects and secures the person and possessions of every person of every community, and where every such member, when joining all the others, obeys only himself and stays as free as in the past."

According to this conception, relation between a community and an individual is based on a social contract, where an individual keeps his freedom, that is the starting point. On the other

hand, freedom is secured through social contract and through the duties it includes. Thus, rights and duties belong to the model of Rousseau.¹⁰²

Society For All

Developing an affluent society and a civic society could gradually lead to a society that is meant for all. This kind of society strives for the equalization of opportunities of its citizens, and it strives to create possibilities for a meaningful life for people as productive, independent partners in society. The steps to develop this kind of society are as follows:

- 1) Tolerance of difference and increasing the tolerance as part of securing and increasing people's equality and possibilities for choice.
- 2) Adjusting the infrastructure and activities of society, in the planning stages, to the differences of people – no matter whether the differences exist due to age, gender, ethnic origin, different abilities, and so on.
- 3) Making it possible for people to control their life, so that they can find and use all their potential.
The following measures will be taken to increase the opportunities of citizens:
 - a) social, physical, or other kind of obstacles will be removed or lowered in people's immediate environment
 - b) equal opportunities and channels for participation will be actively created
 - c) those who have problems controlling their life will be helped by rehabilitation, in the widest sense of the word (physical rehabilitation, awakening of consciousness, strengthening of motivation, development of knowledge and skills), and they will be helped also by providing them support services, their immediate environment will be adjusted to their special needs, and costs will be evened out by principle of joint and several liability, or by insurance
- 4) Self-administration of interest groups will be promoted, so that they can
 - a) express and communicate the needs of their members for decision making
 - b) participate in production of services
 - c) enable consumers to request and control themselves their consumption of care and support
- 5) New partnership will be created for the state, market, and households, and job market will be made more accessible, therefore creating a more equal sharing of well being.

It is not enough to integrate people into society, because adjustment and assimilation can integrate all of us. The concept of "society for all" is just the opposite: to adjust society to people. Utilizing human resources is both a prerequisite of development and goal of development.

¹⁰² Kemppainen, Erkki: Osallistuminen sosiaalisena oikeutena ja velvollisuutena Euroopassa, kirjoitus teoksessa Yhteiskunta ja osallistuminen (toim. Erkki Kemppainen), Stakesin raportteja 112, Jyväskylä 1993, 48. (Erkki Kemppainen: Participation as a Social Right and Duty in Europe. In the book Society and Participation, ed. Erkki Kemppainen, Report 112 of National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health, Jyväskylä 1993, 48.)

Sectors of Participation

It has been said that the needs for food, shelter, and so on are not the basic human needs after all. They are just necessary tools for survival. The basic needs would only be opening a person's own resources and expressing oneself as a person. At least we can say that the last-mentioned needs are typical to humans. Committed planning takes into consideration the needs and resources of different people. Participation must be seen as goal-oriented activity, with a purpose of controlling social and political processes.¹⁰³

Instead of the existence of needs, we could and should study the resources of human beings that help them cope in life. Resources can be insufficient when it comes to housing, work, education, social relations, or opportunities to influence. This means that political machinery, for example democracy, is a resource that helps people cope in life.

Poverty and exclusion are also lack of participation or opportunities for participation. Supporting participation in different ways can be a means to reduce exclusion, because it makes possible for a person's own resources to be utilized. *Principles of participation and companionship* include that local and national partners, public and private sectors, and poor people themselves must work together to influence the reasons of poverty. In Europe locality, companionship, and multidimensionality are emphasized. Different projects try to influence education, vocational training, health, housing, etc.

Often participation requires knowledge and an ability to outline things. Obtaining knowledge related to society has often been insufficient and haphazard. A condition for the participation of the Roma is obtaining knowledge about society, and through that; a will to participate will arise. Openness in receipt of information and principle of publicity are the cornerstones of democracy, which are being strengthened in uniting Europe.

Participation can be connected to work community, where participation of workers can be developed. Participation is connected to safety at work too.

Participation as volunteer work done by third sector is an essential part of welfare society. Third sector is formed out of unpaid volunteer work, not for the benefit of family and friends, but for the benefit of unknown people who are, in an organized way, reached through volunteer centres, for example. Volunteer work, unpaid work, and organizing are characteristic things for third sector. Volunteer work can be, for example, discussions, visits, running small errands, or other such services that have the character of support services. Often volunteer work acts in cooperation with social work of a municipality. A notable question of social philosophy, overcoming selfishness, is connected to that. If all individuals and families think only of their own immediate interests, society cannot last. A counterbalance to selfish thinking is a so-called second degree thinking: if I help someone who is in need, someone will help me when I need help. When I pay my taxes, I will sometimes be the recipient.

The Roma do a lot of unselfish work within their family and relatives. Can the Roma participate in third sector volunteer work with majority population? This chance must be tried, because it can provide a good channel for removing prejudice. *The Roma must be equally included in third sector volunteer work in the projects of parishes, Salvation Army, Red Cross of Finland, and other volunteer organizations, and municipal social work.*

¹⁰³ Wiman, Ronald: "A Society for All, Ett samhälle för alla". An article in the book "Society and Participation".

Representative democracy is a strange idea to many Romani people, due to leadership concept in Romani culture. Older men of certain families act as Romani leaders. Esteem and respect among the Roma has based on traditional tribal culture, where the equality of All Roma has been a self-evident idea. As the Roma now adjust to the demands of modern society and establish their own organizations to be heard, and they might even establish their own political organizations in future, it is a question of long-standing change that includes many hopes and expectations. Development of organizational activities of the Roma makes them audible and visible representatives of their people, whose opinions politicians must take into account. The Roma will gain new ground through their organizational activities, they will gain ground they have never had before.

Finnish society must support the Roma, in different ways, in learning democratic rules and manners of proceedings. Contribution of society can be notable for example in providing necessary meeting places for the own activities of the Roma.

4. MARGINALIZATION AND EXCLUSION OF THE ROMA

4.1. Overview

Marginalization is usually always studied from the perspective of majority population. This means a certain characteristic of an individual or a group is the subject of study. Individuals or groups are compared to each other, in which case some are more marginalized than others. Usually marginalized people are as a minority in a comparison in the society where they belong. This kind of definition starts from outside the individual being defined, like an old fashioned diagnosis of illness. This means that the subjective view of an individual or a group is not taken into consideration. In the past illness was diagnosed "objectively" without taking into account an individual's feeling of illness, for example. The same is done when it comes to marginalization, when the pursuit of objectivism is not concurrent with subjective evaluation of an individual or a group. In fact it might be that in some dimension majority is more marginalized than the minority being compared. The majority only thinks it is better off. Of course not all problems can be studied as subjective feelings, but for example disabled people have shown support to the said thinking on marginalization. According to that thinking, marginalization means different things to different people.¹⁰⁴ A sick or a disabled person can find a whole new life through the illness, a life that satisfies, in many ways, the person better than previous life, assuming that basic needs of life are met. When it comes to the Roma, it can be assumed that often their way of life can be more free and warm-hearted than the tightly regulated rat race against economic realities of the Non-Roma.

There are several definitions of exclusion. *"Exclusion is a process, where individuals or groups are totally or partly excluded from participation in the society where they live."*¹⁰⁵ In Europe the term poverty has been replaced with *social exclusion*. As poverty is often a static condition, social exclusion is a process, where estrangement from the way of life that is

¹⁰⁴ Rauhala, Urho: Report 1991, 9.

¹⁰⁵ European Foundation for The Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.

considered normal happens at the same time in many dimensions of well being. Material poverty is one form of exclusion.¹⁰⁶

Exclusion processes are dynamic and multidimensional in character. They are not connected only to unemployment and/or low income, but also housing circumstances, education and possibilities for education, health and discrimination, nationality, and integration to local community. That is why prevention of and fighting against exclusion demands application of wide-ranging measures and uniting both economical and social measures. On European level this also means, that exclusion must always be handled in connection with European Union politics.¹⁰⁷ When it comes to the phenomena of marginalization and exclusion, those central factors of these phenomena people can only understand by working on them must be found. This way we can find clues on what to do to prevent, alleviate, and remove these problems.¹⁰⁸ An essential thing is cooperation over sector boundaries and administrative boundaries and coordinated measures. Another essential thing is activating local resources. Participation of excluded people themselves is important.

Using international comparison, Finland is one of the wealthy countries of the world. Finland has, especially after World War 2, been able to create a welfare state according to the Nordic model. In a welfare state society is like a guarantor against any risks that an individual may meet. Citizens of a welfare state are insured for birth, death, illness, old age, unemployment, and accidents. Big income transfers from one population group to another are so complex, that left hand does not always know what right hand does, or in other words, it is quite difficult to sum up the winners or losers of a welfare state, this means who gets paid and who pays. We have created a system and in many respects we are prisoners of that system. Preparing for risks costs money and we have chosen the role of a payer. We prefer to pay rather than live in uncertainty when meeting with different adversities or natural weakness that is a part of human life. Characteristic to Finland are wide housing, social, and health care services, where the central principle, as with income transfers too, has been equal treatment of citizens and equality between genders. Manpower planning is tightly connected to public services.

4.2. Education of the Roma

As early as in the era of industrialization, and also later as society changed to a fast-paced information society, traditional vocations have no longer provided a living. This finally led to unemployment of the Roma, too. Many new professions have come about and the old ones have been left unused, along with mechanization, for example. Insufficient basic education, lack of professional skills, labour market becoming more inaccessible, special characteristics of Romani culture, and discrimination from majority population are reasons that make it difficult for the Roma to find employment.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Syrjäytymisen estäminen, hallinnonalan toimenpidekokonaisuus, Sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden ministeriön monisteita 1998:5, 1. (Prevention of Marginalization, Measures of the Administrative Branch. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Duplicates 1998:5, 1.)

¹⁰⁷ Syrjäytyminen ja sosiaalityö Euroopassa - sosiaalisen osallisuuden edistäminen, IFSW EU Liaison Committee'n projektiraportti, Sosiaalityöntekijäin Liitto 1997, 17. (Marginalization and Social Work in Europe - Promoting Social Involvement. Committee Report of IFSW EU Liaison Committee. Association of Social Workers 1997.)

¹⁰⁸ Rauhala, Urho 1991:7, 4.

¹⁰⁹ Ollikainen, 1984.

4.2.1. Administrative Framework

Teaching administration has changed radically during the last few years. The roles of The Ministry of Education and National Board of Education have changed more towards a consultative role as decision making has been dispersed to educational institutions. The consequence of this is a decentralized decision making system that is harder to influence. From the perspective of Romani politics, it should be possible to influence the goals of teaching in a way that is in accordance with the goals of Romani politics. To prevent social exclusion of the Roma, The Ministry of Education and county government must influence educational authorities on municipal level. However, at this moment it is more difficult than in the past to make changes in local level, due to strengthening of municipal self-administration and state subsidy system.

Central administration of state can no more influence education arranged by municipalities and municipal federations, not the way it happened in the past. However, the quickly changing working life, new prerequisites of life, and strategies require constant training of people.

Goals of Cooperation in Training Romani Population

- a) Tight cooperation between the Roma and educational authorities so that necessary knowledge for working life is included in training schedules and curricula approved by teaching administration.*
- b) Developing and increasing the efficiency of cooperation in connection with reorganization of teaching administration and developing new forms of cooperation. Emphasizing the role of Ministry of Education in Romani affairs.*
- c) Increasing cooperation with working life to chart the needs for instruction and knowledge.*

Romani Education Unit in National Board of Education

Romani Education Unit has served in National Board of Education since February the 1st, 1994. It is placed in department of Swedish instruction, right within the authority of chief director. Romani Education Unit functions independently and it is financed by a state grant to further education. Part of the grant is directed to the education of the Roma. The activity is based on the opinions and decisions of Government and The Ministry of Education. These opinions and decisions are expressly about developing the education of Roma population and implementing their culture. Issues connected to the instruction of linguistic and cultural minorities have been recorded as a task in the working order of National Board of Education. An executive group, with representatives of the Roma in it, directs activities. The task of the executive group is to watch education issues of the Roma and to further confirm guidelines for action and yearly plan of action of the unit.

The task of Romani Education Unit is to develop and carry out education of Romani population on national level, and promote Romani language and culture. The tasks also cover instruction and information services. So the education unit offers seminars, courses, and conferences both to The Roma and to majority population. It also trains contact persons and it

has publishing activities. An example of publishing activities is the publication of their own bulletin "Latso Diives", and production of learning material.

The purpose of education is to provide facilities for the tasks of daily life, encourage and help young people to finish comprehensive school. Education also tries to improve the basic education and knowledge of society of adults, and through that, improve their situation in labour market. Thus education improves the facilities of Romani people to act as culture interpreters between the Roma and majority population. The goal of Romani Education Unit is to increase knowledge of Romani culture among majority population by organizing different events. The role of international activities keeps expanding as Finland has joined European Union.

However, lack of funding is obvious in the teaching sector also, although legislation provides chances for flexible arrangements that can be used to apply for additional funding. Discussion on values should be started immediately. What is saved in education will have to be paid for later on as increasing costs in social work. So it should be kept in mind that investing in education, starting from early age, will be worthwhile in the long run.¹¹⁰

4.2.2. Legislation

Racism and discrimination have given cause for developing yet more different international treaties and restrictions and legislation. They were tried to use to strengthen the identity of minorities and marginalized people, and to spread tolerance to different nations. It is mentioned in the basic rights section of Statute Book of Finland, that *people are equal in front of the law. It is not permitted to place anyone, without a just cause, in a different position on grounds of gender, age, origin, or such personal reason.*

However, minor changes in legislation are not sufficient to cause a major change in structural problems of society. Protection granted by law has been insufficient. Political representation to the Roma has not been guaranteed by changes in legislation, and participation of the Roma in social activities has not been increased by criminalization of discrimination. Economical and social disparity between the Roma and majority population is still great. There are problems connected to housing: unemployment, social problems, and low level of education. It is justified to state, that real acknowledgement of the Roma as a minority population happened as late as in the 1990's, concurrently with the Reform of Constitution in the year 1995.

When it comes to education, a crucial document is Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities that was ratified in European Council ministerial committee in November 10th 1994, and the Framework Convention came into force internationally on February 1st 1998. At that date the Framework Convention came into force in Finland, too. According to the Framework Convention, contracting parties take up the following measures, when necessary: *knowledge about culture, history, language, and religion of national minorities as well as majority population must be preserved.* In the 14th article the contracting partners commit themselves to acknowledge, that *"every person who belongs to a national*

¹¹⁰ Lillberg, Eine ja Salvia, Linda. Romanioppilas koulussa. Opetushallitus, Moniste 17/1997, 11. (Lillberg, Eine and Salvia, Linda. Romani Student at School. National Board on Education, Duplicate 17/1997, 11.)

minority, has the right to learn the language of that minority. In case there is a sufficient demand in areas with traditional minority population or with a significant number of people who belong to minority groups, contracting parties shall try, as far as possible, and within the framework of their educational organizations, to ensure that people who belong to these minorities have adequate possibilities to get instruction of minority language or instruction in that language. Paragraph 2 of this article shall be applied so that it will not influence learning of official language or instruction given in that language." European Council's definition of minority is discussed also in chapter 1.5.

Although the goal in both Reform of Constitution and reform of school legislation was equalization of education in different parts of the country, it is not happening, because Romani children are being taught Romani language as a native language only in a few municipalities. Although Government supports instruction of Romani language at schools, lack of resources has caused a situation where less than ten municipalities have included instruction of Romani language in teaching programmes at schools. County advisory boards on Romani affairs have made initiatives to start teaching Romani language at comprehensive schools. The advisory boards have also paid attention to getting school aides to Romani children in lower levels of comprehensive schools. There is also an attempt to get aides for Romani children in day care.

About 220 pupils out of 1.500 – 1.700 pupils under compulsory education in the year 1998 participated in instruction of Romani language in eight municipalities.³ There are several reasons for scarcity of pupils. The Roma live far apart from each other, and that is one reason the best possible solution for the pupils to get instruction of Romani language has not been found yet.

Working group of National Board of Education has drawn up an extensive memo and a proposal concerning the position of Romani language and culture in school organization of Finland. The proposal includes, among other things, an idea of a quota for the Roma in education of class teachers. The Ministry of Education has approved the vocational examination and special vocational examination of Romani culture counselor to be examinations meant in the Act on Vocational Examinations in the year 1997. In practice it is an examination of Romani language teacher and it is part of official examination organization in Finland. There are several factors that have impeded the instruction of Romani language, like cuts in the budgets of municipalities, lack of instructors, and insufficient training of instructors. Instruction of Romani language is presented extensively in chapter 2.1.

The Advisory Board on Romani Affairs has stated that statistics show that the Roma and their culture have not been subjected to such a research as, for example, Finnish Swedes, the Sami, Ingrians, or refugees, and that majority population has very little knowledge about the characteristics of Romani language. Part of the reason for this is that textbooks at schools do not contain much information about traditional minorities.

³ Suomen ensimmäinen raportti kansallisten vähemmistöjen suojelua koskevan puiteyleissopimuksen täytäntöönpanosta. (4/2/99). (Finland's First Report on the Implementation of Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities. 4/2/99.)

4.2.3. The Roma in Comprehensive School

Minority cultures must gain an equal position with majority population of society, so that they could be preserved in society. It is impossible to get further education and enter a profession without a good basic education. Opportunities for education must be accessible to all. Especially when it comes to Romani children, it is important that during the first years in lower levels of comprehensive school the basic skills of student are at least average, or preferably above average. However, nowadays classes are, regrettably, too often very big and that means there is no time or resources for individual instruction to students. The biggest problem of a Romani child during first school years seems to be connected to command of language and that exactly would demand individual instruction and a strong effort from teaching staff. Literature in Romani language should be developed also for the use of a student in lower levels of comprehensive school. Finnish Romani children do not have a childrens' Bible in Romani language, for example. Neither do they have any christian literature directed to children. The latest ABC-book in Romani language was published in the year 1995.

An unfortunately frequent occurrence is that a student just passes the lower level of comprehensive school along with the others, and problems start piling up on upper level. On upper level students are expected to have a degree of independent initiative and an ability to cooperate. However, at the same time a young person who is growing up meets an identity crisis, and motivation to do well at school might collapse. The students start to cut classes. Especially the development of Romani girls in age of puberty might be so quick, that going to school feels childish. This happens exactly at the age when the girls might make a choice between a Romani dress and the clothes majority population wears.

According to a research of *Eine Lillberg and Marja Eronen* (1995),¹¹¹ the seventh year of school is the time of peak dropout rate of Romani youth. Special attention should be paid to supporting Romani youth and their families just when they are about to enter upper levels of comprehensive school. Dropping out of comprehensive school blocks the way to further studies and it often prevents young people from getting working experience. A research done in the County of Turku and Pori (1990) showed that only one fourth of Romani students got a certificate of graduation from comprehensive school, and many of them got the certificate from special classes. One reason for the rate of school drop out might be that young Romani people become independent earlier than their peers in majority population do. The so-called youth is shorter among the Roma than in majority population. It takes only a short time from people to move on from childhood to adulthood, when they start families and build their homes. Education is not considered such an investment as majority population considers it to be. Of course it must be taken into account that many Romani children do not start comprehensive school at seven years of age, but later. It is understandable, if a young Romani, who is a couple of years older than classmates, feels himself an adult compared to the rest of the class.

After dropping out of comprehensive school, there are not many people who seek vocational training. In the end the sources of income for a young Roma might be income transfers and state support, like subsistence support. Doing business with social welfare office might already be a part of everyday life. A young person learns to be a client of social welfare

¹¹¹ Lillberg, Eine ja Eronen, Marja: Romaniväestön koulutustarvekartoitus 1995. (Lillberg, Eine and Eronen, Marja: Mapping on the Education Needs of Romani Population, 1995.)

office. However, in this situation it is justified to point out that the young person is excluded from education, working life, or from subsistence only according to the terms and norms of majority population. *It is very rare that a young Roma is excluded from his own social contacts. However, the few who do, can be met, for example, in Kerava juvenile prison.* The matter is clarified in chapter 4.8.2.1. "Criminality as A Social Issue".

The Roma need adapted and special education. It is important to provide that education and other supportive measures at the right time. Latest research shows that these special educational needs of the Roma should be paid extensive attention. Town of Jyväskylä in Central Finland has a project called "Aina aikuisesta ammattiin" (From Adulthood to Working Life). Most Romani children in the project attended regular classes at comprehensive school. The project did a research and sent out 1.000 inquiries, out of which 650 were returned. There are 233 students in Jyväskylä, Helsinki, and Vaasa. Out of these 233 students as many as 178 students attend regular classes at comprehensive school. Sixty students went to upper level, and forty of them were in regular classes. That means 173 students went to lower level of comprehensive school.¹¹² It is interesting to note that there were 173 students on lower level, but only 60 students on upper level. Where do all of those 113 Romani students disappear? As the sample was quite large, variations of birth rate and migration alone do not explain it. Students are moved up from lower level to upper level, and in this case there is a big difference between upper and lower levels. It is hard to say what role does dropping out of school play here, but it looks like it is a significant reason.

According to the research, adapted education is used. Adapted education means that instruction is adapted to suit the needs of an individual student. Teaching programme is smaller and requirements are lower than in regular instruction. As time goes on, adapted education is no more fully efficient, but the wants and needs of a child must be paid attention to right in the beginning of school. Almost all children who received adapted education in this project had changed to it in the beginning of their school attendance. A student often starts adapted education due to learning problems. An expert makes decision.

According to research, special education is not common among Romani children, especially on lower levels of comprehensive school. If a child is not transferred to a special education class during the first years of school, problems surface a few years after that, as the previous researches showed, often when moving up to upper levels. Expert decisions are often made on transferring a student to special education. Initiative from school and home may also result in a child being transferred to special education. Increasing attention must be paid to these transfers to special education and to their necessity. Statements of the reasons must be standardized. *Romani children must be given personal, separate instruction, taking into account their Romani background.* Special education is effective, with sufficient effort put into it, but unnecessary transfers to special education must not happen. Careful consideration must be used when doing these transfers. In the town of Pori, for example, students are no more transferred to special education; personal teaching plans are favored. There is room for difference. School attendance of Romani students is in control in Pori. Students go to school and their situation is supervised through a personal teaching plan. It has required efforts from all partners involved to reach this situation. In addition to headmasters, all staff in Pori in daycare and at schools who are in contact with or teach Romani children and youth has been trained. Information meetings and consultation has been arranged for them. In addition to that, a Romani curator worked in town, and a personal assistant who was a Roma. Free time

¹¹² Välimäki 1998.

activities have been arranged for the Roma and a sewing course will be arranged for Romani women, funding for the course comes from employment authorities.

Should a Romani child be integrated, during comprehensive school, in the same class with majority population, or should so-called Romani student classes be set up, so that all Romani children at the same school would belong to the same group? Integration has been noticed to be a good teaching method in Mikkola comprehensive school in the town of Vantaa, where Romani children are integrated in regular classes with their peers.¹¹³ However, Romani children are given instruction of Romani language, so that means the students have a chance to work in their own group. So these lessons of Romani language also act as a positive encouragement for development of a child's own identity. Own culture grows and becomes strong abreast with the culture of majority population. In the Mikkola school in Vantaa Romani students do not differ from the other students as a special group. On the other hand it must be noted that many other nationalities and cultures are represented in the Mikkola school. It should also be mentioned that the school has three teachers of Romani language, who teach at several schools during school term. These teachers act as curators between school and home, so the school gains more knowledge about Romani culture and customs. Language teachers bring knowledge about school to homes, since most Romani families lack tradition of education. Parents of children have not necessarily finished comprehensive school in their youth, or they do not appreciate education, like majority population uses to do. In the end only a minor part of Romani children have a really limited intelligence.

Representatives of Romani culture are needed both as language teachers and as curators, so there are grounds for encouraging young students to study education and social work.

National Board of Education founded a working group in 1998 to plan curricula for the vocational examination and special vocational examination of Romani culture counselor. The Ministry of Education approved the examinations in a 1997 Law on Vocational Examinations. Job description of Romani culture counselor will be extensive so that it covers the sectors of early education, education, social work, culture, and housing.¹¹⁴

New Act on Comprehensive School gives a student a chance to proceed at the pace of a personal curriculum. This is a very useful method for Romani students, who often move from one place to another with their families. They move often compared to majority population. School attendance is not regular. New school perhaps does not know exactly what the Romani child has been taught.

*It would be convenient, if Romani student had a so-called study book where the courses the student has taken so far are recorded. The study book would be available for reference as the student moves again.*¹¹⁵

4.2.4. The Roma in Higher Secondary School and Vocational Schools, Adult Education of the Roma

Traditional trades of the Roma have always been trades connected to horsekeeping and handicrafts. Working hours has been quite flexible in these trades, and the work has been independent. This trend is obvious in Romani youth of modern times, too. Trades that require

¹¹³ The Rapporteurs visited Mikkola School 19.5.1999.

¹¹⁴ Proposal of National Board of Education Working Group to the Ministry of Education 1997.

¹¹⁵ Häti 1999.

handiness and independence are popular. The popularity of private entrepreneurship is on the rise too. This means that these days a young Roma prefers to go to a vocational school after lower levels of comprehensive school, rather than going to higher secondary school.

A higher secondary school of the Roma was opened in 1998 in Czech Republic, near Prague. As far as is known, there is no other similar educational establishment in Europe.¹¹⁶ The goal of the school is to train Romani students to become social workers among their own people. Romani people's own higher secondary school is in Czech Republic a big improvement in the field of education of the Roma, but on the other hand, it also gives occasion to speculation. Is Romani people's own secondary high school needed? Would it not be profitable to go to school together with other students, and is it a good idea to train the Roma to become social workers only for the Roma? In spite of culture it is good that the Roma work in the field of social work, but they should also be active among majority population. In addition to social skills, they would provide public with information about their culture and customs. The Roma must not act as their own, separate group from society, but as integrated to the society they live in.

According to Romani Missio, out of all Romani students in Finland, about 10 students enter secondary high school yearly, and 5 students enter university.

Romano Missio gives out educational grants. Based on the amount of these grants, it is noticeable that the Roma understand the importance of education and they understand the chances education brings along. In the year 1998 the amount of educational grants given was 80, and by the time of writing this report, in May 1999, there were already 36 grants that had been given. On the other hand, it must be kept in mind that lots of people do not belong to this group, for example those who have the possibility to get support from employment authorities, so the numbers could be even higher.

According to a mapping on the educational needs of the Roma done by *Eine Lillberg and Marja Eronen* in 1995, about one third of the people who had responded, said they want vocational training. About half of the respondents estimated, that they have not received enough information about education possibilities. Thirty percent of the respondents wanted training that would qualify them to work in the field of social work and health, ten percent wanted training in business administration, and nine percent wanted training in transport. One fourth wanted some other kind of training. The vocations at the top of wish list were: sewer, teacher, youth counselor, social worker, chef, cook, truck driver, and private entrepreneur.¹¹⁷

Vocational training was first offered to the Roma in 1979. Instruction was organized in the field of keeping horses and training horse for trotting races. Both things had always belonged closely to the life of the Roma. Instruction on sewing national costumes and instruction on doing handicraft connected to Romani culture started at that time, too. Courses have been organized in different locations all over Finland and they lasted approximately 4,7 months. Premises of vocational schools, universities, and colleges were used as classrooms. During the years 1979 – 1989 the Roma were offered 45 courses, and about 450 Roma attended.¹¹⁸ The goals in adult education are based on the needs and life situations of adults. Everyone is offered a chance to gain sufficient knowledge to participate in working life, social life, and culture. Another goal that is attempted to reach by offering education is to influence the

¹¹⁶ Romano Boodos 1/99, 4, publication of Romano Missio.

¹¹⁷ The same.

¹¹⁸ Pellinen, Mervi 1993.

attitudes of elderly people so that they would lose some of their suspicions about education, and adopt a more positive attitude towards it.

In many education projects of several cooperating partners the goal is in preventing long-term unemployment and youth unemployment of the Roma, and through that, the goal is also in preventing exclusion of people. A new chance is given, in spite of illiteracy or dropping out of school. There are mainly two types of education provided by labour services: general and special. Special education is planned for a certain group, whereas general education is open for all. Special education makes it possible to change studying periods and the contents of studies to reach and secure the goals of studies. Planning of education provided by employment services is based on educational needs of labour force, and on manpower needs of employees. However, as the education is planned, Romani people's own interests must be considered. Seeking education is strongly connected to personal orientation. In addition to that, teaching methods should be taken into account: for example, a method that offers both classroom work and independent work suits to those people who have a family and a job.

Civic colleges and folk high schools are very suitable for such adult education that is specially directed to the Roma. Instruction is important especially for such Romani people, who have not completed compulsory education. The goal of the instruction is primarily to obtain reading, writing and math skills, and to complete compulsory education. On the other hand, it is important to learn Romani language and culture. It was also noted necessary to organize, for the Roma, orientation courses related to civics. The courses should be organized in the place of residence of the Roma. Civic colleges could extend their instruction to cover prisons, too. In prisons there are some Romani people, who are oriented to learn how to read. Those Romani people need such instruction, that they can follow it in spite of shortcomings in their education.

It should be emphasized that the Roma need training in computers. In our fast-paced society, the biggest part of information is passed daily through computers. A computer is a data bank. The Roma must be organized instruction in the use and command of Internet. By using Internet a Roma learns to know the structure of our society, at the same time. Also many workplaces nowadays require computer knowledge.

"Romako Finland" is one education project going on right now. Operation period of the project is 3.8.1998 – 31.12.2000. The Ministry of Labour covers sixty percent of the costs, and European Social Fund covers forty percent. Tuusula labour office is the organization that is responsible for the project in the whole country. Tuusula labour office makes decisions on what are suitable institutions for training, based on their applications. The goal is 130 people participating in different activities. The activities are education offered by employment services, and supported employment. This education is directed to unemployed Roma, primarily in the age bracket of 25 – 55, who want to get an education or who want a job. People apply for the project through employment office. As examples of what possibilities Romako Finland can offer, are completion of compulsory education, completion of vocational training totally or partly, finding employment, or finding a training place through practical training, strengthening reading and writing skills, and studying Romani language and culture. The training may last eight months at the most. The goal of these activities is to improve the situation of people who have been unemployed for a long time or who are about to be excluded so that 50 percent of the participants find a job or a student place, and 95 percent completes the program and gets a certificate.

At the moment the number of participants in Romako Finland is 163, and 14 participants have dropped out. Quantitative goals were exceeded, but the ambitious goal of 95 percent completing the program was not reached. Romani people's great interest to participate in the education and to get a vocation can be considered the most outstanding point of the project. Romako offers, in addition to completing compulsory education, opportunities to take a degree in practical nursing, hairdressing, or in counseling young people. There is also an opportunity to take basic courses required for a degree, and continue that later.

Adult education offers the Roma an opportunity to reach an equal position with majority population by obtaining a vocation. Getting a vocation and a job becomes actual after maturity reached at a young age, and after they have set up a family and home. A grown up Roma might then have the time and interest for education. However, courses and training should be planned with care. Every course to be implemented is an answerable unit, where the parties implementing the instruction answer for the economical and qualitative results. The instruction must guarantee the participants a vocation. Planned schedule must not be too tight, because it is not possible to acquire qualifications required for a vocation during the short time the course lasts. Students for the courses of the Roma usually come from all over the country, so The Ministry of Education should centralize funding for the education of the Roma. The funds of labour districts are meant for the general educational needs of the districts.

The integration of the Roma into Finnish society can come true only if their children are successfully raised and educated, and if vocational training is organized for young people. However, the purpose of this kind of integration must not be assimilation of the Roma, or alienating them from their own culture. Such teaching and training methods, that take into account the special characteristics of the life and language of the Roma, must be given first priority. Romani language and culture, and their social characteristics must be included in those projects of governments and European Union, that attempt to promote the multiplicity of cultures on all levels of education. An important step in this work is to promote the use of suitable mechanisms in advanced education, and the use of information networks, for example Socrates program.

4.2.5. What Must Be Taken into Consideration

Due to economical situation of our society, education is often subjected to budget cuts. It is imperative that a discussion on the budget cuts is started. What is saved in education, will have to be paid back later as increasing costs in social welfare services, so it should be kept in mind that investments in education, starting from primary education, is profitable in the long run.

Grants to be used for education should be directed effectively. Courses organized for the Roma are usually more expensive than the average, and that means funding must be directed effectively so that goals can be reached. Including the Roma in the planning of education guarantees the education meets existing needs, especially when the education is implemented in way that takes into consideration Romani people's own interests. Expertise on the special needs of students must be noted.

Paying attention to a cultural minority in education can be taken up with the help of a minority group representative. The number of minority group members accepted to teacher training must be increased. That is how knowledge about minority cultures spreads out and tolerance increases. An employee representing a minority group acts as a cultural link to a child, when it comes to the language of the minority. Exposing children to the minority language as early as in primary education or in day care is a good means to preserve a distinguished, old language.

Home and school must be in cooperation. In case Romani homes do not know what happens at school, a contact person is needed to act as a link between school and home. A representative of minority culture can act as a unique contact person and make information flow between school and home more effective. This way school and home can intervene as early as possible if the student starts to cut classes, or maybe it can be prevented.

A possibility for a quota system for the Roma should be investigated. The quota system would make further studies possible for the Roma. Secondary education of the Roma must be increased, too. The Roma must get into secondary schools to study abreast with young people of majority population. In case vocational courses of their own are organized for the Roma, the quality of those courses must be watched closely, so that it equals to other similar courses. Short courses do not provide anyone with an occupational title nor do they train anyone for a "real occupation", and thus they do not provide formal competence. The goal should be in getting training for certain occupations, so that people later would have a chance to get jobs that correspond to their occupational titles. Education that gives professional competence and a chance for further studies must be developed when planning the education of young Romani people. Special characteristics of Romani culture must be taken into consideration when education is planned and implemented.

Romani Education Unit in National Board of Education must hire a special education teacher for one or two years to investigate problems connected to schooling of Romani children, and to make a proposal to the prevention of the problems.

State grants must be directed to development of basic education and vocational training of the Roma to prevent exclusion of the Roma, and so that Finland can answer for the implementation of international treaties it has ratified, treaties concerning national minorities. national minorities.

Literacy campaigns must be organized for grown up Romani people. There are still illiterate people in Romani population, or people whose reading skills are very weak, or people who do not know how to write. The education needs of Romani people in prisons must not be forgotten either.

Instruction of Romani culture counselors must be extended. A Romani culture counselor can act as a cultural interpreter, teacher of Romani language, contact person, and as a curator. Romani culture counselor can also give information about Romani culture to day care personnel.

Generally agreed social goals of education of the Roma must be:

a) quantitatively and qualitatively sufficient staff to secure the education needs of the Roma;

- b) school officials must be ready to adapt flexibly to the requirements on knowledge and action principles required by new models of service production;*
- c) evaluation of and using the results of education, research, and development.*

4.3. Housing Needs and Housing Services

4.3.1. Background

No records are kept on the housing situation of the Roma, because Personal Data File Act (471/1987) forbids registering of delicate information. According to paragraph 6 of the said act, it is forbidden to collect or register delicate information. Personal information, that is meant to describe, among other things, ethnic origin, is considered to be delicate information. Information, which covers the whole country, on the housing circumstances of the Roma is most easily obtained from municipal housing authorities and social workers, and from Romani contact persons. Fortunately there are some studies available for this report: Ilkka Paulus: Romaniväestön asuntotilanne 1990-luvun puolivälissä, Ympäristöministeriö 1996 (Housing Conditions of The Roma in the Middle of the 1990's, The Ministry of the Environment 1996); Tuula Laukkanen: Asukasvalinta ja valintojen valvonta, Ympäristöministeriö 1998 (Selection of Residents and Supervision of the Selection Process, The Ministry of the Environment 1998); Asukasvalintatyöryhmän muistio, Ympäristöministeriö 1998 (Memo of working group supervising selection of residents, The Ministry of The Environment 1998); Pirjo Vesanen – Virpi Tiitinen: Ongelmia asunnottomuuden vähentämisessä, Ympäristöministeriö 1998 (Problems in Reducing Homelessness, The Ministry of the Environment 1998); Niemi, Helena: Mustalaisten asunto-olojen kehitys vuosina 1976 – 1979, mustalaisväestön erityisasuntolain vaikutusten tarkastelu, asuntohallitus, tutkimus- ja suunnitteluosasto, tutkimuksia ja selvityksiä 1981:1. Helsinki 1981 (Development of Housing Conditions of the Gypsies During the Years 1976 – 1979, Study of The Effects of Special Housing Statute of The Gypsy Population, National Housing Board, Department of Investigation and Planning, Studies and Inquiries 1981:1, Helsinki 1981); Tanner, Riikka: Mustalaisten asunto-olot. Selvitys puutteellisesti asuvista ja asunnottomista mustalaisista vuonna 1985. Sosiaalhallituksen raporttisarja Nro 5/1986. Helsinki 1986 (Housing Conditions of the Gypsies. A Study on Gypsies with Poor Housing Conditions or No Homes in 1985. Report of National Board of Social Welfare Number 5/1986. Helsinki 1986).

The goal of social policy in the 1960's was redistribution of wealth and maintaining a reasonable standard of living and social security. These goals were set according to the ideas of Pekka Kuusi, a Finnish social scientist who was especially influential in the 1960's. The purpose of everything was "the best interests of citizens". Radical movements were born, and people started to pursue equality policy. Working committee on social work wrote a memo, based on these ideas, in the 1970's. On the part of the Roma, concrete measures were taken by improving their weak housing conditions. According to studies, more than fifty percent of Romani population in our country experienced very poor housing conditions in the 1970's, or they were homeless. Improving housing conditions was considered, according to the spirit of that time, the prerequisite for solving other problems connected to the living conditions of the Roma. A home in itself is important, although it cannot alone solve the other problems. However, it creates a base for new development. Romani issue took shape as a housing issue, and in 1975 a Temporary Act on Housing and a special funding system were enacted. The purpose was, after special measures, to take care of Romani people's housing conditions in

connection with general development of housing. Act on improving the housing conditions of the Roma (713/75) came into force in the beginning of 1976, and the purpose was to bring the housing conditions of the Roma to same level with majority population by the end of 1980. However, the period of validity of the act was continued for a year, so that the goal could be reached.

Special act on housing is a good example of a special act directed to an ethnic group. The act allows privileges to that group, placing it in a special situation compared to other population groups. Special treatment is both an advantage and a disadvantage. The advantage is, of course, that getting a possible residence is easier than in the past. The disadvantage is buildup of prejudice, envy, and patronage directed to minority group. In connection of Reform of Constitution in Finland in 1995, a so-called positive discrimination was stated possible. Positive discrimination means allowing a privilege to a certain minority group, without violating the principle of equality.

Special act on housing obliged municipalities see to it that the housing conditions of the Roma living in the municipality were improved. Municipalities were required to give an annual report on the housing conditions of the Roma, and produce a detailed plan to improve the housing conditions. Special loans included in the act could be granted at an inexpensive interest rate both for an individual Romani person to get, build, or repair a residence of his own, and the loans could be granted for municipalities to obtain, build, or repair rental flats for the Roma.

Special act on housing was implemented in the years 1976 – 1981 in such a way, that the housing conditions of over 600 Romani households were improved. More than 400 households benefitted from loans granted for the Roma to get freehold flats. In addition that, municipalities got about 200 rental flats for the Roma.¹¹⁹ The flats obtained by the municipalities were directed only for the Roma, and the state-granted loans were not to be repaid as long as the Roma lived in those flats. However, municipalities were not too eager to get loans for this purpose, although loan terms were favourable, because the use of the loans was limited.

However, the housing conditions of the Roma improved notably with the help of special legislation. An estimate in the beginning of 1981 was that the part of Romani households living in poor housing conditions out of all the Roma would drop to ten percent, but studies showed that this estimate was too optimistic.¹²⁰ The measures were not directed to the Romani population with the poorest housing conditions. It happened quite often, that those Romani families who already lived quite well, received assistance, whereas almost half of the households living poorly were totally excluded from the measures.¹²¹ So the purpose of the act was not fully accomplished, not even as a temporary solution as it was originally planned.

The goal of Act on Improving Housing Conditions (919/85) was set on, after the model of social policy of the 1960's, securing a reasonable standard of housing and satisfaction to all individuals, families, and population groups. After the special act on housing, housing issues of the Roma were handled, in the 1980's and 1990's, mainly through the development of housing conditions by general housing policy. UN International Year of the Homeless in 1987 brought up homelessness again into social discussion. Starting from that year, a special state

¹¹⁹ National Board on Housing 1988, 9-12; State Treasury 1996, Paulus 1996, 10-11.

¹²⁰ Tanner 1986, 5-6.

¹²¹ Niemi 1981, 41.

grant has been allocated annually for the use of municipalities and non-profit associations to provide and build rental flats for homeless households. In addition to special grants from The Ministry of the Environment, funding both from the Finnish Slot Machine Association and from The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health has been used to improve housing situation. According to evidence, this so-called purchase financing has not been directed to Romani population as expected. Municipalities and non-profit associations have not in the 1990's one single rental flat for the use of the Roma, although this form of financing is very advantageous.¹²²

The said special measures to improve housing conditions were put to use in the 1990's to improve the housing conditions of the Roma and refugees. At that time about one fifth of the Roma experienced poor housing conditions. Problems connected to housing were more common among the Roma than among the whole population on the average.¹²³

Increasing migration to southern Finland, to population centres, and especially to Helsinki metropolitan area is the factor behind the housing problems of the Roma. Migration meant relative decrease of available residences, in other words, shortage of rental flats. In addition to that, recession in the beginning of the 1990's brought to a standstill the market of freehold flats. There was no demand. The demand shifted to rental flats, and that raised the rents in housing market that was exempted from rent control. Public housing policy has not been able to fully secure the housing of people in the poorest financial standing. The problems apply especially to the Roma, who cannot get freehold flats or rental flats not under rent control, due to high prices and different guarantee requirements. That means Romani population is more dependent than other population on the support of society and on rental flats under rent control.

Many Romani people were not granted a special loan or did not know how to apply for it in due course. Out of the residences that were provided for the Roma by a special loan, 319 residences or 66 percent were no more used by the Roma in 1996. The Roma have either temporarily or permanently stopped using 53 flats or 27 percent of the rental flats municipalities provided for the Roma by special loans. Some Romani people have not been able to pay back their housing loans and they have had to sell their residences due to financial problems. According to the view of State Treasury, when the loans were granted, the financial standing of applicants was not scrutinized well enough. The new owner of the residences is almost every time someone else than a person who belongs to Romani population. This has happened in spite of the fact that the inexpensive loan could have been transferred to another Romani household. That means that most of the residences financed by special loans are lost from the use of the Roma. About every third housing loan that was left at the time of this survey had not been paid back in full. Majority of these loans will not be paid back according to State Treasury, so the Roma will discontinue the use of these residences in the future, too. An estimate after these experiences is that special loans to provide the Roma with freehold flats was not a very good idea. Financial resources of the Roma were insufficient to pay these residences, although loan terms were advantageous compared to common loan terms. In addition to that, the Roma feel that redemption procedure was unfair when redemption price was defined.

¹²² Housing Division in Finland 1993, 84; Paulus 1986, 34-35; Interview with Jorma Lauronen, Senior Inspector of State Housing Fund 3.5.1999.

¹²³ Tanner 1986; National Board on Housing 1988; Paulus, 15.

What was told in the previous paragraph about the Romani people's freehold flats financed by special loans being used by other people than the Roma can also be explained by the fact that it is very rare for any family to live for decades in the same flat. Needs of families change due to changes in the size of families, and there are other factors, too. It is natural to change home, and it has happened to many Romani people too. Due to the factors stated and due to small number of Romani population, there is not always a Roma available to move into a flat that is being sold by another Roma.

The rate the Roma have moved out of rental flats produced by municipalities is considerably lower than the move-out rate of freehold flats. Rental flats are a pretty good way to take care of the housing of the Roma, although on municipal level strict restrictions applied to special funding are considered problematic. The size of the flat has not always met the changing needs of Romani households, and the restrictions do not take into consideration some factors that are related to Romani culture and have an effect on the need for a flat. The special loan applies to one flat only and it cannot be transferred to another rental flat.

Total number of state-subsidized housing is about 360.000 residences, or about 15 percent of the total housing stock. Out of these residences, about 300.000 are regular rental flats, a little more than 40.000 are residences for the elderly, about 30.000 are student residences, and about 5.000 residences are meant for other special groups like homeless people, refugees, and the Roma. Municipal companies or corporations own more than 60 percent of state-subsidized housing. Non-profit associations like VVO-yhtymä Oy, Sato-yhtymä Oyj, Tarveasunnot Oy, YH-Rakennuttajat Oy, and Y-Säätiö, own about 8 percent of the residences.

There were more than 200.000 applicants for state-subsidized housing in 1997. About 72.000 households, or 35 percent of the applicants got a residence. The number of applicants for one residence that was built or for lease was 2 or 3 in the whole country, but in Helsinki metropolitan area the number was more than 6. In the previous year the corresponding numbers were in the whole country 3,2 and in Helsinki metropolitan area 4,8. Out of 52.000 applicants in Helsinki metropolitan area about 11.000 people or 22 percent of the applicants got a residence in 1997.

4.3.2. Romani Population in State-Subsidized Housing Market

About 1.700 Romani households, or about 5.000 people applied for state-subsidized housing in 1994. This means a major part of Romani people are on state-subsidized housing market. Former counties of Uusimaa and Häme had the highest number of Romani applicants, all together more than 60 percent out of all the Romani applicants in Finland. About 48 percent of Romani applicants got a state-subsidized rental flat, whereas the percentage of all people who got a residence at the same time was only 45 percent. So the Roma were in an equal situation in subsidized housing market. Helsinki attracts the greatest number of migrants, in proportion. Thirty five percent of the Romani households who had applied for state subsidized housing lived in Helsinki, whereas the proportion of Helsinki out of all households was 14 percent.

State subsidized rental flat was granted to 50 percent of Romani applicants in Uusimaa County and in Helsinki metropolitan area to 56 percent of applicants. Corresponding numbers for all applicants in Uusimaa was 39 percent and in Helsinki metropolitan area it was only

34 percent. So the Roma were very well represented when applicants were chosen. At this point it has to be stated, that *of course it was justified to grant the Roma a proportionally greater number of state subsidized rental flats, because their housing needs were bigger than other population groups' housing needs. More Romani people than other applicants were classified as urgent cases.*

A peculiar character in the housing of the Roma is that *it is extremely rare to find homeless Roma in shelters, because they are so close to their families, that there is always accommodation available in emergencies.*¹²⁴

According to a 1995 estimate, about 440 households out of 1.350 Romani households, who had applied for state-subsidized rental flat, belonged to first group in order of urgency. This means every third Romani household was in urgent need of a residence, and in this group nine out of ten applied for a residence in cities. Out of all the applicants for state-subsidized housing, the proportion of Roma in urgent need of housing (33 percent) was bigger than that of the whole group of applicants (25 percent) on the average. It looks like the Roma still have more housing problems than population on the average.

Romani applicants are concentrated in Helsinki metropolitan area and they are often in urgent need of housing. It looks like the housing needs of the Roma and their financial situation has been taken into consideration pretty well in the selection of residents to state subsidized rental flats. Romani applicants are often households with families, and their position in the selection process is usually a lot better than the position of small households. However, there are many problems in the selection of residents.

Problems connected with selection or residents and supervision are:

- passing people in the most urgent need of housing in the selection of residents,
- different selection processes by different owners in housing market,
- level of income restrictions
- paying attention to income of applicants in the selection process,
- problems connected with system of appeal
- problems of supervision.

Selection of residents has been researched lately. *Arto Laaninen* (1996) did his licentiate's dissertation on the waiting list for housing of a certain city. One of the most central results was that people who lived with someone, had jobs, and incomes a little above average, and who had moved out of flats in good condition, had the easiest access to state-subsidized housing owned by municipalities. People who spent the longest time in the waiting list were homeless, evicted, single, lived in poor housing conditions, and had the lowest incomes. Naturally, the housing stock available influenced the result: the greatest shortage everywhere is of small flats suitable for single applicants.¹²⁵ The same phenomenon came up earlier, in the research of *Jokinen and Juhila* (1991). They stated, among other things, that rental flats in good condition are rarely available for those applicants who are in the most difficult social situation.¹²⁶

Municipalities do not want unemployed people and people living on subsistence support as residents because they fear the extra costs these people might cause. So they are not favored

¹²⁴ Interview of Pirjo Vesanen, Chief Inspector in the Ministry of the Environment 3.5.1999.

¹²⁵ Report of Resident Selection Group, the Ministry of the Environment 1998.

¹²⁶ The same.

in selection of residents. It is hoped that these people would move to other municipalities. The municipalities even try to support the move to somewhere else. Especially state subsidized tenant houses are in a double role, because they, on one hand, must be self-supporting, and on the other hand, they must take social principles into consideration when selecting residents. Managers of state-subsidized tenant houses owned by municipalities and civic associations also have to think about business principles so the situation of the most marginalized people becomes more difficult. Other tenants also easily take a stand and put pressure on the manager. This has been especially clear in the settling of ethnic minorities and when people want to move from one municipality to another.

Ombudsman of Parliament has stated, in his decision on a lodged complaint, that principle of equality applies to all actions of public authorities, and it is forbidden to put anyone in an unequal situation. The complainant was a member of an ethnic minority who lived in another municipality, and the municipality he wanted move into did not give him a residence, on the basis that he belonged to Romani minority. Ombudsman of Parliament gave an admonition to the municipal manager for faulty procedure.

In principle, security for rent can be applied for as subsistence support, or as a loan from Takuu-Säätiö (a foundation that grants guarantees). It is the view of the Rapporteurs, that a prerequisite for a loan from Takuu-Säätiö is an estimate of the overall situation of the client, and an estimate about the client's ability to pay back the loan later. Takuu-Säätiö gives free advice in signing a lease.¹²⁷ Unpaid rents must be taken into account as precautional retrospective expenses, because many municipalities will not take people on their waiting lists if rents have been left unpaid or if there is no scheme of payment. Families with children are an exception.

Centralized application procedure makes it possible for authorities to put up applicants, and the owner then selects residents. There are many advantages to the centralized application procedure:

- the person who needs housing only needs to submit one application to apply for all residences that will become vacant or will be built;
- there is no problem with overlapping applications, and there will be no unnecessary selections. Municipality has detailed knowledge on supply and demand in the area;
- municipality can have a say on where tenants will be placed. This way a too one-sided population in any given tenant building can be prevented, and conscious measures against segregation can be taken up.

In case the application procedure for rental flats is decentralized, the consequence can be that people who belong to so-called special groups will have problems finding housing, or the housing will be centralized to municipality-owned tenant buildings. A municipality can choose either an active or a passive role in selecting residents. In an active role a municipality can use resident selection as a tool for housing policy. In a passive role the municipality only sees to it that regulations applied to resident selection are legal. Municipality has a monopoly on zoning, so the municipality can also use zoning to direct the quantity, quality, and placement of social rental housing. Municipality can also, in any stage of housing production, make conditions connected with selection of residents. For example, a tenancy agreement can include a condition according to which residents have to be selected in cooperation with authorities, or part of the flats must be submitted to municipal resident selection.

¹²⁷ They give advice in number 080098009 and it is recommended to call Takuu-Säätiö before signing a lease.

Migrants from Ingria, refugees, and the Roma want to move to growing centers of southern Finland, and especially to Helsinki metropolitan area. What would be a good population base, has been discussed often. Naturally, ownership and price of land have an effect on where state-subsidized housing is built, so financial factors are one issue that influences on social distribution of population. A municipality must try, as a part of housing policy, to obtain land that can be zoned to become a residential area. In big cities there is a risk of placing people in the lower income bracket to the same areas with inexpensive rental flats. When several people in the low income bracket, unemployed people, mental health survivors, and other special groups are placed in the same area, the risk is that the area becomes stigmatized and social problems reinforce each other.¹²⁸

Certain heterogeneity in population base is an advantage. That means social problems do not feed each other and are not centralized in a certain area. A versatile population base means a more peaceful environment and versatile services, for example if families with children and elderly people live in the same area. However, it is clear, that many refugees or people who belong to the same ethnic group, like to live near each other. It is easier to preserve the group's language and culture when contacts stay intact. Municipalities can also benefit if people live near each other: for example it is easier to provide services for a limited area. There are certain burdens between families both among the refugees and among the Roma, and that prevents some families from living near each other. Authorities must be aware of these limits. The contact person system makes this possible. *Population base can be, generally speaking, heterogenic, but it can include certain homogenic microareas, where common language and culture support life in a positive way.*

According to studies, clients in the lowest income bracket are selected to live in municipality-owned, state-subsidized rental flats, where as so-called non-profit associations get "good tenants" by checking credit references and demanding rent guarantees. Tenants can be selected also on grounds of the image of the association. Selecting tenants this way leads to too one-sided population base in some areas, and it leads to piling up of problems. People have complained about residents with foreign background being centralized too often to new residential areas. Tenants have demanded quotas to be fixed for foreigners and that the tenants should be allowed to decide freely, who gets the vacant flat. However, this is impossible to carry out due to the need to keep intimate information of the applicants confidential. In addition to that, there is reason to ask what kind of attitude would committees of tenant houses adopt towards ethnic minorities.

The problem in the appeal process to resident selection is that only cases than can be appealed are those when a municipality selects residents to state-subsidized rental flats. If the owner is someone else than a municipality, appeals cannot be filed. If a municipality does not make the actual decision, the applicant cannot appeal. Some municipalities have incorporated their tenant houses, and that means the municipality does not make decisions concerning resident selection, but the corporation makes them. However, The Ministry of the Environment has dealt with appeals concerning other than municipal resident selections, because the starting point of The Ministry has been that a municipality has an opportunity to influence resident selections through supervisory duty.

¹²⁸ The same.

So, there is no way of appeal and this causes problems to the people in the lowest income bracket, and to other marginalized groups, who should have a way of appeal to secure their rights. The situation is juridically obscure. If a municipality has supervision in advance and the municipality makes a decision, claim for correction can be filed for resident selections made by other parties than the municipality. After that a municipal appeal can be filed in county government.

According to studies, more than 90 percent of tenant houses owned by municipalities and other parties supervise resident selection. However, the problem is what is being supervised. That is to say the selections are approved in advance and afterwards and there are spot checks. In some places resident selection is not supervised at all. The supervision methods at use do not make it possible to see the actual list of applicants; it is not known if there are applicants in more urgent need than the selected tenants are. All selected residents might meet the criteria, but the order of preference cannot be checked. If supervision is limited to examination of income, the actual need for housing goes unnoticed.¹²⁹

Memo of Working Group on Resident Selection (The Ministry of the Environment) proposes the following measures to solve the housing problem:

The housing situation and special needs of the Roma shall be taken into consideration in the planning of measures of support of state housing policy. Regarding housing policy and plans of social welfare, municipalities must pay attention especially to improvement of housing situation of the Roma who are homeless or whose housing circumstances are very poor. Municipalities must also be prepared to allot residences to Romani people who suddenly become homeless or who return from abroad.

Municipalities could provide, build, or repair rental flats to the Roma with the help of new special housing law, or the Roma could provide or repair flats and build houses themselves.

Loans would be granted on the same principles as they were granted in the previous system, except limits for use and transfer of residences would correspond with present housing production law. The law could be in force for five years. Municipality would grant the loan. Special housing loan for Romani population should be used to provide, build, or repair about 700 residences for the Roma.

It is proposed that budget of state includes a separate allocation for the Roma. The allocation can be used to fund acquisition and repair of rental flats by municipalities, and it can be used to repair residences owned by the Roma. The allocation can be used to grant financial aid that could be 40 percent of total costs of the project.

4.3.3. Examples of Housing Problems of the Roma

1) Helsinki metropolitan area. A Romani family of five looked for a rental flat on free market. Both parents had jobs. The family called someone on grounds of a newspaper advertisement. The applicants gave the landlord all necessary data for checking employment and credit information. After checking the information the landlord approved the applicants

¹²⁹ Report of Working Group on Resident Selection, the Ministry of the Environment 1998.

on the phone. They agreed on showing of the flat and on signing a lease. In the showing it was apparent, that the applicant family belonged to Romani minority. The landlord firmly refused to sign a lease, and he expressed his disapproval at how the applicant family had cheated him by not telling him they belonged to an ethnic minority.¹³⁰

2) A young Romani family with a newborn child, living in a municipality in South Finland, applied for a state-subsidized rental flat. The family had been looking for a flat for a long time already. They lived with the husband's parents until the child was born. A period of modesty, ranging from one to three months, when a mother with a child does not join the social interaction of the community she lives in but concentrates on caring for the child, is a part of Romani culture. The municipality did not allot the family a flat, so the family appealed against the decision. The position of National Housing Board was that the municipality had no reason to refuse to allot the family a flat, especially because the young family had, for a long time, lived in the municipality with their own parents.

After the decision of the National Housing Board the Romani family was in contact with a housing authority of the municipality. The authority said he had talked to a deputy landlord in the municipality, and a flat is available. However, the rental flat available was selected, on purpose, from a storey that was right above a storey where another Romani family already lived. The landlord knew that a Romani family couldn't live above another Romani family due to concepts of purity and moral in their culture. The young Romani family was left without a flat and they lived for almost one and a half years with other Roma and their relatives. The child of the family was ill with a skin disease, and to treat the disease, in addition to other reasons, they would have needed a good residence.

3) Ten Romani families who lived in a small municipality near Helsinki, had for a long time applied to change residences or the young families had applied for state-subsidized rental flats owned by the municipality. However, a municipal housing authority did not consider the housing needs of the Roma as important on the plea that the municipality has many applicants on a waiting list. It appeared from the oral answer of the housing authority, that other applicants were more important to the municipality, because they were so-called well-off people and good taxpayers. Two Romani families living in the municipality were in urgent need of housing according to urgency classification given on housing. The Roma made a municipal initiative proposing that the municipality apply for interest subsidy loan of the state to provide residences for the Roma. The municipal initiative was approved and the housing authority of the municipality was given the task of applying for the loan, the grounds for the loan being the homeless and the Roma. A loan of 2,3 million Finnish markkas was granted. The municipality acquired two or three residences. The residences were rented to members of majority population, who had been evicted. The loan was not used to provide residences for the Roma living in the municipality, although the Roma even helped find suitable residences.

One of the Roma who lived in the said municipality was an unemployed horse trainer, whose family of four people lived in very close quarters. He proposed to the municipality, as justification for getting a residence, that the municipality acquires a farm house located in the area of the municipality, and then the municipality could rent the said house to the Romani family. This would have made it possible for the unemployed applicant to become self-employed by opening a horse stable that concentrates on horse management and training. However, the municipality did not consider the housing problems of the Roma to be

¹³⁰ Vuolasranta, Miranda: Muistio asukasvalinnoista 4.10.1998. (Vuolasranta, Miranda: Memo on Resident Selections 4.10.1998.)

important enough, but it returned the unused portion of subsidy loan of the state to State Treasury.

Romani families moving from one locality to another have an increasingly hard time finding housing, and this has increased to number of complaints and appeals submitted by the Roma. In many cases a municipality has justified not providing a residence by stating that the applicant belongs to Romani minority or is unemployed, and therefore will not bring tax revenues to the municipality, but causes extra costs.

4.3.4. Housing Issues: Special Characteristics of Romani Culture

Passage of time has brought some relief to the housing issues of the Roma. However, living in multi storey houses has brought along some new problems that hard to understand for an outsider, if there is no knowledge of the background. Some special characteristics are explained in the following:

If a Romani family is allotted a flat that is located directly above or below a flat where another Romani family already lives in, that is a problem. According to the rules of purity, morality, and customs of Romani culture, one Romani family cannot live above another Romani family.

Death of a family member may cause the Romani family to want to change residences quickly. The family will move out after a death in the family even in the case that the family member died somewhere else and not at home.

In case of Romani family living somewhere and ignoring the rule of purity, older Roma will not even visit them, not to mention moving into that place.

The housing needs of young Romani families become concrete when they have lived with their parents in the beginning of their marriage and then a child is born. According to Romani traditions, this situation requires that the young family moves out, for modesty and respect for older people.

Avoidance rule is an old legal practice of the Roma. It is a prevention mechanism of social conflicts. When Romani families are in dispute with each other, the situation is handled so that the family who started the dispute is obliged to move out of the locality, and thus avoid contact with the other family. This situation may cause friction between different municipalities, because the receiving municipality does not always want to receive a family that is obliged to move due to circumstances. The most difficult situations on field are just the so-called avoidance situations. The problems are the worst in small municipalities, which do not have such a wide choice of residences available as the larger population centres.

Due to the above-mentioned reasons, members of Romani culture ask permission of local Romani families before moving to a new locality. They usually contact the oldest person of the family, or nowadays they can contact Romani contact person in the municipality.¹³¹

¹³¹ Vuolasranta, Miranda: Muistio asukasvalinnoista 4.10.1998. (Vuolasranta, Miranda: Memo on Resident Selections 4.10.1998.)

4.3.5. Proposals for Action on Housing and Housing Policy¹³²

1. *Public housing policy must pay special attention to and take special measures to secure availability of housing to the Roma by increasing the production of state-subsidized rental housing. Municipalities must have a centralized application procedure. This means it will be easier to pay attention to where tenants are placed and segregation can be consciously prevented.*
2. *Municipalities should use measures of social policy to increase housing alternatives of the Roma. Municipalities should more effectively support the opportunities to provide housing for Romani population in privately financed housing market. Municipalities should also disseminate information about these opportunities.*
3. *Special characteristics and needs that apply to the housing culture and customs of Romani population must be taken into consideration, in addition to urgent need of housing, in the resident selection to state-subsidized rental flats and to residences financed with interest subsidy loans. (Constitution, paragraph 14) This requires, among other things, that public authorities are knowledgeable about Romani culture and it requires that the authorities establish functional relations with local Romani population. The Ministry of the Environment and other authorities responsible for public housing policy must, in cooperation with Romani population, draw up a guide about special characteristics and needs of Romani culture. The guide should be drawn for municipalities and other quarters responsible for housing.*
4. *Cooperation between different authorities, especially housing authorities and authorities responsible for social welfare services, is important in the selection of residents. For example, in sudden problem situations authorities must be able to cooperate over municipal borders.*
5. *Public discussions and information meetings on local housing issues must be arranged a couple of times in a year for the Roma.*
6. *Romani Education Unit in National Board of Education and an association of Romani contact persons, Ryhdys ry, have, during the last few years, trained Romani contact persons to work in municipalities. The contact persons have been volunteers, for the most part. The work has proven successful all over Finland. Developing Romani contact person activities in municipalities will benefit both housing authorities and Romani population. The contact person is considered important especially in handling the housing issues and problems of the Roma. The contact person can inform the Roma about housing issues, and he can offer help for example in writing applications, because many elderly Roma cannot read or write. Contact persons are representatives between the Roma and public authorities. They are also experts on Romani affairs and culture. Authorities can turn to them when they need information about the special characteristics of Romani culture. Nowadays the contact persons work mostly as volunteers. If the contact person activity is expanded, issues related to organizing and funding the activity will come up. An alternative in some municipalities has been to combine the positions of Romani language teacher and contact person so that the municipality hires a contact person to work in the*

¹³² The same.

municipality as a contact person and as a teacher in all daycare and in lower and upper levels of comprehensive school.

The Ministry of the Environment and Housing Fund must subscribe the contact persons in their mailing lists, so that they would be aware of all opportunities to fund housing, and they can inform the Roma and influence municipal decisions on housing policy.

7. *The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities provides training for municipal housing authorities. The training must include special characteristics of Romani culture and Romani people's need for housing.*
8. *The Ministry of the Environment required a 45 years restriction on the use of Romani residences. The period should be shortened, so that municipalities and civic organizations would have more interest in acquiring the said residences.*

4.4. Income Maintenance Benefit

Economical recession in the beginning of the 1990's put the systems of social policy in Finland to a test. Finland was able to prevent extensive spreading of poverty due to social policy. However, social services got two or three hundred thousand new clients during a few years. The group of clients who were granted unemployment security or subsistence support was the largest in numbers.

The recession caused poverty and social exclusion. The goal of Council of Europe is to research poverty and exclusion in Europe, to analyze the connection of poverty and exclusion with the implementation of basic rights, and to create concrete methods to prevent poverty and exclusion.

Poverty that is measured by income disappeared from Finland almost altogether during the years of economic growth in the 1980's. Only 3,3 percent of households had such a low income that they were classified as poor in 1990. This percentage has not changed in the 1990's, in spite of the recession and big changes in national economy. Researches on the quantity and quality of poverty often excluded those in the most marginalized situation, like homeless people, alcoholists, mental health survivors in outpatient care, and so on. This may make the results to be somewhat skewed. Of course, the indicators that are used in the research have an effect on the results.

An old wisdom of the Bible can be applied to poverty: the poor are always amongst us. No matter how wealthy society is, there are always families and individuals who are better off or worse off than their neighbour. Relative poverty has not disappeared from the world, even from affluent societies. However, the Finnish income equalization system with progressive taxing and income transfers has redistributed wealth, so disparity of incomes is smaller in Finland than in most other countries. However, disparity of income is on the rise in Helsinki metropolitan area, where it is bigger than elsewhere in Finland.

The gap between the rich and the poor is widening all over Europe. There are about 50 million people in Europe, who can be considered to live on the border of poverty or below it. Due to economical recession, the number of clients who were allotted subsistence support in the 1990's increased from 182.000 households to 350.000 households, or from 314.000

people to 610.000 people. The largest separate group living on subsistence support were those who were under 30 years old, the group numbered almost 50 percent of new clients. Clients of social services have become younger, but a new feature is the increasing number of elderly people who need help. The most common type of household receiving subsistence support is the group of single men, that means 36 percent. A typical client of social services is a single young person who lives in a rented flat, and gets labour market benefit. Often the clients have lots of problems: failing health, drugs, human relations, unemployment, and so on. Very often an insufficient unemployment security leads to application of subsistence support. Three fourth of people who have been unemployed for a long time, can be classified as socially excluded. Unfortunate factors in their background have piled up, from low level of education to different social problems. This marginalized group includes about 20 000 – 30 000 people.

Households got into debt during the economic recession of the 1990's. In the beginning of 1995 there were 85.000 households heavily in debt, and the average amount of debt was 170.000 Fmks. A separate law on restructuring private debts came into force in 1993. Approximately 50.000 private persons came under the law after 1993, and almost 200.000 families every year have negotiated with their bank about restructuring their loans. About one third of the people under restructuring of debts have serious social, financial, and health problems, that endanger the restructuring of debts. Sudden expenses, different crisis situations in families, and short employment relationships, and especially the increasing expenses of living in growing population centres have ruined people's chances of paying back their loans. People living on minimal unemployment security and people, who have been unemployed for a long time, have a hard time coping with daily costs of living.

Poverty in cities has come up in Finland more clearly than in the past, due to spreading of unemployment. There are some cities in Finland, where segregation can be seen. Unemployment rate in some suburbs can be as high as 40 percent. Segregation becomes stronger, if long-term unemployment is not reduced. There are also some districts of town, where ethnic structure is different.

Differences in the health of population groups have increased lately. The differences are connected with age, gender, marital position, place of residence, education, income, and unemployment. Use of alcohol, smoking, and eating habits are the factors where the greatest difference in the health of different socio-economic groups is shown. The way of life of lower socio-economic groups is more unhealthy than the way of life of upper socio-economic groups. Marital status has a strong effect on the death rate of Finnish men. Those who have families, live longer.

The number of children taken into custody that has gone up in the 1990's is an indicator of the emotional and financial problems families have. The situations of clients have become more difficult. It is a so-called triangle of deprivation: child custody, mental health problems, and substance abuse problems pile up.¹³³ The most deprived people are unemployed, single men, people living on subsistence support, young families with children, and chronically ill people. Substance abuse is often the factor behind exclusion and deprivation.¹³⁴

There are some population groups or areas at a great risk of exclusion. This can be concluded on the grounds of researches and studies. The groups at risk are:

❖ People who have been unemployed for a long time

¹³³ Syrjäytymisen estäminen, mt, 5-7. (Prevention of Marginalization, pages 5-7.)

¹³⁴ The same.

- ❖ People with mental health problems
- ❖ Children and young people living in vulnerable circumstances
- ❖ Disabled people
- ❖ Homeless people
- ❖ People with substance abuse problems
- ❖ People who are heavily in debt, people who are evicted
- ❖ People living in problematic areas

The Rapporteurs sent an inquiry to organizations, and they interviewed several people among the Roma and municipal authorities. The information gathered showed that *the Roma do not, as individuals, appear deviant when it comes to their income, because the group of people living on subsistence support in our society has grown so large*. The Roma merge into this group of clients who have got subsistence support for a long time. However, considering the situation relatively, there are more Romani people than members of majority population living on subsistence support. The reason for this is low level of education of the Roma makes it hard to find employment. The threshold to be crossed before entering labour market is too high for an ordinary Roma who dropped out of comprehensive school. However, society gives daily bread for the Roma in the form of subsistence support. The Roma are used to scanty life, so they do not consider themselves as dregs of society due to their scanty income, but they think that society has been able to help them.

It is the view of the Roma, that poor financial situation causes other problems, but subsistence support is considered as a normal source of income, it is like an advantage that has been gained.¹³⁵

The starting points of social and health policy have been all encompassing subsistence and service systems; not separate policies nor benefits tied to employment relationship. It has been clearly indicated that level and coverage of income transfers, this means social services too, are important. They have been crucial means to reduce poverty of different population groups. The benefits and services needed by special groups have been taken care of under common social services system. The economical recession of the 1990's created a new situation with the danger of a group of people, who are permanently marginalized or excluded, forming in society. This development can be fought by directing measures, with the help of a new law, to the groups at the greatest risk of exclusion and poverty. That is when we talk about tailored measures to prevent, alleviate, or remove certain problems of certain individuals or groups.

The Roma must be included when talking about groups in an extreme risk of exclusion and poverty. The solution lies in educating children and young people, if there is a will to stop Romani people's long-time standing as receivers of subsistence support.

It is clear, that the Roma belong to the population group with low income, since their unemployment rate is 56 percent, according to an inquiry. Their socio-economical position as a group deviates sharply from other population. Measures to provide equality for the whole population have been insufficient in this respect. The Roma have learned to use subsistence support, and it cannot be said, that there were beggars, or individual or families living in misery among the Roma. *The problem is not material misery but marginalization, which means poor health, poor housing, poor food, poor education, lack of strength to make*

¹³⁵ Inquiry of the Rapporteurs.

choices, problems in participating different activities of society, poor chances for hobbies, etc.

Sources of income in many Romani families are different subsidies, like child allowances, labour market benefit, and subsistence support. According to an inquiry done in 1969, only 16 percent of providers of Romani families were employed. More than half of the households were dependent on different income transfers and allowances. Temporary social assistance was given to 75 percent of Romani population. There are no studies on the present situation. According to an inquiry of county government of Uusimaa, two thirds of Romani families living in Uusimaa County got subsistence support; that is a lot more than the corresponding subsistence support of majority population.¹³⁶

There is no actual exclusion of the Roma in the sense that they were excluded from their own group. Community, family and extended family stay in touch with each other and they provide security. The Roma have to use the services of surrounding society, too. Finnish society helps the Roma in many ways, as it helps other citizens, but at the same time society sets limits and, in many ways, makes the life of the Roma more difficult.

Majority population might have strong prejudices towards marginalized or excluded people. Majority population can live just above the lowest income level, but it is afraid it will sink to the same low income level as clients who get allowances, or majority population can feel themselves discriminated against, because it does not get the same allowances and the same attention as clients of social services. This may lead to conflict, where people do not want to meet the dark side of society, this means we have a so-called *Nimby-issue* ("*not-in-my-backyard*" -issue). In Finland many people do not want Romani families as their neighbours, or they do not rent a flat to the Roma, in fear of a negative stigma. There might be a limit to what society can stand or what it is ready to accept. If this problem of rejection is not paid attention to, the Roma will also suffer from it. That is why different parties have to be considered in the integration process, or the weakest will suffer. *One possibility to approach other population is to offer services to them, too. For example, a childrens' home or day care centre of the Roma can admit other children, too.*

Poverty is, in spite of its changed nature, a mass phenomenon, that represents a structural feature of society. Society includes mechanisms, which create economical disparity, if the effects of those mechanisms are not restrained. Nowadays there are a group of central factors that, when it comes to economical subsistence and social problems, restrict participation in industrial life or prevent it altogether, like lack of education of the Roma, to name just one example. Alleviating the problem requires interfering in the structural features that cause frustration. Social mechanisms also act in a subjugating way. *Michel Foucault and Thomas Szasz* describe how medieval authorities punished poor people, sick people, and tramps as warning examples. There are similar features in modern society. In his article "The Uses of Poverty" *Herbert J. Gans* indicates thirteen ways to use poverty. The most central ways are as follows:¹³⁷

- 1) The existence of poverty ascertains that unpleasant jobs get done. (The Roma do not always agree to do all the jobs that authorities give them, for example because they cannot do it in a Romani dress and that offends majority population.)

¹³⁶ Välimäki, 1997.

¹³⁷ Urponen, 1982.

- 2) Poor people create jobs in the fields of providing services and protection. (Housing and social authorities, school authorities, and so on.)
- 3) Poor people stabilize markets by buying the unmarketable merchandise that does not suit to others. (The Roma are not admitted to all places that provide different services, and they are watched as potential thieves.)
- 4) Due to lack of power, poor people offer an opportunity for different social experimentations. (The Roma are afraid of personal data files.)
- 5) Poor people bolster the self-confidence and position of those who are better off. (The part of the media is important. The whole Romani population is stigmatized due a crime committed by one individual Roma.)
- 6) Poor people as targets of criticism help prop up the legitimacy of current norms. (All positive characteristics are attributed to Self; negative characteristics are attributed to The Other.)

Poor people have turned from majority into minority, but there are structural factors in society that still maintain poverty, at least relative form of poverty.

Reform of basic social security done in March 1998 applied to subsistence support, subsidized housing, unemployment security, and financial aid to students. There was a prospect to stop the growth of group of people living on subsistence support and make the group to become smaller in future. Another goal was to stop the growth of subsistence support expenses and shorten the time clients lived on subsistence support. There was also a prospect to make wage work more incentive, and increase the efforts of people living on subsistence support to curb their housing expenses. There was a significant decrement in the number of people living on subsistence support; 12,8 percent a month. The most significant decrement took place in families consisting of one or two providers and children. The more children in the family, the greater the decrement. One fourth of clients living on subsistence support were so-called permanent clients. The reform cut the norms of families with children, created a seven percent share of expenses the client himself is responsible for, and, on the other hand, the reform improved labour market benefit and housing support a little, especially housing support on the part of single and childless people was improved. The total influence of this reform was negative for households living on subsistence support. They lost something. The goal of the reform was to shift the emphasis from subsistence support to so-called primary benefits, and that goal was successfully met. The loss of income in families with many children was sometimes notable. Partial reform of housing support was to the benefit of single people and childless couples.¹³⁸

It is more common for Romani families than majority population families to have children, so the said reform of subsistence support and other supports has reduced the support the Roma get from society.

4.5. Social Services and Health Services

It is possible to promote rights of the Roma in social and health services using the same general means of social policy that are used to promote the rights of majority population: with the help of legislation, administration, planning, and financial support.

¹³⁸ Stakesin tiedote Nro 24/1999, 16.2.1999. (Notice of National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health, number 24/1999, 16.2.1999.)

Rule of equality in paragraph 5 of Constitution of Finland ensures equal treatment in social security system of Finland. The paragraph includes also prohibition of discrimination. According to the prohibition, it is forbidden to put anyone, without an acceptable reason, in an unequal position on the ground of gender, age, origin, language, religion, conviction, opinion, state of health, disability, or any personal reason, for example. However, the above-mentioned does not refer to any specific law, but it includes a more general obligation for legislators to develop legislation.

Most essential basic right provisions related to social security are collected in paragraph 15 of Constitution of Finland. According to the first moment of the paragraph, everyone who cannot get basic security required for worthwhile existence must be provided the right for basic living and caring. This kind of support includes, for example, providing housing and nutrition indispensable for maintaining health and viability.

According to moment 2 of the paragraph, law guarantees everyone the right for secure basic living. Unemployment, illness, inability to work, old age, birth of a child, and loss of a provider are typical situations, where an individual's possibilities of making a living are reduced. According to moment 3 of the paragraph, official authorities must secure, as the law provides, everyone with sufficient social services and health care services. According to the provision, official authorities must secure the accessibility of those services.

Municipalities, that represent the public sector in Finland, are obliged to provide people who live in the municipality with sufficient health services and social services, among other things. Municipalities have the right to collect taxes to fund these services. Both basic and special health care are, mostly, services provided by municipalities.

Social security of Finland is mostly based on place of residence. All people residing in Finland permanently have an individual right for social security benefits based on housing. Benefits included in social security based on place of residence are, among other things, health insurance with parental benefits, maternity allowance, child allowance, national pension insurance, disability allowances, a large part of rehabilitation, unemployment benefits, and public health care. For a person to receive daily unemployment allowance, he must, in addition to living in Finland, meet certain requirements. Employment pension legislation and insurances for accidents and occupational diseases are forms of social security that are based on work.

The starting point of social security is an individual right for a benefit. The position of the provider of the family does not influence the social security of family members.

As the reform of constitution states, social and health services must take into consideration the language and culture of the Roma. However, treatment both in outpatient care and in institutional care is provided on the terms of majority population. Law on Planning Social Care and Health Care and State Grant (1150/96) does not know the Roma. There are no provisions in legislation on social and health care that oblige public authorities to provide services in Romani language. Romani language is not used in social and health services, nor do all Roma have a good command of it, but use of Romani language, if the Roma want to do that, would comply the spirit of constitution.

Planning and funding services in Romani language is something yet to be accomplished by municipalities. Report of Education Committee, number 9/1993 vp states that the task of state is to take care of the linguistic multiplicity of minority groups. In regard to this task, The Ministry of Education, The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health,¹³⁹ and The Ministry of Labour have the responsibility of preventing exclusion and caring for minority cultures.

Training personnel that knows Romani language in the field of social and health care is the responsibility of The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, The Ministry of Education, and The Ministry of Labour. Romani youth and adults must be included, more than in the past, in the training of social and health care personnel, to improve services of Romani population and to prevent exclusion. What has been done until now is that the Roma were provided training in practical nursing as vocational training course for the unemployed. A better alternative is that the Roma take the same courses with other students. Organizers of the courses must have knowledge of Romani culture, so that problems in training Romani students in different age brackets, for example, can be avoided.

Strong support and security provided by family is a part of Romani culture. A study of elderly Roma showed that 81 percent of respondents, older Roma, had a family member who helped them, usually a daughter or children. A spouse was often mentioned, a son rarely. Grandchildren, daughters-in-law and sons-in law, siblings, and neighbours and friends helped too. Out of other helpers, the one that was most often mentioned was municipal home aid, who helped as often as a neighbour or a friend, that means one out of ten elderly Roma. Congregation and private service producers helped too. However, most of the time immediate family members helped. Almost every third person would be ready to accept municipal home help if necessary.¹⁴⁰

The Roma are hesitant to bring up their lack of knowledge about the customs of majority population, when they contact public authorities who provide social services and health services. This hesitation has a negative effect in interaction situations, unless professional personnel know how to take up a friendly and matter-of-fact attitude towards the Roma. It is not only the professional jargon of officials, but also the structure of social and health care that represents a whole strange world to the Roma. Customs and values are different. It is hard for a Roma to get a clear picture of the machinery of administration, and it is equally hard to picture his own possibilities to have an influence on this confusing bureaucracy. What is more, insufficient reading and writing skills come up when the Roma apply for services. Especially writing is hard for the Roma. Considering all this, submitting written applications for subsistence support, for example, is difficult for the Roma. Oral applications would be easier for the Roma. The Roma do not always know what social and health services are available and where and how to apply for the services. The entity of the service system is only partially comprehended and the system is perceived as difficult to understand. Hesitation and fear often make the situation to come to a head between an official and a Roma.

¹³⁹ K 4/1997 vp, 335.

¹⁴⁰ Välimäki, Sari, 25.

4.5.1. Day Care of Romani Children

Day Care

The Roma are citizens of Finland and that means they have the right to get the same education as majority population. Even now cultural differences and prejudices subject children and teenagers in comprehensive schools to such a stress that they may drop out. Older Romani people often have an insufficient facility for going to school, because they often have no reading or writing skills due to their educational background. This means children should be offered, at a very early stage, the linguistic and social skills they will need later in life. This would ensure equal opportunities between individuals in the beginning of comprehensive school.

Advisory Board on Romani Affairs stated back in the 1970's (it was then Advisory Board on Gypsy Affairs), that day care has a notable influence on the development of a Romani child, and Romani children's participation in day care activities, at least two year prior to entering school, should be encouraged even if there is no actual need for it.

Amendment of Children's Day-Care Act (1336/94) came into force as late as 1995. The decree provided juridical grounds for day care of Romani children. The decree requires that Finnish, Swedish, Sami language, Romani language, and sign language, and the language and culture of immigrants must be taken into consideration and it is supported in day care in cooperation with representatives of the cultures in question. The new decree has *not* brought about any measures in municipalities, nor has it increased cooperation of Romani population and day care centres.¹⁴¹ Training of day care personnel includes no knowledge of Romani culture nor is any emphasis put on cooperation with the Roma. According to an estimate, the number of Romani children in day care and preschool is relatively lower than the number of other children. Taking Romani language and culture into consideration during early education reduces prejudices by providing schools and day care centers with correct information. That would also promote amore positive attitude towards school in Romani homes, and it would be easier for Romani children to adjust themselves to school. Day care centers shall encourage Romani homes to contact the centers to start and develop the care of children.

*An alternative is a Roma who acts both as a teacher of Romani culture and as an assistant in educational institutions and takes turns working at all schools of a municipality. He can tour day care centres and comprehensive schools to tell about Romani culture, teach Romani language to Romani children, and to play, sing, and tell stories to them.*¹⁴²

According to a view of The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health Working Group on Early Education, *a person who has taken the new professional examination of Romani culture counselor, could act as a culture interpreter, teacher of Romani language, and as a contact person between day care centers and parents in the field of early education. The counselor could also train day care personnel to meet members of Romani culture.*¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Varhaiskasvatustyöryhmän muistio, STM:n työryhmämuistioita 1999:4, 40. (Memo of Working Group on Early Education. Group Memos of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 1999:4, 40.)

¹⁴² Romanilapsen maailma, Sosiaali- ja terveyshallitus, Raportteja 29/1991, 32. (World of a Romani Child, Social and Health Administration, Report 29/1991, 32.)

¹⁴³ Varhaiskasvatustyöryhmän muistio, mt., 40. (Memo of Working Group of Early Education, 40.)

The first of years of human development are a crucial time that later development builds on. During day care and preschool a child's vocabulary is developed, and the child is provided with facility to attend school, and the child is taught social skills. That means those children who have gone to day care centers or attended some similar activities, have an advantage when they go to school. The biggest problems of Romani children who enter school are command of Finnish and regularity of school attendance. That is why *it would be important, that a Romani child was in day care and that way developed his facility for school attendance.*

Minding children is a matter of honour for a woman in Romani culture. A child grows into surrounding culture, customs, and traditions. Romani culture lacks "tradition of education".¹⁴⁴ Due to that, it is a difficult task for many Romani parents to motivate their children to attending school. In addition to that, there might be some conflicting values between school and Romani culture. These conflict situations do not support Romani children's school attendance.¹⁴⁵ The goals of day care centers include many things that Romani culture respects as well, like good manners, respecting older people, and cleanliness.

However, day care and preschool offer an educational and a linguistic foundation. The importance of early education should be emphasized. Then *training of day care personnel, teachers, and kindergarten teachers is in a key position. The focus of that training should be shifted to the direction of cultural plurality.*¹⁴⁶ *Multicultural representation in day care centers would help children to understand and appreciate difference. Perhaps even Romani the attitude of Romani homes towards education would become more positive and Romani children would adjust themselves to school more easily.* As people learn to appreciate difference, they can also appreciate themselves and they can be proud, in a positive way, about their own roots.

A family must be seen as an entity, and that means the well being of an individual like a child depends on the situation of the family. *The best way to support a child is to support the child's family.* The task of day care is to support families *in raising children.* Day care should also support the growth and development of a child, taking into consideration cultural background and special characteristics of the child and family, and family and parents' opinion on childrearing should be respected.¹⁴⁷ Family is seen as a focus to which different supportive measures can be directed, with the help of early education, school, and mass communication. This kind of supportive measures are no threat parents with loss of parenthood. It should be kept in mind, that Romani homes have very little knowledge about the content of preschool and about the significance of preschool in preparing for comprehensive school.

Development of a small child is also a time when language skills develop. *Day care should offer to a child, who belongs to a minority culture, too, an opportunity to learn the language of the culture.* When a small child learns to speak, it is not merely a question of words, but it is a question of the meaning of those words, a question of world. World is organized and classified with the help of language. We all get colored eyeglasses with our native language, and the glasses define, in the beginning, what do we see in the world around us, and how do we relate to the world and to different parts of the world. A child learns to set limits and he

¹⁴⁴ Välimäki, Sari, 1993.

¹⁴⁵ The same.

¹⁴⁶ Romanilapsen maailma, 1991. (World of a Romani Child, 1991.)

¹⁴⁷ The same. Leponiemi, Raija, 21.

starts to feel connected to his own group, in other words, he gets a social identity. Language acts a child's tool for thinking, influencing, getting information, and passing information. Language acts also as a tool for starting social relationships, maintaining the relationships, and expressing emotions.¹⁴⁸

Day care centers shall take into consideration the ethnic background of children, and develop cooperation with parents of Romani children to support Romani language and culture in day care. Day care centers shall include parents of Romani children in the parents' council of the day care center and thus encourage them to bring up different subjects.

Day care centers shall employ a Roma, because leaving a Romani child to the care of a day care center without the presence of a grown up Roma equals to leaving the child in a drifting boat.

National plan on social and health care must take into account the social and health services of the Roma a means to prevent exclusion.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, and The Ministry of Education must cooperate so that the number of Romani people being trained for professions in social and health care can be increased.

Training in the field of social and health care must include a training period where the special characteristics of Romani culture are explained.

The Roma must be provided, in connection with training in civics, information on social and health care system.

Preschool

The most difficult problems of Romani children who enter school are command of Finnish and regularity of school attendance. Thus it would be important for a Romani child to attend preschool. By attending preschool the child could develop a facility for schooling. Preschool must take into account Romani culture, too in its teaching programme.

It is also very important to produce literature about Romani culture in Finnish to children of majority population. School may provide information about distant original tribes and eskimos, but local society is not fully known.¹⁴⁹ Romani children are often subjected to discrimination, because their customs are not known. All unknown is always strange, and people cannot appreciate difference without knowledge. A Finnish Romani child badly needs experiences, that the culture the child represents is valuable and acceptable.

Representatives of disabled people should also be taken into consideration in preschool teaching. It is still not possible to get material on Romani culture, that would be accessible for disabled children. For example there is no material in Finland about Romani culture in braille. Schools have not paid attention to disabled Romani children either.

So there is no preschool material about Romani culture in Finland. An extensive and coherent early education material package should be planned.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ The same. Selokoski, Inga 36-37.

¹⁴⁹ Inga Angersaari kirje Väinö Lindbergille toukokuussa 1999. (Irja Angersaari: Letter to Väinö Lindberg in May 1999.)

¹⁵⁰ The same.

4.6. Position of Romani Senior Citizens

Old age is not a permanent concept, but it is always tied to situation, time, and place. Surrounding culture, history, tradition, and illnesses define what, at a given time, is old age and what is not. As people's life circumstances improve, and as medicine develops, human life span has become longer. On part of majority population, a sixty-five-year-old is not yet an old person, but nowadays researches of the field consider actual old age to start at about 80 years. Instead of that, old age comes earlier, in a way, in Romani culture.

For the Roma old age does not mean only years, but it is reached after other stages in life. Instead of a course of one's life, human life is seen as a rising or growing segment of a line, where in every stage people attempt to meet the expectations connected to that age, with the help of dressing and behaviour norms. Some other cultures have a similar concept of continuity of life. So, in a way the surrounding culture expects an individual to act his age, that means responsibility is connected to aging. Unlike in majority culture, old age is not feared in Romani culture, but old age is a respectable and attainable quality. In a way it is not a question of old age, but life experience and command of traditions connected to age. A Romani senior citizen is the cornerstone of culture. Old people pass down wisdom, experience, and language to younger generation and thus guarantee the continuity of culture.

Living

According to a report of a two-year project done by *Sari Välimäki* to Romano Missio and county government of Central Finland, about three fourth of old women live alone, and a little over half old men live alone.¹⁵¹ However, older people usually seek their way to the vicinity of services or population centres. About the fourth of the respondents lived either in a suburb or a municipal center.

General housing situation of the Roma is discussed in detail in chapter 4.3. "Housing Needs and Housing Services". Income disparity between majority population and the Roma reflects, among other things, in the living of senior citizens. An attempt has been made, by special legislation, to secure the Roma, too, the best possible living circumstances. The most significant reform up to now was a law that was in force in 1976 – 1981. The goal of the law was to get the living circumstances of the Roma up to the same level with majority population. The implementation was the duty of municipalities. The law also included so-called special loans, that could be granted both to private Romani people to acquire a residence of their own, or to repair a residence, and loans could also be granted to municipalities to purchase rental flats or to repair residences for the use of the Roma. Nowadays state-subsidized housing is used to take care of the housing issues of the Roma. Municipalities also have the opportunity to apply for a loan to purchase rental flats from the existing housing stock for homeless people, refugees, and the Roma, but unfortunately this financing has not been used to house the Roma, the way it was expected to happen. (State Housing Board Act 1189/93). Majority of older Romani people depends on municipal rental flats. It is also common for Romani senior citizens to live in an owner-occupied flat purchased with Romani loan (special housing loan).

¹⁵¹ Välimäki, Sari: Romanivanhusten elinoloista Suomessa. 1997, 15. (Välimäki, Sari: On the Living Conditions of Elderly Roma in Finland. 1997, 15.)

As large part as 80 percent of majority population senior citizens live in owner-occupied residences. It is true that many of them live in the country, where living is cheaper than in cities.¹⁵² The most common period Romani senior citizens lived in their present residence was one to five years.¹⁵³ Generally speaking, it is rare for senior citizens to live in close quarters. However, it is more common in small municipalities than in cities.¹⁵⁴ Romani senior citizens who participated in the project had residences with all conveniences. For example, all residences had drain and water supply, and 73 percents of the respondents owned a TV.¹⁵⁵ According to *Tyrkkö* (1991), majority population usually considers insufficient conveniences of residences to be the problem of older people and their households who live in the country.

Subsistence

Committee on Goals and Strategies of Welfare for Senior Citizens in Finland had, in spring 1994, Gallup of Finland do a research on attitudes and opinions related to old age. The research was called "Vanhusbarometri" (Greybeard Barometer). Results of the research indicated that the majority of Finns classified senior citizens as having a reasonably good income. People want to maintain the level of subsistence by different pension systems and networks of public services.

The Roma have always lived at a low level of subsistence. The Roma used to do different jobs in the country, mostly related to horsekeeping and handicrafts. Industrialization brought along mass migration to cities. In cities many Romani families had to live in the outskirts of the city, and they finally drifted into poverty and exclusion. Nowadays, too, the sources of income in many Romani families are often allowances like child allowances and unemployment benefits. A 1989 research done in County of Uusimaa showed, that as many as two thirds of the Romani population living in Uusimaa got subsistence support. (County government of Uusimaa, 1989.)

The basis of subsistence for senior citizens in Finland is pension security. The subsistence of Romani senior citizens mainly consists of pensions and subsistence support. Pension often consists of employment pension and national pension; however, Romani senior citizens often do not have employment pensions, so the only source of income is national pension. The purpose of national pension is to guarantee a minimal income worthy of a human being, regardless of career. What is a sufficient income an individual can live on, is a subjective experience. Due to the small amount of national pension, almost half of Romani senior citizens live on subsistence support. Subsistence support has an immediate influence of living and getting services. Thus, subsistence is also connected to meeting physical and social needs. It is also a prerequisite for the independence, independent initiative, and partly also the security of a senior citizen.

Social Networks and Culture Awareness

The Roma want to keep their senior citizens in their society as long as possible, so they are unwilling to place older Romani people in nursing homes. Family takes care of senior

¹⁵² Välimäki, Sari 1997, 16.

¹⁵³ Välimäki, Sari 1997, 16.

¹⁵⁴ Tyrkkö 1991, 51.

¹⁵⁵ Välimäki, Sari 1997, 18-19.

citizens. Usually family and relatives take care of older people and children. Municipal home aid might also help older people. Although municipal service system is well developed in Finland, and the services cover a large segment of population, help given by family is still considered the best. Due to cuts in public sector, it might also be the only form of help available for older people in future. Volunteer work done by third sector might also be an alternative for help of family, but volunteer worker should be well aware of different cultures and their ways of action.

Due to the loneliness experienced by many older people, some places like Helsinki, Jyväskylä, and Vantaa organize recreational events in blocks of service flats for senior citizens. Organizers of recreational events also try to inform people about municipal services for senior citizens, since lack of information often leads to inactivity. The information should be given orally for people who cannot read. In addition to that, the recreational events are organized to maintain and increase contacts to other Romani senior citizens.

Romani senior citizens have a lot of knowledge to give about their own culture. That knowledge would help especially personnel who work in welfare for senior citizens and it would help the volunteers too. The Roma have not been willing to give information about their own culture; not until the last couple of decades. Concept of vulnerability has been in the background: the less majority cultures know about minorities, the harder it is for majority cultures to cause damage to minorities. Although libraries and different researches now provide information, the best source of information would be the older person. Members of the same culture do not always act in a completely similar way in similar situations, but individuality of people must be taken into account, too.

So, how to keep Romani senior citizens as a part of romani society involved and sharing everyday experiences? One alternative could be *two-family houses or community residences where different generations could live together*. Older people would not be so lonely anymore, since they could take care of their grandchildren, for example. This kind of *community living* could offer the older person new ideas and security. The community should be built so that it would be easy for an older person, too, to live there. Matters of health should be paid attention to, like physical ailments of romani senior citizens and the limitations the ailments cause. In a way it would be a return from the present *institutional care to old community care*, to a form of care where the whole human life span from birth to death would become visible again.

4.7. Special Characteristics of Health Care of the Roma

Poor financial situation of the Roma, and poor living circumstances have reflected and still reflect on the health of older generation and middle-aged generation. In proportion to majority population, the Roma have been ill more often, and their illnesses have been more serious. Due to their poor employment situation, even now the Roma are at a disadvantage, compared to majority population, when it comes to occupational health care. As a consequence, the Roma do not get preventive health care. The Roma become ill at a young age, because unhealthy diet and lack of exercise predispose people to illnesses. The Roma do not want to go to hospital, but they prefer to recover at home.

Due to lack of occupational health care, health centres must organize additional physical examinations for the Roma. Health centres must educate the Roma about healthy ways of life, like proper diet and exercise.

Every culture has its own attitude towards illness, health, and death. According to the Roma's idea of human beings, a human being is, in the first place, a part of his family, extended family, and community, and that defines his attitude towards health, illness, and death. A Roma considers himself healthy, if his illness or disability does not influence his life in a crucial way. Romani culture has different ways to support the person who has fallen ill, and his family. Creating a secure atmosphere has a positive effect in getting over the illness and it helps increase patient's independence in the recuperating stage.

Usually family takes care of ill and disabled people. Family prefers not to place ill or disabled people in institutions. In the past, when an older person became so ill, that he could no longer travel with his family, the family sought a "nursing home" for the older person, in the home of a family they knew. The family could be either a Romani family or a majority population family. Usually a family member stayed there to take care of the older person. The sick person was treated with curing herbs from nature. People were very careful about cleanness.

The Roma usually equate mental diseases with other illnesses, and the mental diseases are not considered as a stigma. However, mental diseases can become very painful problems for the mentally ill people themselves. Encounter of different cultures can cause problems in a psychiatric doctor - patient relationship. A person's estrangement from his social and cultural community can be in the background of a mental disorder. Many young people, who have fallen between two cultures and who cannot really identify with either one, often suffer from mental disorders.

Early care of disabled people must be taken into consideration in connection with health care of the Roma. Some Romani parents, who take care of their disabled child at home, probably cannot give their child enough stimuli. Parents of sick children should be informed about the importance of special schools, like schools of the deaf and schools of the blind, at an early stage when a child is taken to a child health centre.

The Roma think that a good nurse is professional, capable of cooperation, and friendly. The nurse can get along with the Roma by being warm and open. The Roma hope, that their cultural background is taken into consideration during the treatment. So the nurse needs proper knowledge to be able to develop proper attitude. Many nurses hesitate to, due to their lack of knowledge, approach Romani patients.¹⁵⁶

Objective information about ethnic minorities should be included in health care training. Characteristics of Romani culture should be explained during the training in appropriate contexts.

Traditions of purity and modesty of the Roma, and the importance of family and extended family can cause misunderstandings and problems. These situations should be discussed openly with the Roma.

¹⁵⁶ Romani ja terveystalvelut, opas terveydenhuollon ammattilaisille, Opetushallitus, Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö, 1998, Helsinki. (A Roma and Health Care Services. A Guide for Health Care Professionals. National Board of Education. Helsinki 1998.)

The Roma do not use health care services as often as majority population. They even rejected health care services in the past; part of the reason was lack of knowledge. *A discussion with a nurse* is often all that is needed when the Roma go to health centre. The concern of a Romani patient is often greater than his illness warrants. A doctor seeing a Romani patient often hears the ailments of the whole family at the same time. It is a good idea to tell a Roma who is making an appointment that the appointment is meant for only person, or the Roma can *make a longer appointment*. At the same time punctuality should be emphasized. Many Romani people are not happy to see a doctor alone. They might take several people along and one of them acts as a spokesperson. As a doctor writes a prescription, it would be good to make sure the Roma understand the dosage. It happens often that many Romani people, especially elderly people, do not read the prescription and take their medicine irregularly. Some people might stop taking medicine as soon as the symptoms have disappeared.

Young Roma do not discuss sexuality with their parents. *School nurse could act as a liaison between young Roma and teachers when it comes to issues related to puberty, because rules of modesty are only valid among the Roma themselves and young Roma can discuss sexuality with a school nurse who is a member of majority population.*

Experience shows that the Roma do not use the services of mother-child clinics as often as majority population. The Roma are not aware of the importance of child health centres; so they do not use their services. A pregnant Romani woman may visit the centre infrequently, maybe at the end of the pregnancy. Although pregnancy is not to be talked at the presence of an older Roma, it can be discussed with a professional person at the centre.

It is important that health care services include the Roma, too. Not all Romani people are under health care services at present. Health care services must provide Romani families proper information, for example through Romani organizations. It is important that Romani mothers are informed about importance of health care and proper diet during pregnancy, and the mothers should be instructed to avoid unnecessary physical exertion.

A Romani mother might show up in child health centre with all her children and she hopes that all the children were examined and treated during the same visit. Appointments at the child health centre might be broken. *If the centre cannot see a Romani mother due to her being late, it is a good idea to have the mother come back as soon as possible. If the new appointment is too far in future, it might be forgotten. Child health centre should make sure that Romani children are vaccinated regularly.*

When a Romani woman gives birth, another young woman or expectant woman's husband can be present. The husband and young Roma can visit the mother and child in a hospital. In the past it was a custom that when a mother went home with a newborn, she always had a helper, her husband or a friend, who did the housework and served food and drink to the mother. The custom is still followed in some families.

A Roma is usually seriously ill before he seeks help in a hospital. A big institution is experienced as oppressive and often the Roma has unpleasant experiences of a hospital. They might be afraid of infections and in addition to that: the Roma are separated from their families. What causes a lot of amazement in hospitals is *the great number of visitors to a Romani patient*. The Roma take it for granted that a large group, some of them from far away, goes to hospital to see the person who is ill. *The patient feels that he is not alone*. Often there is at least one family member or friend staying with the patient. Even if the patient were so ill

that no visitors were allowed, the Roma might spend their time on the hallways of the hospital, in cafeterias or parking places. This is a way to support the family and show sympathy.

It is a good idea to place a Romani patient in a single or double room, if possible and if the patient does not object, to avoid other patients being disturbed by the many visitors the Romani patient gets. It is also an advantage if the room is near the entrance of the hospital so that the visitors do not disturb hospital staff.

A booklet called *Romani ja terveyspalvelut (The Roma and Health Care Services)* is a good guide to health care professionals. Teaching Administration and Advisory Board on Romani Affairs published it in 1998. The Advisory Board is under The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The booklet offers information about usual situations where Romani people and health care professionals meet. The booklet provides suggestions on how to handle different situations.

4.8. Discrimination Experiences of Romani Population

4.8.1. Overview on Discrimination and Trust

Migration of population, movement of people from one place to another has, for thousands of years, influenced the life of individuals, groups and nations. This also applies to Europe at present time, where neonationalism makes people to migrate. People are subjected to interaction with *The Other* and so they form an image, beliefs and estimates of that Other. As a result of that process, people plan a strategy for interaction with the Other and they adopt an attitude towards that Other. The characteristics attributed to the Other reflect the counteracting characteristics of *Self*. For example the colonial policy of Great Britain was based on the supremacy and superiority of white man. However, the Other was not only created outside a national state, but also inside it. The Roma and the Jews can be mentioned as examples.¹⁵⁷

The fifth section of our constitution includes a general prohibition of discrimination. It is criminalized in paragraph 11, section 9 of criminal law. The law states that if a professional person or someone serving clients at work does not treat everyone equally, the reason being the person's race, origin, skin colour, sex, religion or any such reason, he is to pay a fine or he is to be imprisoned for no longer than six months. Paragraph 47, section 3 provides on discrimination at work.

After the 1995 reform of constitution paragraph 14 section 2 makes the following statement on civil rights: "The Sami as original people and the Roma and other groups have the right to maintain and develop their own language and culture." Reform of day-care decree came into force in 1.1.1995, and act on day care issued after that followed the decree. The act specified goals for educating children, and the goals were broadened by additional goals like supporting the language and culture of the Roma in cooperation with representatives of Romani culture. These rights have yet to be implemented in their full extent.

¹⁵⁷ Miles, Robert: Racism, Jyväskylä 1994, 25 and 62.

Finland has ratified two important international treaties securing minority rights. The first one is European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages that came into force in March 1998. Finland named Romani language a non-territorial minority language. Another treaty, signed by Finland in 1995, that is important to the Roma, is Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (by European Council), that came into force in February 1998. Finland named Romani population and the Sami traditional minority groups.¹⁵⁸ These laws are discussed in chapter 1.4.

Actually, the protection offered to the Roma by these laws and treaties is insufficient, because in practice the Roma meet with extensive discrimination in situations of daily life. Following the special characteristics of culture often leads, in practice, to discrimination and communication problems with public authorities. Use of traditional dresses by Romani women often leads to discrimination in employment situations, and it leads to racist reactions in public places. It can be considered that Romani women meet with *double discrimination* because of their sex and ethnic origin, and because they wear traditional dresses of their culture. Maintaining essential elements of their culture would require that society widely adopted a multicultural atmosphere, and Finland has not, until present day, been prepared for that.

Romani population has been heard, most of the time, in preparation of legislation, and during debate in committee in the parliament. Hearings have been implemented in different ways, but mostly it has happened through the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs.

Reform of constitution has two provisions, a provision that forbids discrimination (provision 5), and a provision that secures the language and culture of Romani population (provision 14). These provisions have, obviously, strengthened the position of minorities. However, the law has only been in force since 1.8.1995, so the real effect of the law cannot yet be estimated. The answer representatives of Romani population give when asked about discrimination is that in principle the law protects them against discrimination, but in practice the protection does not work. The greatest problem is; still, discrimination experienced by individual Romani people. It is usually not reported and it does not show in statistics. The Roma also meet with discrimination by official authorities, the discrimination shows itself in unwillingness to serve and advise. Still discrimination shows itself when the Roma are forbidden entrance to shops, restaurants, barbershops, hotels, and public recreation and camping grounds. The few discrimination cases tried in courts do not manifest the extent of the problem.

We can often classify discrimination experienced by the Roma under such a concept as "*discriminatory practice*", that covers all the cases where it is proved that a certain group is excluded from resources and services, and is unevenly represented in the hierarchy of classes. For example *the Roma are overrepresented in group of the unemployed and Romani children are overrepresented in observation classes or in other special classes at school*. The existence of discriminatory practice is inequality in society or in price awarding and it presupposes that there are decisions and processes that discriminate others. It also presupposes insufficiency: discriminatory and excluding measures require that there is a need to allocate insufficient resources and services. When there is a small number of residences, it is necessary to establish criteria to estimate the worth and suitability of people in selection of residents. These discriminatory practices do not always arise from skin color and negative attributes

¹⁵⁸ STM:n antama lausunto Ulkoasiainministeriölle 210/04/98. (Statement of Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 210/04/98.)

attached to it, but for example high unemployment rate or children's poor performance at school can be arisen from poor level of schooling or lack of parental approval of education. Discrimination based on race is not always the reason. However, it is possible that racism is the underlying reason for discriminatory practices.¹⁵⁹

The concept of discriminatory practices refers both to deliberate acts and to nondeliberate consequences, that create *structures of inequality*. Both the acts and the consequences prevent individuals from getting some services or reaching some positions, or they lead to their overrepresentation in some unapproved categories, like for example being subjected to police investigation. Both calculated attempts to create inequality, and such decisions and acts that create inequality without perpetrators being aware of it, are included. To be able to talk about *racism* in this context, the deed requires a process of racist thinking where a certain race is attributed negative characteristics and own race is attributed positive characteristics. Racism can appear in any environment: universities, factories, and offices. Racism in working class is explained by the negative experiences working class has got about capitalistic methods of production. Conclusion is that problems can be solved by excluding the Other.¹⁶⁰

*It is the understanding of Advisory Board on Romani Affairs, that legislation of Finland can be considered to formally offer sufficient guarantee of judicial relief against ethnic discrimination. However, in practice the protection offered by law is insufficient, since the Roma meet with discrimination every day. The Roma have bad experiences about the prejudice of police and the court system. This in part has weakened the Roma's trust in the said institutions and it causes that offences in cases of racism and discrimination are not always reported.*¹⁶¹

It is the view of Advisory Board on Romani Affairs, that it cannot be said that full and effective equality has realized, in the sense that Framework Convention article 4 requires, in business and in social life, and in cultural life between the Roma and majority population, although some progress has been made. For example, according to a mapping done by Romani Education Unit in 1995, the employment situation of the Roma is very difficult: as much as 56 % of respondents were unemployed.

Finland's periodic report on *discrimination* in *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* (SopS 1-2/1998) states that legislation of Finland can be considered to formally provide sufficient guarantee of judicial relief to prevent discrimination (constitution, paragraph 5 and criminal law, paragraph 9). The report of Finland also states that *in fact the protection offered by law is not always sufficient. Especially the Roma have met with discrimination in situations of daily life. According to statistics of the police, most racist discrimination offences are directed towards the Roma, although the Roma are eight times lesser in numbers compared to foreigners.*¹⁶² The Ministry of Labour appointed, in October 1st 1998, a steering group to a follow-up system on national racism and ethnic racism. The follow-up system is just being established. The purpose is to follow up racism directed to both new immigrant groups and to old ethnic minorities in different areas of society.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ Miles, Robert: Racism.

¹⁶⁰ The same.

¹⁶¹ RONK:n lausunto Ulkoasiainministeriölle 12.1.1999, Euroopan neuvoston vähemmistöjen suojelua koskeva puiteyleissopimus, 3. (Statement of Advisory Board on Romani Affairs to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 3.)

¹⁶² Finland's First Report... drafted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1999, 11.

¹⁶³ The same, pages 10-11.

Helsingin Sanomat, the largest newspaper in Finland, ran an article in its June 12 1998 issue about four Romani women who, as an experiment, tried to enter thirteen different restaurants in Helsinki metropolitan area. They were denied entrance to seven of these restaurants and they were admitted to only four restaurants without additional questions. It is prohibited to deny entrance to restaurants, nightclubs, or bars for reasons of ethnic origin, but it is difficult to prove the contravention of this prohibition.¹⁶⁴

According to law, restaurants and shops have to serve all clients on the same terms, and it is prohibited to discriminate because of place of origin. During the last few years, several cases of discrimination have appeared. There were five cases in Turku and two cases in Jyväskylä in 1996. There have been 12 cases of discrimination in Helsinki between 1997 – 1998.

Meeting Foreign Cultures

A working group of ministers, established to prevent racism, and chaired by Minister Claes Andersson, approved an action program in May 1996. The action program proposes that the attitudes of public authorities to ethnic issues should be researched. A research conducted in University of Joensuu, School of Social Sciences, "Vieraiden kulttuurien kohtaaminen viranomaistyössä"¹⁶⁵ (Meeting Foreign Cultures In The Position of Public Authority) is the first research in a series of many researches that the working group proposed. The research describes the experiences of frontier guards, police, social workers, employment authorities, and teachers in meeting different cultures. The research also describes the attitudes of public authorities towards immigrants and their introduction to Finland. The research was carried out in 1998 on national level, by sending out questionnaires by mail.

The research found that the attitudes of public authorities to immigrants are connected with not only their profession (nature of work) but also with their experiences in meeting immigrants: experiences of immigrants as clients and co-workers, and number and quality of contacts public authorities have with immigrants during their free time.

Different professionals had various experiences about immigrants. Teachers, social workers, and employment authorities had mostly professional experiences, while every third person in police force said they have negative experiences about immigrants. Therefore; different authorities had different attitudes to immigrants. Frontier guards and police had the most negative attitudes to foreigners and people with foreign background; and social workers and Swedish-speaking teachers had the most positive attitudes. A new occupational group is security guards in stores. The executors of this report have found their attitudes to the Roma to be negative when interviewing the guards.

The attitude public authorities adopt towards a different ethnic background also says something about their attitudes towards the Roma. On one hand the authorities see immigration as something that enriches Finnish culture, on the other hand they see it as a threat to peace in society. Especially police and frontier guards emphasized the risks that are brought about by increasing immigration.

¹⁶⁴ Ihmisoikeusliiton raportti helmikuu 1999, mt. Report of Finnish League for Human Rights, February 1999.

¹⁶⁵ Pitkänen, Pirkko - Kouko, Satu 1999.

Immigrants would be preferred to hold jobs that do not require high level education or language skills, like cleaners or taxi drivers. Authorities consider west Europeans, especially Scandinavians, and Ingrians to be the most welcome. The representatives of these groups are trusted the most. Most unwelcome groups are people coming from Middle East and North Africa, and Russians.

Almost all public authorities feel the need to improve their language skills. Especially social workers, employment authorities and police experience the difference of cultures to be a problem. They would like additional training in cultural practises of immigrants and also in the values and norms behind those practices.¹⁶⁶

Public authorities do not think foreigners who move to Finland need to become like the Finns, but they must be able to build their lives in Finland on the basis of their own cultures. However, immigrants must give up all practices that are in conflict with Finnish laws. In addition to that, they should learn Finnish or Swedish. A slight conflict between ideals and practice can be noted, for although the authorities favor positive special treatment in theory, in practice they do not want to put immigrants on the first place in employment situations or in allocating rental flats. In the same way only a minority of authorities is ready to grant political rights to foreigners who have lived in Finland for a few years.

Research shows that Finnish public authorities strongly favor tolerance and anti-racism activities. Majority of every authority group has the opinion that schools, churches, and other institutions of society should increase their participation in anti-racism work. The police are also expected to find more effective means to prevent racist crimes. Generally speaking the authorities consider that it would be necessary to develop activities to increase communication and understanding between people who come from different cultures.

As Finland is becoming more multicultural the situation of the Roma has become somewhat easier, because refugees and immigrants from far away cultures have arrived Finland. Their culture is even more different than the culture of the Roma.

The executors of Romani affairs asked the Roma to put *public authorities and other quarters* in order of quality according to how they treat the Roma:¹⁶⁸

1. church
2. municipality
3. politicians
4. ordinary people
5. judicial system
6. police
7. security guards in shopping malls

¹⁶⁶ The same, 3-4.

¹⁶⁸ Inquiry of the Rapporteurs.

4.8.2. Relations of Police and Judicial System to the Roma

4.8.2.1. Criminality as a Social Issue

Every community has a certain set of legal norms, which has been founded on the views of the community during a long stretch of time. Moral of a community has always been based on the necessity of existence and living. A community has to obey certain norms to survive. Community might expel, isolate, or punish in some other way those people who break these norms. The Roma have also developed their own legal and moral norms in their culture. The Roma themselves consider juvenile crime to be the most alarming issue, and they consider crime rates to be on par with the crime rate of majority population. Substance abuse is often connected with criminality, and it has increased alarmingly.¹⁶⁹

Misconducts in the community are handled inside Romani community, and the community decides on a punishment, which is usually a moral punishment, a certain kind of loss of reputation. Some people might consider this an insignificant punishment, but it really has a great impact. Conception of honor towards another Romani person is highly esteemed in Romani community. The reputation of the miscondactor's immediate family might also be tarnished due to the misconduct. This collective consequence of the misconduct arises from the norms of the community. The norms oblige members of the community to take responsibility for their family and their deeds.

The Roma do not experience imprisonment the same way as majority population, because they have been imprisoned for breaking the rules of majority population, not their own rules. The offences against their own rules the Roma handle in their community. The Roma are not labeled as criminals when they are imprisoned the way members of majority population get labeled, but older Romani people do not consider a "jail sentence" acceptable, but they consider a Roma in this situation to be removed from Romani culture.¹⁷⁰

Blood vengeance mentality of the Roma is emphasized in publicity. This is a one-sided concept, because the Roma also use a withdrawal and avoidance mechanism. If someone has been subjected to serious damage, the person responsible for it and his immediate family have done their best to avoid the people who suffered the damage. Thus the Roma make a conscious effort to avoid revenge.

Research shows that more than half of young Romani people who were imprisoned in Kerava juvenile detention centre in the middle of the 1980's grew up in institutions or they were raised by some relatives; not their own parents. This has estranged the boys from their own culture, from their roots. There have been several reasons for placements in children's home; most important reasons for divorce were irreconcilable disagreements or alcohol problems of the husband. One reason was also vagrant lifestyle; a small child was a hindrance to parents who made a living by selling things. Still more reasons were carelessness and lack of knowledge in childcare or mother's immoral way of life. Child welfare officers had interfered in family affairs and placed children in a children's home.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ Inquiry done by the Rapporteurs.

¹⁷⁰ Kemppainen, Juhani, 1986.

¹⁷¹ The same, 7.

Romani child's schooling was difficult because other children bullied him or her. There were fights and the child was placed in an observation class or in a special school, where it was easier to fit in with other "deviants". Because the child did not find friends at school, he had to find friends outside. There was a group of school dropouts on the street, they were both Roma and majority people, who did not bully but accepted the child as a friend. This group started using alcohol early, kids as young as 11 years old used alcohol.

Out of all Roma interviewed in Kerava juvenile detention centre only one had committed a crime when sober. People stole and sold the stolen goods to buy alcohol. It was no wonder this lifestyle soon led to police interference and the Romani boy found himself in prison.

As long as crime control is concentrated on the traditional property offences and violent offences, socially marginalized people will be imprisoned, both majority people and the Roma.

Romani prisoners were sentenced for the following reasons: violent offences 23 %, assaults 12 %, and homicides 11 %. Property offences amounted to 52 %; theft 31 % and robbery 21 %. Only 3 % had been sentenced for illegal sales of alcohol.¹⁷²

In prisons other prisoners may avoid and discriminate against Romani prisoners. Different statistics on the number of Romani prisoners have presented in public, although this kind of statistics is forbidden by Personal Data File Act. It might be that the Roma are, considering the number of Romani population, overrepresented in the group of prisoners. This makes us ask why. *Discriminating practice leads to structural violence towards the weaker groups*. In the United States of America the number of black prisoners is, in proportion, greater than the number of white prisoners. Do the same kind of factors in Finland and in the US influence so that a certain group of population has a greater risk of being imprisoned than some other population group? Poor social circumstances, low level of education, unemployment, discrimination, and contempt from others could be factors that, combined, cause the risk of do a wrong deed to be greater than if the person were a Finn with a good background, good income, professional skills and good education. Still wrong deeds of individuals must not be generalized as a criminal trait of character that applies to a whole minority group with their own morals, and who also among themselves judges wrongdoings. So a police officer cannot write columns to a local newspaper where he labels the Roma as a nation that sells alcohol or practices some other illegal activities. *It can be asked, is criminality among the Roma any more common than among other Finns in the same socioeconomic situation?*

Criminality connected to marginalization has developed new traits in the 1990's. The number of murders and homicides has increased slightly, and the offenders are mostly young, marginalized men. It is a question of some twenty or thirty men and some women, but the proportional change is big. The segment of population that gets marginalized keeps getting younger. Alcohol and drugs cause problems. Quickening migration has caused urbanization to happen at a fast pace, and it has weakened local networks of support, monitoring and influencing, and it has also increased the numbers of loose population that do not belong to communities. The prospective polarization of Finnish society into employed wealthy people and unemployed poor people also deserves to be mentioned. *Kauko Aromaa* writes that the replacement of traditionally oriented, locally committed people to future oriented people who

¹⁷² The same, 39.

carry out their own life projects can be observed in Finland, too. Marginalized people who are left to cope on their own represent the other side of the coin.¹⁷³

These changes in society have an impact on the three prerequisites criminal acts are based on. The first one is the readiness to commit crimes, the second one is a chance or an opportunity for it, and the third one is the weakening of unofficial monitoring due to weakening of social commitment.

Due to gloomy outlook for future, many people these days have little to lose. A horror society would be one where wealthy members of society live in their own areas, isolated in their homes, that are surrounded by walls and closely guarded, while marginalized people try to steal from them and rob them when they have a chance. This kind of society is good for no one to live in, even the wealthy people, and there are many societies like this in the world. Inequality increases bitterness and leads to professional crime, including homicides. Of course not all marginalized people commit crimes, but the risk is greater than for those people who follow the rules of society anyway.

Kauko Aromaa states that it is sensible to invest in renewals, which prevent marginalization and support the social commitment of children and young people especially. This kind of renewals can have a positive impact on prevention of atrocities. The importance of the matter is emphasized by the fact that it seems that marginalization is partly inherited. So it would be wise to undertake measures to improve occasional circumstances that prevent crimes. Outer circumstances, unrelated to individuals, or situations can influence the way how something happened, and the partners involved, and the way it happened, the time and place, although the deed looked like it had been planned in advance. People implement, in crisis situations, existing models of problem solving and action, many of which have been known for a long time, some of which are new. Social workers and police have their role in analyzing these factors.¹⁷⁴

When Romani children are transferred to the social welfare board, they should further be placed to their own cultural environment, like in a Romani children's home. This way they will not be uprooted and marginalized both spiritually and socially. Social welfare and police can, both separately and in cooperation, undertake preventive measures in social problems of the Roma, when warning signs are discovered. So it is sensible to invest in preventive work, the same way that has been done with suicides and deaths in traffic.¹⁷⁵ The best preventive measures to prevent crime among the Roma is to support the education of Romani homes and schooling of Romani children, to increase vocational education and to provide information on substance abuse.

It has been stated earlier in this report that according to research, the attitude public authorities take towards the Roma varies, depending on what contexts mutual contacts are taken in. So prison personnel has a very different attitude from the majority population, or from social workers. In prisons the guards are subjected to quite an amount of pressure from different sources and they must, in the middle of those pressures, to develop their own habits, norms and attitudes. Prison staff often has a distorted picture of the Roma. Prison guards have the most distorted picture, because come into contact only with those Romani people who

¹⁷³ Aromaa, Kauko 1999.

¹⁷⁴ The same.

¹⁷⁵ Aromaa 1999.

have been imprisoned. Decayed side of Romani culture can be seen in them. This negative concept of the Roma is generalized to apply to the whole Romani population.

Prison staff must be provided, during basic and advanced education, objective information about the Roma and their special customs, so that Romani prisoners would receive objective treatment in prisons. The special needs of the Roma as a minority group must be taken into consideration in prison, too. Prisons must provide the Roma a possibility to participate in social work with intoxicant abusers, organized by authorities or volunteers. Ties to the old gang with a criminal, drunken lifestyle must be severed, and relations to family and Romani organizations must be taken care of.

Prisons must set up groups for hobbies or discussion for the Roma. Some Romani organization could lead the groups. Prisons must also provide education on comprehensive school level, taking into account the low level of education of the Roma.

4.8.2.2. Trust in Police and Judicial System

Romani population as a whole does not trust judicial system of Finland, or police, because these authorities have shown prejudice in their actions. For example police may want to check someone's identification and the reason is because you are a "gypsy". Police might also stop a car and demand the operator to show driving license and extract from a register, which is a legal act, but when police sees Roma in the car, police often demands all of them to show identification papers. If the papers cannot be found immediately, the Roma are taken to police station to clear the matter. However, the highest leadership of police in The Ministry of the Interior has emphasized that suspicions for warrants of apprehension or crime suspicions have to be based on probable reasons and the suspicion must not be used as an artificial reason to gain authority to perform some official duty. In a case like this Parliamentary Ombudsman stated in his decision that when the situation requires, police must admit to an error and present an apology to the person subjected to an action.¹⁷⁶ Maybe service that is in accordance with administrative procedure law and polite behavior would help improve relations between police and the Roma.

It has been confirmed as one directive of police, that police must protect and treat equally every person staying in the country, regardless of nationality, race, religion, sex, and opinions. The directives of chief leadership of police state that¹⁷⁷

"Some immigrants and members of minority groups might meet factors that cause such insecurity that is not common among original population". Police must be able to respond to their need to get help and protection from public authorities. Police of Finland is considered professional, just, and honest. These characteristics must be fully applied to representatives of immigrant groups and ethnic minority groups.

Police has to act fast and it has to react effectively so that criminal acts directed to representatives of immigrants or ethnic minorities can be settled by judicial authorities. Police must also purposefully invest in preventive actions to prevent such crimes."

¹⁷⁶ Sisäasiainministeriö, poliisin ylin johto, päätös 88/662/98, 13.10.1998. (The Ministry of Interior, Police Administration, Decision 88/662/98.)

¹⁷⁷ Sisäasiainministeriö, Poliisin ylijohd, Saatekirje 30.6.1997, Dno 5/600/97. (The Ministry of Interior, Police Administration, Covering Letter 30.6.1997, number 5/600/97.)

Discrimination is only rarely reported to police. According to some experiences of the Roma, police often does not consider these crimes serious, but recommends settling the case without a trial.¹⁷⁸

Parliamentary Ombudsman interfered in writings by a policeman in Helsinki. The writings were about the Roma and they were published in a local newspaper. The policeman made a generalization about crimes committed by some Romani people. No one can be denied freedom of speech, but there is a responsibility connected with that. A private person can write columns, but a public authority cannot write the same way. He must be more careful with his words, because he represents an authority's view on the situation. Not even a private person is allowed to incite the public against another population group.

The Ministry of the Interior issued, for the entire police leadership, directions for action in 1997. The directions state the following:

Police has to intervene in racist acts by increasing their efforts to solving crimes like discrimination crimes and incitement to racial hatred. The process of forwarding these crimes to consideration of charges must also be made more effective.

Police has, in its own part, to see to that the principles of good administration, like good client service, guidance, hearing of the parties, and stating reasons for a decision, are applied to immigrants, too.

Beginning from 1997, personnel training and different meetings and theme days shall include in their programs topics about ethnic relations if the topics help meet the goals of the events.

When planning the training, there is reason to pay special attention to the police administration's responsibility to see to it that matters related to discrimination are taken into account in the planning and implementation of different operations.

A section on ethnic issues and prevention of racism is added to practical training connected with police recruitment training and basic training.

Police staff organizations must be involved in the planning of training on the subject.

Police chief command and police administration that is under the chief command should use representatives of immigrants and national ethnic minorities as teachers and experts in the training, and when necessary, representatives of international organizations and foreign experts.

Personnel policy of police chief command and police administration must be changed so that persons who belong under ethnic minorities, had better possibilities of being recruited.

Employment interviewers must be trained to recognize the advantages of recruiting people from ethnic minorities.

Training related to this subject should be made available during the year 1997 already. Sections on this topic should be added to those training events that have already been planned.

Police chief command and police administration that is under the chief command shall handle ethnic relations and discrimination issues in its publishing activities. This kind of activity will be increased. These topics will also be added to the publication policies of police. Police external and internal information service must provide complete coverage on the subject.

An attempt shall be made to curb racist problems before the situation becomes critical. This shall be achieved by local cooperation between parties involved and by intervening in the reasons of racism.

¹⁷⁸ Mäkinen, Tuija 1984.

After racism becomes apparent, police acts as a convener, who summons parties involved to clear up local problems and to settle them. Police must summon up a cross-administrative cooperation group on a local level as soon as racism appears. Registration system of reports of offence shall be improved so that the system provides information on crimes with a racist motive.

Police has a central position in preventing and solving racist occurrences. Police is the first authority to contact when an offence has been committed against a representative of a minority group. Police chief command is responsible, together with police administration, for implementing the policy decision.

The Ministry of the Interior has stated that it is important for the police that representatives of minority groups entered the profession. "People want different looking policemen." However, there is no interest in lowering the terms of admission, because representatives of minority groups must be admitted on the same grounds as majority population. If the representatives of minority groups were allocated some kind of quotas, they would be pressured, too. It would be considered that they were only admitted to training due to their minority background. People do not want a police officer that would handle only Romani issues or a Somali police who would handle somali issues, but a Romani police should handle everything a police normally handles.

Police starts, together with congregations and non-governmental organizations, to follow and research ethnic discrimination, in the area of Tampere in 1999. This project is called Virkos-project and its purpose is to develop the immigration work of authorities and third sector. The project collects information about different forms of discrimination, and based on the information that is collected, prepares directions and a plan to prevent discrimination. One aspect of the project is that the Police of Tampere train ten people to act as a contact officer to local ethic organizations. For example the organizations of the Albanians, the Somali, and the Kurdis get their own contact officer, as well as those organizations that have been established for a long time already, Tampere Russian Club and Romani Association. The goal of police is to gain trust in authorities. It is a difficult task, for many minorities have bad experiences about authorities. This project is about a special field of police, not about the field of those police officers with a certain ethnic background.

It is the view of the Executioners, that when it comes to terms of admission, it is possible to take a different stand from the The Ministry of the Interior. The reason for this is that it would take a too long time before the Roma reach the level of education that would enable them to meet the terms of admission to police college. For example, one Romani woman was not admitted because she was too short. It feels like people could really be more flexible when using this kind of criterion, if they really want police officers with different ethnic backgrounds.

Training in human rights has been a part of the curriculum of police training since 1997. Racism is covered in a training period called "ideologically motivated crime". The same training period also covers issues like worship of Satan, animal rights activists and environment activists.

In addition to the directions of the The Ministry of the Interior, the Executioners consider that *Police must implement the directions of the The Ministry of the Interior to increase tolerance and prevent racism. Ethnic minorities and their special problems and the special characteristics of their cultures must be taken into account in police training. The social and*

socioeconomical position of the Roma must be outlined in police training, in proportion to the crimes committed by the Roma. A training module with information on the customs of the Roma, grassroots problems, encounters of police and the Roma, etc. must be developed for that purpose.

There must be Romani people in police force, and the Roma must be able to serve as lay members of lower courts. Police colleges must admit Romani people as students and Romani representatives must be taken into consideration selection of courts. Romani people must also be admitted to Prison Administration College that is under the The Ministry of Justice. Social considerations must be taken into account when examining the qualifications of Romani students. The Roma who enter work force must be supported after their training has been completed.

4.8.3. Relations of the Media to the Roma

Media has its own responsibility in forming the attitudes of majority population. The media often covers issues related to the Roma in a way that labels them and generalizes so that crimes committed by some individuals become a characteristic that applies to the whole Romani population. The view the media adopts divides society into two masses, and the second "passive mass" consists of all troublesome and unclean things. Minority groups like "refugees, negroes and gypsies" are considered to belong under the passive mass. This kind of black and white separation, good-against-bad does not identify an individual out of the mass. On the other hand, there are examples of positive radio and TV programs and newspaper articles. Ethnicity gets treated in a more matter-of-fact way in high quality journals and newspapers. At their best they might even offer new information on Romani culture.

The media shapes our opinions inconspicuously, and gives us certain models of thinking, that have a direct effect on our opinions. The opinions are often formed on the basis of the press, media, and hearsay. The reader should always put himself in the position of the writer or program producer and look at the picture from that angle. What is more, in general the reporters represent majority culture, and it can always be seen in the final product. Young Roma should be encouraged to become reporters. A good reporter has a good insight.

Negative reporting causes growing prejudice and bitterness among the Roma towards the press, television and radio. It also means that the Roma have a negative attitude towards the majority population. The Roma consider there is no reason to open up to the majority population, but it is best to stay quiet in their own group. However, this kind of segregation promotes prejudice and, finally, increases inequality. For this reason it is the responsibility of the media to disseminate information in an equal and unbiased way, also positive information, about the Roma to majority population and about majority population to the Roma. The reporters should also pay more attention to the interviewees. There might be too many official sources when it comes to ethnic issues. What is more, the black and white style of announcements should be removed. There should be several points of view when reporting about issues. Why interview skinheads when refugees could be interviewed too?

Reporters of the press, radio, and TV must be provided with training on issues related to minority groups, especially the Roma, so that they can overcome their attitudes and see the good sides of the Roma too. This kind of training should be provided both at the beginning

and advanced stages of reporter training, and both education authorities and employees should be responsible for providing it.

Bearing responsibility has been obscured in the media. It is easy to hide behind one's own article with the help of a pseudonym. The media has power, but it should also accept responsibility. Not only does the media follow ongoing events, but it also participates in the events through its expressions of opinion. Entertainers should also bear their responsibility and be aware of possible consequences. No one is bad in the beginning, but the labels given by society finally guide people's lives and actions.¹⁷⁹

According to the view of Advisory Board on Romani Affairs, Finland made good progress in relations with ethnic groups and in promoting tolerance. However, there is still a lot of prejudice and irrelevant reporting about the Roma. Mentioning nationality or ethnic background can be more harmful than mentioning a person's name, because that exposes the whole group to prejudice and discrimination. The more clearly a characteristic attached to someone separates that person from majority population, the stronger the effect. *The way the media reports on the Roma must be made more objective and neutral so that the reports only cover events caused by individuals without any ethnic definitions.*

Mass media has increased its coverage on issues related to the Roma, and they have heard Romani people's own experts. The press, radio and TV had a debate in 1997 about is it possible to present the Roma in an imagined program in the light of negative stereotypes attached to them. According to the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs, the picture the media gives about the Roma blames them collectively and presents them in a very negative light. Many researchers have created different types, as have writers also. Creating some kind of average character is a skill in itself, and it requires scientific investigations, where fiction can add spice, but an average character cannot be built on that.¹⁸⁰

TV has become an educator in our society. Romani children watch children's programs in TV the same way children of majority population do. TV has not taken into consideration the needs of Romani children. There are no children's programs in TV that would objectively take notice of Romani culture. The fictional characters in entertainment programs are not suitable role models for a growing child. *Such cartoons and children programs, where Romani culture is represented, should be produced.*

Article 9 in Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities covers freedom of speech. Finland's report on implementation of the Framework Convention states the reform of broadcasting activities. Paragraph 7 of the act issued on Finnish Broadcasting Company (1380/1993) has been extended to cover providing services also in Romani language and in sign language (746/1998), and services to other language groups of the country must be provided also, when applicable. Swedish-language television broadcasts cover about 9 % of the production of two nation-wide TV channels, and there are two national radio channels in addition to local broadcasts. The Sami have their own radio channel (Sami Radio) in their native locality. The Sami Radio broadcasts consist of about 40 hours of programs in a week. Finland also has closed-captioned TV in Sami language.

¹⁷⁹ Åkerlund, Tuula 26.3.1998.

¹⁸⁰ Building ideal types, see for example Suonoja Kyösti: Kuluttajat rakentavat 1 (Consumers Build 1), Helsinki 1966.

The Roma have three quarterly magazines, two of them are published by a national Romani organization, and one is published by National Board of Education. All of them are published in Finnish but they include articles in Romani language. Radio news in Romani language is broadcasted in national network once a week. *Production of Romani people's own radio and TV programs must be extended to the level match the amount of programs available to other national minorities. Especially information on social and cultural issues must be provided.*

Advisory Board on Romani Affairs and Ethnic Committee of Finnish Journalist Association organized, in March 1998, a debate called "The Roma and Media". About 40 representatives of Romani population, and ten journalists attended. The consensus was that the debate was good and serious thought should be given to organizing a similar debate in the future.

The inquiry done by the Rapporteurs shows that the decision-makers in society get very little information about the Roma. Part of the reason is the shortage of scientific research and statistics. However, information is available, should anyone want to look for it in the magazines of the Roma, in guidebooks, radio, TV, or in Internet. The basic problem might be that although information is available, people are not very interested in it. Part of the reason might also be that the Roma keep some issues to themselves and do not give information to outsiders.¹⁸¹

According to the inquiry, the Roma themselves consider their most important information channels to be the media, that is radio and TV, and after that their own magazines and "grapevine". National newspapers come in the last place. When it comes to sharing information among the Romani community, the most important channel is Romani magazines and journals before the "grapevine". National newspapers hold the last place again.¹⁸²

4.8.4. Discrimination on Labour Market

According to legislation of Finland, discrimination in employment and in work life is forbidden. A working group under Minister *Claes Andersson* drew up, in May 1996, a program and an operating plan to remove ethnic discrimination in work life, for instance. It is still too early to say how this program will affect the discrimination experienced by the Roma. According to a 1995 mapping done by Romani Education Unit, the employment situation of the Roma was very difficult: as much as 56 % of The Roma were unemployed. The proportion of traditional professions and professions that have become outdated in modern times tells us about marginalization and it tells about an unequal position in society. Two thirds of the respondents stated that they want vocational training. Eighty five percent of those under thirty years of age were interested in vocational training. Thirty percent wanted vocational counseling.

Low level of education makes it hard for the Roma to gain employment. There is no research available on discrimination in work life. Low level of education, "wrong" ethnic origin, and high general unemployment rate put the Roma as job-seekers in a situation that is worse than the situation of other people. It is hard to prove the discrimination, although the Roma report on frequent occurrences of discrimination when they are looking for employment. Based on the descriptions of the Roma themselves, discrimination in work life is still a reality in

¹⁸¹ Inquiry by the Rapporteurs.

¹⁸² The same.

Finnish society, where legislation is supposed to secure the well-being of all people, and where life is supposed offer equal opportunities for everyone. There is no information available on discrimination, no follow-up and no statistics that could be used to monitor the development of this phenomenon.

Occurrences of discrimination in work life are rarely reported to the police, because discrimination is often very hard to prove, and the process is troublesome. However, it has happened that a Roma who has refused a job on the plea of his own culture has been denied unemployment benefits. A Romani woman could not accept a job where she would have been forced to appear without the traditional Romani dress.¹⁸³

The case that follows is a good example of the problems Romani women can have in labour market: A Romani woman was denied daily unemployment allowance because she refused to accept a job clearing park areas. The woman pleaded of the rules of her culture that require her to wear traditional Romani dress. She also emphasized that she only refuses outdoor work that requires her to use working clothes. Her parents and grandparents lived in the same place, and wearing "Non-Roma clothes" would have been a serious insult towards them. Labour commission took the stand that the cultural tradition is in conflict with Employment Act and unemployment laws, and proposed that the appeal should be dismissed. Unemployment Appeal Board and Insurance Court took the same stand without presenting their own grounds.

In another case a person who refused to use anything but a Romani dress at work by a soft drink factory's production line had, according to the decision of Unemployment Appeal Board, caused the unemployment himself.¹⁸⁴

In order to encourage people to gain employment, subsistence support was amended, in 1998, so that it became possible to lower the basic amount of the support by 40 % in case someone refused to accept a job that was offered to that person. According to initial research, municipalities have applied this sanction possibility in three percent of this kind of cases. Field research interviews show that this is applied mostly to young people turning down a job.¹⁸⁵ However, it is possible to apply the amendment for example when the Roma refuse to accept jobs on the basis of dressing code of their culture.

Report on prevention of marginalization, by the The Ministry of Labour, states that the competence of *labour offices* must be developed so that they can recognize people and groups who are in danger of becoming marginalized and to prevent marginalization. Developing competence is related to know-how in the first place, but *attitudes must also be taken into consideration. Employment authorities feel the burden of their tasks* when they work on the difficult employment situation of those people who are in danger of becoming marginalized. Positive experiences should be brought up and shared.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Romaniasiaain neuvottelukunnan lausunto STM:lle YK:n TSS-oikeuksia koskevan yleissopimuksen Suomen määräaikaissraportista (210/04/98). (Statement of Advisory Board on Romani Affairs to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 210/04/98.)

¹⁸⁴ Scheinin 1991, 265-266.

¹⁸⁵ Elsa Keskitalo - Matti Heikkilä 1999.

¹⁸⁶ Työhallinnon toimintaohjelma syrjäytymisen ehkäisyksi, mt., 27. (Action Program of Labour Services to Prevent Marginalization, 27.)

The Ministry of Labour must start an efficient follow-up process of racism and ethnic discrimination. Occupational safety and health authorities could do the follow-up. Employers' associations must inform their members of discrimination crimes.

Example 1: A group of Romani students showed up in a nursing home that was supposed to be their employment training place, in spring 1997. The staff in the nursing home had no knowledge of their ethnic background. The Roma got a very cold welcome. Stealing was forbidden, special surveillance was arranged in dressing rooms, and locks were installed in staff wardrobes.

Example 2: A Romani woman applied for a job in a children's day care centre. When she went to job interview, she was told the vacancy is filled already.

According to law, labour protection authorities can handle cases of labour discrimination and they are obliged to report to the police all occurrences of discrimination. *Government must develop a system to collect information about discrimination and train the Roma to become aware of their rights and act correctly in situations where discrimination occurs. It is forbidden to enter personal information of people subjected to discrimination in a prospective discrimination register.*

Employment authorities provide training for the Roma. This training is becoming more diversified now. European Union Social Fund will provide funding for and Ammatti-instituutti (Vocational Education Institute) will implement a project called ROMA KO. The project does a mapping of the educational needs of the Roma and it organizes basic education and vocational education for the Roma. The task of Romani Education Unit that is linked to National Board of Education, is to plan and implement training of the Roma on national level. The goal is to provide the Roma an equal access to education. This will improve the Roma's possibilities in working life.

Many Romani people do not find employment in open labour market, although they have vocational education. This happens because of discrimination in labour market. There is even larger group of Roma whose lack of vocational training prevents them from gaining employment. They should be offered a more respectable and a more permanent form of employment than what odd jobs and different vocational training courses presently provide. *Many Roma in labour market are in a difficult position between the activities of social and health administration and labour administration. The clients of social and health administration and labour administration must be activated and they must be provided the opportunity to gain employment. An employment procedure directed specially for the Roma must be developed.*

4.8.5. Discrimination Based on Sex

Traditional role differentiation in Romani culture must be taken into consideration in promoting of equality between men and women among Romani minority group. The Roma consider the issue of equality between men and women inside their group to be inconsequential. A man stays on the background when it comes to issues related to a woman's role and position, and vice versa. In case the role differentiation of Romani culture is different

from majority culture, the Romani people's own culture must be respected, because they have the right for it.

Competition between sexes is a strange idea to the Roma. Supporting each other, strong solidarity and team spirit are characteristic to the Roma. Commitment to their own culture, their own family and tribe are important. It is a central value of the culture. The sex roles of Romani population are in accordance with these values. In a balanced Romani family a man and a woman do not compete with each other. A man is the head of the family and a woman is the heart of it. Both have an important meaning and position in the well being of the family. A man is appreciated according to how well he supports his family and a woman is appreciated according to how she cares for home and children. A woman has a very important position in Romani community. She creates the atmosphere of the home, and basically she is a very strong person in a feminine way. Although a Romani woman still has many responsibilities, in general women do not feel they are subjugated. The Roma are sensitive. A man can be emotional, too. It is not embarrassing if a man cries. When older Roma are present, spouses do not express their feelings towards each other. However, married couples know how to show older people, in a delicate way, that they have a good life.¹⁸⁷

However, weakening position of a Romani man can be observed in the present changing development of society and families. *Special attention must be paid to prevention of Romani men's marginalization, and to the support of his participation and retraining in the near future.* It can also be said that in the Romani culture a woman is the strongest character and family and relatives depend on the woman. A woman takes care of practical things; she raises children and teaches them how to be sociable. A man has total responsibility of the family and relatives, but if his position in this structure becomes weak, there is the danger of social falling and marginalization. Romani men also meet new challenges, and maybe it is harder for them than for men of majority population to put up with the new, weaker position in family.

Women are traditionally more used to adapting to new circumstances. For example, as the traditional ways to make a living failed, women had more facilities than men did for retraining. A typical feature in the equality between Romani men and women is that older Romani women are respected as much as older Roman men. This is illustrated when a married woman, even if she were a young woman, is usually presented as the daughter of her parents rather than the wife of her husband.

Romani women have participated in the follow-up training organized for teachers of Romani language. They have also attended training provided for contact persons. The task of contact persons is to work in municipalities, as a link between public authorities and Romani population, as a "culture interpreter".

Constitution of Finland and equality program of government are general frameworks that government should follow when organizing Romani women possibilities for suitable training and work, and for participating and influencing in society.

When it comes to Romani women, it is not too far-fetched to talk about general discrimination in labour market and even racism in salaries and in employment. The education level of Romani women must be raised to remove inequality. It is often hard to say whether the discrimination of Romani women in working life is a consequence of their ethnic background,

¹⁸⁷ Romanit ja terveystalvelut, 2. painos, Opetushallitus ja STM/ROK, Helsinki 1998, 15. (Roma and Health Services, Helsinki 1998, 15.)

sex, or low level of education. However, the most typical examples of discrimination give reason to assume that Romani women are treated exceptionally mainly due to their origin and traditional dresses Romani women wear. According to an understanding in majority population a woman wearing a traditional Romani dress cannot perform all the tasks that are required in her job. This kind of jobs are, for example, jobs in hospital or in kitchen, where hygienic work clothes are required. However, the use of the traditional dress is related to traditional moral and cultural values of Romani culture and it is also related to their concept of purity. It is an essential part of a Romani woman's identity and position in her own community. For that reason it is difficult for them to give up the traditional dress and that is why they meet more discrimination than men do. When they run errands in offices they get reluctant service and in stores they often are subjected to public surveillance or they are denied entrance to stores.

In Romani community a woman's role as a mother and bringing up children has traditionally been important, but at the same time Romani women have earned their daily living outside home, for example retailing handicrafts. The traditional vocations of Romani women that were based on their skills in retailing and handicrafts has, since the 1970's, given way to training for new vocations like dressmaker, cook, counselor, and counselor of Romani culture. Advisory Board on Romani Affairs took an initiative in organising special women's seminars in 1998. They suggested the idea to Romani Education Unit. This kind of seminar was last organized in 1998. The topics were child raising and becoming aware of their own position. *In future these seminars can be developed into hearings of Romani women.*

The most important development goal at the moment is securing Romani people's channels to influence and participate in society. Romani women are represented in the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs, and in Romani Education Unit. Romani women's own activity has been an important prerequisite for the positive development.

The Advisory Board on Romani Affairs delivered an opinion on 22.3.1999, stating that positive special measures could be used to remove inequality when it comes to women who belong to minority groups. The equality program in Finland has been drafted from the perspective of people who belong to majority population, so the perspective of Romani women, who belong to national and ethnic minorities is not discussed sufficiently. The actual social position of women who belong to minority groups, and their belonging to an ethnic minority, visualized by the traditional cultural dress, gives them a different starting point from other women. That is why mainstreaming the policy of Beijing congress is insufficient when it comes to Romani women. Special measures are needed to develop schooling, employment, and housing of the Roma. Employment discrimination legislation must be developed, as well as capacity to follow up the discrimination minority groups face in working life.¹⁸⁸

For the follow-up it would be important to develop for European Council its own operations model, with frequent hearings of representatives of women who belong to ethnic minority groups. The hearings should cover issues like human rights and minority rights, and discrimination in working life. In general international support and follow-up is good for minority groups.

¹⁸⁸ Miranda Vuolasrannan kommentointi 23.3.1999 EN:n uudistetun sosiaalisen peruskirjan ratifiointi , RONK:n arkisto. (Vuolasranta Miranda: Commentary 23.3.1999 Ratification of Reformed Charter of European Council. Archives of Advisory Board on Romani Affairs.)

Implementation of equal rights of men and women must be researched in Finnish society, taking into consideration the perspective of minority groups, too. The perspective of multicultural society must also be taken into account in the research.

4.8.6. Discrimination in Other Areas of Life

Resident selection boards often select residents in municipalities, where local residents often press elected officials. Due to this pressure, they discriminate against the Roma when selecting residents for municipal rental flats. The Roma or immigrants are often unwelcome in residential areas, where residents are afraid of trouble and they are afraid the prices of residences will go down. Parliamentary Ombudsman intervened in the actions of a municipal manager after he presented municipal board a draft resolution on a Romani family's residence. The Romani family was not allocated a residence due to their ethnic background and because suitable residences, where the family could live without bothering other people, were not available. No legal process was raised on this case.

Discrimination in housing issues is discussed more in detail in chapter 4.3. "Housing Needs and Housing Services".

5. ADMINISTRATION OF ROMANI AFFAIRS

5.1. Municipal Level

The Roma live everywhere in Finland, there are very few municipalities with no Roma as residents. It is obvious that the larger municipalities have better resources for handling Romani affairs, and administration also pays more attention to the Roma. The situation is different in small municipalities with only a few Romani residents. It feels natural that the administration of romani affairs has to be organized differently in different municipalities. The Roma themselves have not participated actively. That is why the Roma must be encouraged to increase their contacts with official authorities and to participate actively on municipal level.

There are many obstacles that prevent the Roma from participating:

- a) lack of knowledge and information,
- b) the Roma are denied possibilities to influence,
- c) practical obstacles (financial and social obstacles, lack of transportation),
- d) frustration with decision makers,
- e) experience of powerlessness,
- f) lack of trust in politics,
- g) fear of authorities,
- h) lack of contact persons,
- i) indifference,
- j) fear of being stigmatized,
- k) alienation from the municipal community of majority population and
- l) bureaucracy.

The town of Malmö in Sweden can be mentioned as an example of a town with relatively small Romani population, but the town has, nevertheless, created a development project with the Roma. The local associations of the Roma can participate as equal partners in teamwork with social welfare administration and politicians. The goal of the teamwork is to find new methods to overcome the problems of the Roma. Another good example is the town of Uppsala. Their teamwork effort encouraged retired Roma to take up studying.¹⁸⁹

Finland, too, has similar experiences of democracy on local level, where local residents are part of a planning team in a municipality. However, there has not been such cooperation in planning between the Roma, local authorities, and politicians.

The Town of Pori has shown a good example by setting up a Romani group to facilitate communication between the Roma and local authorities. Both the Roma and school administration and social welfare administration are represented in the group. A special education teacher, director and planner of public education, a social worker, and a comprehensive schoolteacher are members of the Romani group, in addition to three Romani people.

The town of Forssa has had, for ten years already, a cooperation group of the Roma and the town. The group was established to act as a cooperation organ between the Roma and local authorities. People wanted to find a common ground where the Roma and local authorities can speak the same language. These days the group meets rather infrequently, but it has made many practical improvements in Romani affairs.

Shared planning is more than one-way or two-way information and interaction. Shared planning is an operation model that enables the equal participation of the Roma in the development of their community. Shared planning is development work that is based on the cooperation of local authorities, decision-makers and the Roma. The goal is to develop the living circumstances of the Roma. Shared planning is based on cooperation, participation, and information about the objective and subjective living circumstances and it is also based on information about the goals of the municipality and the Roma. Shared planning uses ethnic principles as a support to reaching the goals. These principles are, for instance, equality, openness and respect of others.

A so-called *socio-pedagogic model* is suitable for solving the problems of the Roma:

- 1) solving the problems of the Roma must start from the Roma themselves (*anchoring principle*);
- 2) the work must be done among the Roma, not from up to down (*grassroots principle*);
- 3) Romani people's own resources must be developed (*mobilization principle*);
- 4) the Roma themselves must influence and change their situation by active participation (*activity principle*);
- 5) the Roma must be made aware of social, political, and financial connections and dependencies, and they must become aware of the possibilities to change circumstances (*awareness principle*); and
- 6) activities must take place on the terms of the Roma and the result must be advantageous to all parties involved (*principle of self-administration*).

¹⁸⁹ Romer i Sverige, mt. 63. (The Roma in Sweden, 63.)

The number of the Roma in administrative jobs and confidential posts in society is noticeably low. Their social and financial situation is different, as a group, from other population. The actions of state and municipalities to create actual equality between the Roma and majority population have been insufficient so far.

Municipalities have a cross-sectoral cooperation group of client service between social administration and health care administration, labour office, and Social Insurance Institution. The cooperation group is based on rehabilitation legislation. Most groups work in one municipality, and they meet about 3 – 6 times a year. The purpose of the cooperation groups is to provide advice for clients and official authorities in issues related to health, employment, and social marginalization. In this context "rehabilitation" means a comprehensive promotion of well being. Negotiations with an individual client are the most crucial working method of the groups. The client is present at group meetings about 70 percent of the time. Group situation encourages the client to think about his own life circumstances in its entirety. The realities that rehabilitation can be planned on are clarified in these meetings. A client can take along a support person – a family member, a friend, or a public authority.¹⁹⁰

It is considered that the cooperation groups are suitable for rehabilitation of the Roma too, in individual cases. All public authorities can gain information about cultural factors, and they can take these factors into consideration in decision making and cooperation. The client can avoid the red tape and he can understand the backgrounds and reasons for the decisions that concern him. Any language problems (for example when filling up forms or writing applications), and inexperience in handling affairs with public authorities can be taken into consideration, for example with the help of a support person. Issues like accumulation of factors that lead to marginalization, housing problems, employment problems, education problems, and subsistence problems all belong to the cooperation group, no matter whether the client is a Romani or someone who belongs to majority population. The advantage of the cooperation group is that minority group label or any special group label does not limit it.

Romani contact persons should cooperate with these local groups to solve the social, educational, employment, pension, and other problems of the Roma. The local contact person should be enabled to be present when the cooperation group discusses the rehabilitation of a Romani client. Romani groups in municipalities or local advisory boards should take contact to local cooperation groups and find out if the group is suitable for attending to the problems of individual Romani clients.

Municipalities must set up, in cooperation with local authorities and the Roma, cooperative planning groups where representatives of the Roma can, equally and openly with local authorities and politicians, to make a municipal plan to improve the living circumstances of the Roma and develop their possibilities for participation.

Small municipalities can, in cooperation with the Roma, appoint a Romani contact person, who acts as an information carrier for all groups, and to whom different public authorities can send information that is relevant to the Roma.

Municipal social and health administration, labour office, and client cooperation groups of Social Insurance Institution must keep in contact with Romani contact person or Romani groups in the municipality when attending to affairs of the Roma.

¹⁹⁰ Karjalainen & Saikku (ed.) 1999, 9-10, 18-22.

5.2. Regional Administration in Counties

County government of Oulu started to prepare a participation project in 1996. The project was about improving the Roma's situation. Four counties implemented a regional development project with funding for research and development from the The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The project enables regional advisory boards to continue their work and form a pool of resources, when methods to extend the social participation of the Roma are searched for. That means the regional advisory boards do not try to be channels for participation, but cooperative organs, that start up local development projects. The actual participation can be implemented with the guidance of the regional advisory boards.

An advisory board consisting of local and regional officials and Romani population is a resource, that can be used in observing problems, in information, in planning, and in carrying out different measures. The regional advisory boards are an important means to stop the marginalization of Romani population. The regional advisory boards have handled, among other things, the following issues that have been initiated by both the Roma and public authorities: education, housing, employment, day care and preschool, other social welfare and health care services, discrimination, teaching of language and culture, purchasing educational material, the work of culture interpreter, the activities of local officials, and development and maintenance of the culture in general.¹⁹¹

In addition to that, the regional advisory boards have started up projects that strive to improve the situation of minorities, or they have been initiators in starting this kind of projects. Some examples of these projects are an experimental culture interpreter project in the region of Oulu, an international project that collects biographies of the Roma (funding for the project comes mainly from European Union), education project of the Roma in Kainuu, and Romani population and health projects that are being implemented in province of Eastern Finland and Jyväskylä region.

The regional advisory boards have cooperated with county and local officials. The boards obviously meet a need for disseminating information, promoting tolerance, preventing prejudice and racism, and they arbitrate differences between public authorities and the Roma.

How to bring the perspective of the Roma to the notice of decision-makers? Decentralization politics does not require participation in state politics or local politics, because according to subsidiarity principle "higher unit" does not take measures when "lower unit" can carry out the task satisfactorily.¹⁹² The planning and implementing of public goods should be done as close to people as possible. The power of higher levels is justified if local resources are insufficient for providing services. A publication on subsidiarity principle by the The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health cites an encyclic letter written by Pope Pius XI in 1931, where the principle is defined as follows: "*... it is unfair, utterly damaging and a breach of peace if a larger and higher quarter seizes tasks, that smaller and lower units can effectively take care of. This is an unwavering principle of social philosophy...*"¹⁹³ If a society makes an effort to

¹⁹¹ Virolainen, Kari: Romaniväestön osallistumisen mahdollisuudet aluehallinnossa, Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriön monisteita 1999:1, Helsinki 1999, 35. (Virolainen, Kari: Participation Opportunities of Romani Population in Regional Administration, Duplicate of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 1999:1, Helsinki 1999, 35.)

¹⁹² Raunio 1998.

¹⁹³ Kautto 1995, 3-5.

implement subsidiarity principle, this facilitates the start of such a democracy where local communities (for example a certain region in a municipality) can decide how to use resources. Although the tendency in the 1990's has been towards local decision-making (state subsidy reform in 1993), the meaning of centrally planned system of experts is still intact. However, a discussion about communality is going on, and it can be assumed that communality shall search for its place in social policy in the new millennium. This might be one of the key questions when it comes to the social participation of the Roma. How can the Roma discover the new local possibilities in for social participation and what kind of liberties can they reach on local level? Shall the Roma strive for independent decision making in their own affairs or shall they influence the local affairs by increasing their numbers in the decision-making groups of majority population? It looks like the regional advisory boards tried to become cooperative organs of Romani population and public authorities. They have not tried to be interest groups that would defend the rights of the Roma against the rights of majority population.¹⁹⁴

The previous question can be put in a different way that uncovers the dimensions of the discussion on values that is related to decentralization. Can experts maintain and promote the wealth of Romani culture or does a strong society better protect the values of Romani culture? The question is to what extent can the values of Romani culture be defined so that they can be understood from upwards and, therefore, they can be protected. Is it easier to protect the values and norms of Romani culture case by case, on the grounds of local knowledge? According to an inquiry done within the framework of this report, the Roma seem to support the extension of local activity. Local activity in this context does not only mean county or provincial level, but it can also mean a certain group in a municipality. This kind of group could, for example, participate in the activities of regional advisory boards.¹⁹⁵ The characteristics of Romani culture, sense of justice and strong family ties, emphasize the local nature of issues and that is why centrally planned expert power is not suitable as a guideline for Romani politics.

The participation of the Roma seems to have happened on the level of civil society, because the practices and demands of administration culture are more unknown to the Roma than traditional communal activity. The Roma have, due to low level of education for example, better capabilities for working in associations and clubs than in official and partly political state of municipality administration. On this part the expectations on the Roma's participation are very positive, if only the strengthening of civil society goes on. Therefore; following social policy and influencing the policy is important for the Roma.

The regional advisory boards were established at the right time, because they have been able to come up with ideas for local activities. The local activities will surely continue to be important. Participating in any local activities produces individual skills that can be used in the process of local decision-making as it finds its shape in social policy. It is possible for the Roma to find genuine means to influence in society, although associations of the Roma are scattered, and the Roma have not got organized on national level. However, this requires that a so-called *resource-centered operations model* be internalized to be part of minority policy. In this operation model *the participation of minorities is needed in decision-making*, so that

¹⁹⁴ Ks. esim. Romaniväestön osallistumisen mahdollisuudet aluehallinnossa. Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriön monisteita 1/1999. (See for example Participation Opportunities of Romani Population in Regional Administration. Duplicates of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 1/1999.)

¹⁹⁵ Inquiry by the Rapporteurs, item 3.

multiculturalism can be implemented. So it is not only accepted as part of administration for the sake of democracy.¹⁹⁶

Regional advisory boards need full-time secretaries so that they can promote contacts between Romani population and local administration, so that the right to develop Romani culture, granted by constitution, can be implemented in practice. It is natural to establish regional advisory boards in order to create a constructive dialogue between a minority and administration. Establishing the boards is a step towards the previously mentioned practices that follow principle of proximity. Establishing the boards is a possible answer to those problems, that Advisory Board on Romani Affairs is considered to have, for example the fact it is located in Helsinki and therefore is distant to the Roma living in provinces. The regional advisory boards can strengthen the concept of locality and the principle of proximity in two different ways. First, principle of proximity refers to a concept of place that means an opinion for the fact that local level is better in defining criteria for justice, for instance. Second, the principle of proximity refers to decision-making that is "close to people" so that decision-making is an open process and people see the grounds for decisions and they understand political responsibility issues.

Both perspectives of principle of proximity are crucial in Romani issues. Since the Roma are scattered all over Finland, it is hard to believe that some official or organ in central administration would know local circumstances well enough for example when it comes to the relationship between the Roma and majority population. On the other hand, it is obvious that it is harder for the Roma than for majority population to perceive the grounds for political-administrational decision making, due to their low level of education. However, this is a dual problem. The public authorities, too, should understand the function of open decision making better than they do now. Training is required before principle of proximity will function properly. Local dialogue can be started only after both parties involved are aware, in the same way, about the grounds of influencing and decision making. The role of Romani organizations and local associations should be one to promote this development. In doing that they could get competencies both for understanding decision-making progress and for influencing it.

5.3. Central Administration of the State

In Finland central administration of the state handles ethnic affairs so that responsibilities concerning different ethnic minorities are divided among several ministries. The Ministry of Labour handles affairs of refugees, The Ministry of Justice handles affairs of the Sami, and The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health handles affairs of the Roma. In addition to that, each The Ministry handles substance issues that fall within its framework of operations. No The Ministry has the sole responsibility for the affairs of the Roma or the Sami for example, but different ministries handle the affairs. However, The Ministry of Justice coordinates the affairs of the Sami.

Standing Orders of the Council of State (1522/1995) does not mention affairs of the Roma. There is a decision on the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs by the Council of State, dated November 30 1989 (1058/1989). The decision states that the Advisory Board is linked to The

¹⁹⁶ Kari Virolainen 1999, 13.

Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. So the handling of Romani affairs is based on the decision of the Council of State. The level of establishing different advisory boards has been elevated since the reform of constitution, so *the juridic grounds of the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs must be fixed by law*.

When it comes to **The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health**, the standing orders of the Council of State does not mention Romani affairs. Regardless of what The Ministry the Advisory Board is linked to, *standing orders on ministries should mention coordination of Romani affairs, so that there would be a general responsibility for the affairs*.

The Ministry on Social Affairs and Health has a significant role on national level, when it comes to subsistence support. However, subsistence support is a problem at that age, when the mechanism that creates the problem is hard to influence. The living circumstances of an individual Roma can be analyzed in connection of social work and rehabilitation, and that way a solution to problems can be searched for. Subsistence support and other activities of social welfare are important, but they are used to mend matters when problems have occurred already. The health care sector is very important, but the problem there is rather taking into consideration the special characteristics of Romani culture in health care system rather than future oriented questions. Social and health care administration is still an important but a static area in the well being of the Roma.

In the administrative section of **The Ministry of Foreign Affairs** crucial issues concerning the Roma are different international human rights treaties. Human rights issues are central in the work of European Union. The open and logical human rights policy Finland strives for includes a principle on the security of states and societies being dependent, in a very basic way, on the respect for human rights.¹⁹⁷ This extensive concept on security can be considered the basic principle of Romani policy, too. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinates the handling of many important treaties that concern the Roma, too, but the reporting duties cannot be considered to qualify the The Ministry for handling the housing, employment, education, and language issues of the Roma. In other words, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not have substantial knowledge, nor does it have the capability to take the total responsibility for Romani politics. However, the role of The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is becoming more important due to the globalization of Romani politics. The The Ministry has the competency to participate in negotiations when it is a question of coordinating and implementing international human rights treaties in Romani policy.¹⁹⁸

The fact that **The Ministry of Justice** has the main responsibility in Sami affairs makes the question about transferring the responsibility of coordinating Romani affairs to this administrative section justified. The Ministry of Justice was responsible for the cultural autonomy of the Sami, and for the station of Sami district court. The situation of the Roma is different from the Sami, both regionally and juridically, so the transfer of Romani affairs to The Ministry of Justice cannot be justified with the same arguments as was used with Sami affairs. Even if Romani policy were striving for the same kind of juridical station with the Sami, research shows that to achieve this goal it is necessary to develop the participation and

¹⁹⁷ *Ihmisoikeudet ja Suomen ulkopoliittikka*. Ulkoasiainministeri Tarja Halosen eduskunnan ulkoasiainvaliokunnalle antama selonteko Suomen hallituksen ihmisoikeuspolitiikasta 11.11.1998, s. 7-13. (Human Rights and Foreign Policy of Finland. Report on the Human Rights Policy of Government of Finland by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Tarja Halonen, submitted to Foreign Affairs Committee on 11.11.1998, pages 7-13.)

¹⁹⁸ Meeting of the Rapporteurs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 10.5.1999.

mutual communication of the Roma. Keeping this perspective in mind, The Ministry of Justice cannot, at the present situation, provide the best possible special knowledge that can be used to promote participation, and therefore, prevent marginalization. On the other hand, the dispersed guidance of minority policy that The Ministry of Justice supports, makes cooperation in Romani affairs possible with other ministries. The experiences gained when handling Sami affairs are an important section when ministries meet to solve, in cooperation, a particular problem.¹⁹⁹ The Ministry of Justice does not have a local organization to handle Romani affairs.

The area of **The Ministry of the Interior** is interesting from the point of view of the Roma. Especially making local administration, and through that, participation, more effective, is interesting to the Roma. The direct administrative contact the The Ministry has to municipalities and to county governments is a network where Romani policy could get involved in developing regional and local administration. Although this is a central goal of this report, it has been discovered that The Ministry of the Interior does not direct the important substance matters of Romani policy, education, housing, or employment. Different departments of county governments direct, in the framework of their field of activities, the actions of municipalities in the areas of education, social welfare, and health care. From this point of view the role of The Ministry of the Interior becomes more pronounced as the prospective regional advisory boards are established. However, if The Ministry of the Interior directed Romani policy, it would not be the best way to reach the goals of Romani policy drawn up in this report; participation and prevention of marginalization. Instead it would carry out an administrative model where knowledge of substance would have to be provided by other ministries. In this case the role of the The Ministry of the Interior would be that of a convener.

The Romani Education Unit in National Board of Education, a central civil service department under **The Ministry of Education** has the necessary expert knowledge. The Rapporteurs have found that education is the key question in prevention of marginalization of the Roma. Increasing the number of Romani teachers, school assistants, and support persons has been proposed as a solution to the problems in preschool and comprehensive school, like dropping out of school and placing students in special education. The The Ministry has taken a positive stand in these questions of the administration of The Ministry of Education. The educational obligations placed by The Ministry of Education are connected to language and culture issues, so the role of The Ministry of Education in Romani affairs is quite large. If The Ministry of Education coordinated Romani affairs, preventive actions would be emphasized in the right way, and still the affairs would be handled on a large scale, as is the case at the present. However, fields of activities near The Ministry of Education and The Ministry of Labour should be investigated when it comes to handling the issues of the Roma. Individual civil servants are the people who, in the end, are responsible for coordinating Romani affairs in The Ministry of Education as well as in other ministries. When it comes to the ministries being suitable for handling Romani affairs, the ministries are dependent on those civil servants, because when handling the affairs of ethnic minorities it is essential that the civil servants are willing to handle those affairs.²⁰⁰

Education will be increasingly important in the prevention of marginalization in future, so the Rapporteurs emphasize the role of The Ministry of Education in this context.

¹⁹⁹ Meeting of the Rapporteurs in the Ministry of Justice 7.5.1999.

²⁰⁰ Meeting of the Rapporteurs in the Ministry of Education 5.5.1999.

The duties of **The Ministry of Labour** in the field of employment and in manpower training are crucial in the prevention of marginalization of the Roma. The Ministry of Labour has connections to local labour offices and Employment and Economic Development Centre, that can take direct action to promote the employment of the Roma. This is how The Ministry of Labour can pass self-administration on municipal level and work through the labour offices. On one hand this is an advantage, and on other hand this is a disadvantage. Municipal democracy must not be passed. The Ministry of Labour works, on local level, in cooperation with social welfare officers and with Social Insurance Institution to prevent marginalization, for example. The cooperation is based on legal obligation of rehabilitation legislation. If The Ministry of Labour had a coordinator for Romani affairs, the problem would be that The Ministry's field of activities does not cover the basic reasons for the employment problems of the Roma. The Ministry of Labour might be effective in corrective activities, but on the long range it cannot solve the basic employment problem of the Roma – low level of education. It has also been suspected that the immigration issues that are also on the responsibility of The Ministry of Labour, take the first place over Romani issues that might be placed there in future. It is justified to separate the situation and problems of the Roma from other groups.²⁰¹

Employment Service Act (1005/1993) and decree (1251/1993) promote access to labour market on general level. Quick and flexible integration was set to be the goal of immigration policy in the immigration and refugee policy program of the state, issued in October 1997. The Ministry of Labour drew up government proposal for a law on naturalization of immigrants and on reception of asylum seekers. The goal is to use law to make naturalization of immigrants more effective. The law puts emphasis on the refugee's own active responsibility for the new situation in life. As the law was ratified, The Ministry of Labour was given the responsibility of developing, guiding, and coordinating the naturalization of immigrants. The law came into force in the beginning of May 1999.

The responsibility of **The Ministry of the Environment** has in housing issues is still timely in Romani policy. When it comes to housing issues, The Ministry of the Environment has a certain readiness to act as an informant in the cooperation between municipalities and local Roma. National Housing Board and The Ministry of the Environment could disseminate information to municipalities. The coordination and education of contact person system could be developed in The Ministry of the Environment. The Ministry could influence by increasing information about the funding presently available (state-subsidized housing loan and interest subsidy loan). However, what limits The Ministry of the Environment as a coordinator of Romani affairs is the variety of housing problems. The housing issue is not something that can be said to unite the Roma. In some municipalities the housing problem is not very prevalent. The fact that the Romani population has centered in towns has changed the nature of housing problems. For example people are mostly satisfied in the level of housing in Vantaa.²⁰²

Summary of administration: The process of writing this report has shown that it is best to implement the coordination of Romani policy the field of administration that is closest to the problems of Romani population.²⁰³ When looking at the tasks of different ministries in relation to the problems of the Roma, *The Ministry of Education* comes forth as the coordinator of Romani affairs, because education is a key factor in prevention of

²⁰¹ Meeting of the Rapporteurs in the Ministry of Labour 10.5.1999.

²⁰² Meeting of the Rapporteurs in Vantaa Association of the Roma 22.4.1999. Meeting of the Rapporteurs in the Ministry of the Environment 7.5.1999.

²⁰³ Meeting of the Rapporteurs in the Ministry of the Interior 10.5.1999.

marginalization of the Roma. Marginalization begins from childhood and it must be stopped as early as possible. The Ministry of Education has direct connections to county governments and to municipalities. In addition to that, there already is a Romani Education Unit in National Board of Education. Another factor is that the area of operation of The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is taking a second place to educational issues from the perspective of marginalization, although it is still important. All this makes it justified to transfer the action of Advisory Board on Romani Affairs to The Ministry of Education. Subsistence support has become, for many Roma, a source of income that can be compared to a wage for citizens. The meaning of wage for citizens is passive, because in the framework of the wage it is difficult to make changes and do development work for the Roma. Educational questions are, instead, dynamic and they are directed to children and young people, who can get a good basic and vocational training and possibilities for employment in future. There are several other ministries that could be the coordinators of Romani policy, but it must be noted that the operation field of the The Ministry responsible for coordination has an impact on the whole Romani policy, so this perspective must be taken into consideration.

If the coordination of Romani affairs is transferred to The Ministry of Education, the status and activities of the Romani Education Unit must be protected. Education issues are just one issue, although an important one, in the action of Advisory Board on Romani Affairs. It is essential that the education of the Roma has sufficient resources in municipalities.

5.4. Advisory Boards

Council of State made a decision to appoint *The Advisory Board on Romani Affairs* in 1989 (1058/1989). A predecessor of the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs was Advisory Board on Gypsy Affairs, since 1956. The purpose of the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs is to promote equal opportunities for participation in society for Romani population, and to promote financial, social and educational circumstances. The Advisory Board is linked to the The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Council of State appoints members to serve on the Board for three years at a time. Half of the members are appointed on the basis of the proposals of the most significant Romani associations, and the other members represent the areas of the The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the The Ministry of Education, the The Ministry of Labour, and the The Ministry of the Environment; at least these ministries are represented. Municipal central organizations can propose one member to the Board. *It is the opinion of the Rapporteurs, that due to the increased number of tasks both on national and international level, the resources of the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs should be increased by establishing a new office of a planner.*

Finlands report on the implementation of *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* states that the The Ministry of Labour has a coordinating role in the naturalization of immigrants, and in promoting good ethnic relations, and in preventing racism and discrimination. A new decree concerning the Advisory Board on Refugee and Immigrant Affairs came to force on 1.3.1998, and at the same time the title of the Board was changed to *Advisory Board on Ethnic Relations*. New tasks for the Board are tasks related to racism and ethnic relations. Half of the members of the Board represent immigrants and other ethnic communities, for example Tatars and the Jews. The Sami and the Roma are represented in the multicultural section of the Board.

Finland has organs that monitor discrimination, a group of ministers that fosters good ethnic relations, and a decision on principle of the Council of State on measures to increase tolerance, and a decision on principle of the Council of State on a state immigration and refugee policy. In addition to that, Finland has several boards and committees:

*Advisory Board on Ethnic Relations (former Advisory Board on Refugee and Immigrant Affairs),
Advisory Board on Sami Affairs,
Advisory Board on Romani Affairs,
Delegation against Racism,
Immigration and Refugee Policy Committee,
Advisory Board on Human Rights.*

Svenska Finlands Folkting supervises the status and interests of Swedish speaking Finns and their language. All these boards that promote the affairs of minority groups, are in a different position in the administration of state.

The Rapporteurs consider that *the juridical position of the boards promoting the affairs of minority groups must be standardized. Central administration of the state should look for a suitable administrative unit to coordinate the affairs of all minority groups.*

Representatives of minority groups should be provided employment on local, provincial and national level. The Roma should be provided with training and information on how to participate in organizational activities of society. Training and media can help achieve this goal.

In addition to that, administration should be more clearly organized so that different sectors would appoint a person who would be responsible for affairs that are related to the Roma and possibly to other minorities too, in that particular administrative sector. In addition to that, different sectors of administration should draw up their own programs to support and develop the participation possibilities of the Roma.

Framework Convention article 18 covers international treaties on protection of persons who belong to minority groups. International cooperation should be encouraged.

Finland and Russia have an agreement on maintaining the origins of Finns and nations of Finnish origin living in Russia, and maintaining the origins of people coming from Russia in Finland. *When it comes to the expansion negotiations of European Union, Finland must take into consideration the treatment of the Roma in different European countries. Finland must, in other occasions too, bring up the treatment of the Roma in different European countries and in other countries all over the world.*

In the *Framework Convention* member states of Council of Europe consider that a democratic society with many values and real democracy must not only respect the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of people who belong to national minorities, but they should create appropriate circumstances where they can express, maintain, and develop this identity. It is hoped that cultural variety will become a source of wealth, not a source of dispute, to each society. In the document the parties involved commit to take up sufficient measures to promote full and effective equality, in all areas of society, between those who belong to minority groups and those who belong to majority population.

Finland does not have an actual integration policy concerning national minorities. Finland has a political program for immigrants (Council of State decision on principle 16.10.1997) that applies to immigrants who have roots in Finland, refugees, and asylum seekers. The new law on naturalization of immigrants came into force on 1.3.1999. The Roma consider the immigrants to have certain advantages in comparison to the Roma, and the measures society has taken to help them have been more active and the system has been better than when the Roma are involved. However, normally immigrants are not treated better than the Roma. The affairs of the Roma get more attention as Finland undergoes the change to a multicultural country.²⁰⁴

The Rapporteurs consider that the planned office of *discrimination attorney* should cover the affairs of all minority groups that live in Finland, and that is why the office should have sufficient resources.

The Rapporteurs propose that a working group should be appointed to supervise the implementation of proposals made in the report "Strategies of Romani Policy". The chairman of the group should be assistant department director from the The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, and other members should be representatives from other ministries, and from the Association of Finnish Regional and Local Authorities, and representatives of Romani population.

6. SUMMARY

It is an intrinsic value that Romani culture and identity remain vital. The multiculturalism of Finland means, among other things, that biculturalism of the Roma is accepted and there is readiness to invest in maintaining it. The desire of the Roma to be distinctive and to protect their own tradition is not in conflict with the values of Finnish society. The original way of life of the Roma is a way to exist and remain. This way of existence includes the will to get education, work for shared goals, and to live according to common rules. The Roma must be provided resources for this: education, channels for cooperation, and services.

A possibility for teaching Romani language must be provided in all stages of education, from day care to adult education. Language groups at schools provide an opportunity to support the identity of Romani youth. Especially language instruction in lower secondary level can significantly help prevent marginalization. A teacher of Romani language, employed by one municipality or several municipalities together, can provide the instruction. The teacher can work at several schools in the same area. If possible, the job description of the teacher can include such tasks as encouraging school attendance and curatorial tasks. Providing financial support to literature, music and theatre in Romani language means both protection of living traditions and starting up of potential line of business of the Roma.

²⁰⁴ Inquiry done by the Rapporteurs.

Supporting Romani culture is one way to prevent the marginalization of the Roma. Social actions must be used too. Education prevents marginalization and that is why especially social and educational sector must take into account the present circumstances of the Roma and strive to develop the circumstances. The importance of preschool must be taken into account, because marginalization starts from childhood. A Romani child must be offered, at an early stage, a linguistic and social basis. Day care decree (1336/945) must be implemented. Romani children must have the same opportunities as majority children at the beginning of school. Additional material on Romani culture must be produced for day care and preschool. According to research many young Roma drop out of comprehensive school, the peak of dropouts happening on lower secondary level.

One of the most significant parts of strategies for Romani policy is participation and influencing. Participation is no more considered as adapting to the values of majority population culture, but participation can be the best way to maintain and protect one's own culture. A new strategy of society is to enable the participation of the Roma and require resources for cooperation. There are at least three different ways how the new strategies of the Roma and society can meet each other in administration: 1) By establishing a separate *Romani group*, where civil servants, elected officials, and the Roma can develop the life circumstances and participation possibilities of the Roma. 2) By appointing a *Romani contact person* to disseminate information in municipalities with a small Romani population. Civil servants and politicians both need more information about the way of life of the Roma. The Roma need information about the grounds of decisions that the civil servants make. The Romani contact person must establish relations to local cooperation groups of rehabilitation services. 3) On provincial level the central action is to *establish permanent posts to the local advisory boards*. They must summon contact persons in the province, representatives of municipal Romani groups, and county officials. Provincial advisory boards shall participate equally in the activities of Advisory Board on Romani Affairs.

The action of Advisory Board on Romani Affairs is generally considered successful, but the Board needs more funding to increase its resources because the number of international operations has increased significantly. The Advisory Board on Romani Affairs needs an office for a planner to ensure that both domestic and international tasks are handled equally. The Advisory Board has been linked to the The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, by the decision of the Council of State, but the Rapporteurs suggest that appointment of the Board should be provided by law or decree, and in this context the Board should be linked to the The Ministry of Education. The reason for this is that the activities of the Board should be linked to the development of Romani population's education to prevent socio-economic marginalization.

At the moment the socio-economic situation of Romani population is weak, due to historical reasons, low level of education, general prejudices, and discrimination. The realization of complete and effective equality in the areas of economics, society, politics, and culture is halfway, although some progress has been made. The small number of Roma leading positions of society is noticeable. Their social and economic situation strongly differs from the rest of the population. This statement can be made although there are no detailed statistics available. The measures the state has taken to create actual equality have, so far, been insufficient. To achieve actual equality requires a significant investment in the education of Romani children, decrease of the prejudices of majority population, and training of officials in relation to national minorities. What is required from the Roma to achieve equality is to have patience to accept the slow change of attitudes in majority population, courage to get

education and participate in the activities of society, and wisdom to separate influencing and the danger of cultural assimilation from each other. Romani culture shall be seen as a wealth of the nation and that wealth must be protected. Participation in education, and through that, in working life, depends on the willingness of the Roma. Finnish society is still a working society, where everyone earns one's place through work. This has been difficult for the Roma, due to their low level of education. Future shall be better in this respect, providing that society allocates sufficient resources for education and the Roma themselves are willing to get educated. A central organization of the Roma can, in future, act as a channel that the Roma can use effectively to express their opinions on social issues, if the Roma are ready to establish this kind of organization.

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APPENDIX 1

Helsinki 27.2.1999

THE RAPORTEURS' INQUIRY TO ROMANI ORGANIZATIONS AND TO REGIONAL ADVISORY BOARDS THAT SERVED DURING THE YEARS 1996 – 1998

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health appointed two Rapporteurs of Romani Affairs to do an inquiry on the situation of the Roma in Finland, and to propose solutions to problems. For this reason we the undersigned Rapporteurs respectfully turn to Romani organizations and Regional Advisory Boards that served during the years 1996 – 1998 asking you to respond to the enclosed questionnaire in a most careful and inclusive fashion. The Rapporteurs depend on your answers for obtaining correct and up-to-date information and new prospects. The regional advisory boards can discuss the questions in their meetings or they can collect the individual answers of board members. We request your answers by April 15th 1999. The address is Rapporteurs of Romani Affairs, The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Advisory Board on Romani Affairs, P.O. Box 267, 00171 Helsinki.

The name of association/advisory board:

Questions:

(please provide your careful answers in a separate sheet of paper)

1. Do you consider the Roma to be on the first place a) a national minority or b) a stateless, non-territorial multinational minority? (refer to Strategies of Romani Policy, The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health publications 1998:15, page 18-21)
 - 1.1. How should the Finnish Roma maintain contact with international activities of the Roma (RNC, RIU, etc)?
 - 1.2. What is the meaning of international activities between the Roma?
 - 1.3. What are the sources of funding for those activities in the future?
 - 1.4. How effective do you consider it if the Roma themselves advocate for their rights on international forums (European Union (EU), European Council, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and United Nations (UN)?
2. Would it be better to grant the Roma special rights on national level, for example prescribe special acts and decrees to protect the status of minorities, or would it be better to strive for such a civil society where equality is implemented on the basis of basic rights and laws that apply to all citizens? (refer to the Strategies of Romani Policy, 1998, page 23).
 - 2.1. If you prefer special laws in your answer, what are the areas of society where special laws to protect the Roma must be prescribed? – Examples of special acts: special act on special housing loan, an act of subsistence support to purchase traditional Romani clothing, an act of labour market training of the Roma, an act of Romani language instruction, and so on.
 - 2.2. If your answer indicated a resistance to special rights, how should the special status of the Roma as minority be taken into consideration?
3. What is the best way for the Roma to handle their affairs, as a group, in their municipalities, provinces, and in national level?
 - 3.1. What is your opinion on the activities of Advisory Board on Romani Affairs?

4. Should the Roma establish in Finland their own central association to acts as an umbrella association for all the numerous associations of the Roma that are active at present? If so, what would be tasks of this kind of association and what would be its composition? (Note that Advisory Board on Romani Affairs cannot be an advocacy organization or an umbrella organization.)

4.1. How should the representatives of the Roma be appointed to organs that handle Romani affairs on municipal, provincial or national level?

5. Can the Roma change, for example through education or political participation, without losing the positive special characteristics of their own culture?

5.1. Shall the Roma have to look for new ways to live in surrounding society and what are those ways? For example participation in sports, art, science, business, politics, etc.

5.2. Do the future leadership criteria of the Roma lean towards education, at the expense of age and experience?

5.3. Will education extinguish Romani identity? Can for example people who have Master of Arts or Bachelor of Economic Sciences, or doctors be real Romani people?

6. Should the Roma increase their political activism by organizing themselves, and in this manner influence the policy programs of different political parties by working in the parties? What additional opportunities to influence in society should the Roma use?

6.1. How politically active are the Roma at present?

6.2. How active are the Roma in other organizations?

6.3. How is it possible to combine efforts to develop Romani culture and open political participation or other social participation?

7. How accessible is information and instruction provided by society to the Roma?

7.1. How do the decision-makers in different areas of society get information about the situation of the Roma?

7.2. What information is not obtained on both sides?

8. What are the most important means of communication? Put them in order of importance (number 1 is the most important, number 2 is in the second place, and so on): television, radio, "Latso Diives", "Romano Boodos", "grapewine", national newspapers, local newspapers, something else?

9. How are the affairs of the Roma who live in Finland when it comes to the following areas of society and what needs to be developed? Let us know where you see marginalization. (Note that marginalization is different from discrimination. Marginalization happens when an individual or a group falls from the so-called normal financial, social or spiritual course of life. Material poverty is one form of marginalization.)

What is

- a) the financial situation of the Roma, state of being badly off, poverty, and marginalization
- b) health or lack of it, problems in health services, those who are marginalized from health services
- c) social problems, problems in social welfare, people who are marginalized from social welfare (day care, child welfare, subsistence support, services for disabled people, welfare for the aged, welfare for abusers of intoxicants, social welfare)
- d) education, development, problems in education and studying, those who are marginalized from education services

- e) employment, activity in work life, unemployed people and people who are marginalized in labour market
- f) housing, homeless people, those who live in poor housing conditions, and those who are marginalized in housing market, services of housing officials and housing market
- g) political and financial activity, those who are marginalized from exercise of power and participation
- h) criminality (victims of crimes and offenders) and its development, repeated offences as a problem
- i) addiction to intoxicants and drugs, people with mental health problems or multiple problems, and suicides as a problem
- j) any other problems (name them)

10. What kind of help and support do the Roma need to overcome their problems?

10.1. Are there some characteristics in Romani culture and way of life that help prevent and treat the above-mentioned problems?

10.2. Are there some characteristics in Romani culture and way of life that help cause the above-mentioned problems?

10.3. What can the Roma do themselves to take care of the problems mentioned in question number 9? What is the part of society?

11. Are the Roma in Finland being discriminated against? If so, how and where it happens? (Discrimination means putting a person in an unequal position for example in work life, at school, or in different civil and private services.)

12. Where do Romani associations get financial support? (Finnish Slot Machine Association, government, municipality, church, private sector)

12.1. For what purpose is the support received?

12.2. What kind of support do Romani associations need? For what purpose?

13. What are the labour market education needs of the Roma?

13.1. How do the Roma cope and proceed in working life?

13.2. Is there any information available on the enterprises established by the Roma, on what fields?

14. What sector of society takes the most positive stand towards the Roma? Put the following sectors in a numeral order so that the most positive sector is number 1, the second positive sector is number 2, and so on.

- a) church, congregation
- b) municipality (social welfare, health care, housing officials, schools, etc.)
- c) police
- d) the court system
- e) private enterprises
- f) ordinary citizens
- g) politicians
- h) some other sector (name)

15. What is Finland's attitude towards the Roma when compared to other countries (state and society)?

16. Are other minorities in Finland, for example new immigrants, treated better than the Roma? If so, in what way?

17. How much attention and coverage did your association give to the questions presented above?

18. Is there any additional information you wish to convey to the Rapporteurs?

Thank you for your time!

Väinö Lindberg
Rapporteur

Kyösti Suonoja
Rapporteur

THE RAPORTEURS' INQUIRY TO ROMANI ORGANIZATIONS AND TO REGIONAL ADVISORY BOARDS THAT SERVED DURING THE YEARS 1996 – 1998

SUMMARY

1. DO YOU CONSIDER THE ROMA TO BE ON THE FIRST PLACE A) A NATIONAL MINORITY OR B) A STATELESS, NON-TERRITORIAL MULTINATIONAL MINORITY?

The Roma are on the first place a national minority (Romano Missio, Oulu, Tampere Romani Association, Finland's Free Romani Mission, and South Finland).

The Roma are a stateless, non-territorial, multinational minority. (Oulu accepts this definition, too.)

Politically a national minority, ethnically a non-territorial multinational minority (Central Finland).

1.1. International cooperation

Cooperation is considered important. Cooperation should be centralized so that interest groups take care of it (Central Finland).

- Must be considered in depth (Romano Missio).
- Contacts should be maintained 1) officially, for example through seminars and other events, 2) through unofficial relations. Internet could be a good channel in cooperation (Finland's Free Romani Mission).

1.2. The meaning of international cooperation

The meaning of international cooperation is important, especially for information exchange, how are Romani affairs handled in different countries. Those people who are well off can help those who are worse off, the help can be given on international level, too. Exchange of information can produce useful projects, like on the areas of language and culture (Romano Missio). A Pan-European Romani policy can be the goal in the long range. This can strengthen both supranational identity and national minority identity (Oulu Regional Advisory Board).

Cooperation can be carried out for example in OSCE, EU, EC, and UN.

The Romani policy of Finland could be an example to other states. The danger here is that we will become too involved in international Romani policy, using the perspective of Finland (Finland's Free Romani Mission).

International cooperation must strengthen and uplift the identity of the Roma in Finland.

1.3. Where to get funding for international activities?

From the well-known existing sources: EU, UN, national funding. Funding channels are considered complicated and hard to understand. Congregations, collections in congregations. Even sponsors might be used in future.

1.4. How effective do you consider it if the Roma themselves advocate for their rights on international forums?

This is considered a good opportunity to influence on the situation of the Roma. It requires a highly developed system and common will to work for shared goals. A wide representation is needed – everyone's voice needs to be heard. It is proposed that an assistant official be appointed to maintain contacts with majority population (Central Finland). The content of "common will" is subjected to problems and suspicions, is this possible – probably not yet. The answers were written in conditional mode. Ought to ... could offer opportunities ... should ... it were good if ... etc.

- International activity can be an effective forum because hardly any political group on national level will start to advocate for a relatively small group (about 10 000 persons). An international activist must be both an acknowledged "real" Roma and an educated person (Regional Advisory Board of South Finland).

2. SHOULD THE ROMA BE GRANTED SPECIAL RIGHTS, OR WOULD IT BE BETTER TO STRIVE FOR SUCH A CIVIL SOCIETY WHERE EQUALITY IS IMPLEMENTED ON THE BASIS OF BASIC RIGHTS AND LAWS THAT APPLY TO ALL CITIZENS?

The goal is a society where basic rights ensure equal treatment. Before this goal is reached, it is possible to enact temporary legislation to secure the rights of the Roma ("positive discrimination" – Romano Missio). Special laws are a necessary temporary solution. Special laws could be enacted about economy and education (Oulu). Central Finland proposes that special laws should protect especially Romani culture.

2.1. If you prefer special laws in your answer, what are the areas of society where special laws to protect the Roma must be prescribed?

- equal education
- financial standing
- cultural rights. Act on subsistence support for Romani clothing, act on instruction of Romani language, and act on labour market education (Central Finland).
- housing affairs
- subsistence support
- labour market education
- standing of Romani language

Structures should be changed for special rights so that the rights prescribed by special laws can be implemented in practice.

Special laws are widely supported, although the goal is a society, where rights are equally implemented without these special laws.

Special laws are still needed, so that people can get rid of them some day.

2.2. If your answer indicated a resistance to special rights, how should the special status of the Roma as minority be taken into consideration?

- "The Roma must not be granted national special rights" (Tampere Romani Association).
- "When it comes to Finland, separate national special rights are not necessary, since they will weaken the situation of the Roma ... Globally thinking, special rights to protect the existence of the Roma are needed" (Vantaa Romani Association, inc.).

3. WHAT IS THE BEST WAY FOR THE ROMA TO HANDLE THEIR AFFAIRS, AS A GROUP, IN THEIR MUNICIPALITIES, PROVINCES, AND IN NATIONAL LEVEL?

By becoming active to handle their own affairs. The existing channels, like for example regional advisory boards, local and national associations, must be used. Cooperation with local authorities must be increased, and this can be done with the help of support persons/cultural interpreters.

- By cooperation. Cooperative, socially enlightened, and respected people are needed to cooperate.

In addition to the above, a "municipal area group" is proposed. A representative would be selected out of that group to provincial advisory board. This board should have direct connections to Advisory Board on Romani Affairs (Regional Advisory Board of Western Finland, Finland's Free Romani Mission).

- By being employed by municipality, for example in social welfare services or school administration.

3.1. What is your opinion on the activities of Advisory Board on Romani Affairs?

On general level, the work done by Advisory Board on Romani Affairs is considered valuable. However, the problem is in regional division: South Finland is overrepresented. Another problem is the distance from the daily problems people live with. The activities of Advisory Board on Romani Affairs are not very well known. The Advisory Board does not cover provinces. The Advisory Board should provide more information for example to Romani Associations.

It is believed that the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs has a vital role in developing legislation. At the grassroots level the impact of the work of the Board becomes visible only with a time lag, and thus it is difficult to perceive its importance.

- It is hoped that the General Secretary will concentrate more on domestic affairs (Southern Finland Regional Advisory Board).

4. SHOULD THE ROMA ESTABLISH IN FINLAND THEIR OWN CENTRAL ASSOCIATION TO ACTS AS AN UMBRELLA ASSOCIATION FOR ALL THE NUMEROUS ASSOCIATIONS OF THE ROMA THAT ARE ACTIVE AT PRESENT?

An umbrella organization is considered possible, if not downright necessary. Oulu Regional Advisory Board proposes that the tasks of a central association could be acting as a pressure group, and acting as an expert group. Oulu suggests the members should be elected (only a real Roma would be eligible to vote, requires a definition of what is a "real" Roma). Nowadays only a small active part of the Roma participates in organizational activities, so a central organization should summon the Roma to participate. A central organization should not displace the tasks of present Romani associations.

Central Finland proposes an interesting system of three umbrella organizations. Spiritually, politically, and socially oriented umbrella organizations are needed. They would be independent, but would cooperate closely.

- "An umbrella organization must not be established" (Tampere Romani Association).
- "The same kind of organization model the Sami have could be good" (Vantaa Romani Association).

4.1. How should the representatives of the Roma be appointed to organs that handle Romani affairs on municipal, provincial or national level?

The prospective central organization to be established in future could be divided to regional associations that could choose their representatives to municipal or provincial organizations. The central organization could be represented in organs of the State. An important thing is to strive for regional justice and to listen to the opinions of local Romani population.

- Cooperative, socially enlightened, and respected people are needed to cooperate (Finland's Free Romani Mission).

Romani associations must appoint the representatives (Tampere Romani Association).

- Representatives should be elected in provinces to make decisions on the affairs of the province (an individual opinion from Eastern Finland Advisory Board).

5. GETTING AN EDUCATION AND PARTICIPATING IN POLITICAL ACTIVITY: WILL ROMANI IDENTITY DISAPPEAR?

People take up a positive attitude towards education. Some of them consider that education strengthens identity. Lack of education is a threat to the whole Romani culture in the pressures of the present time. Participating in the activities of society is also considered to raise the self-esteem of the Roma, and to bring out real, positive characteristics of Romani culture. It is important that the education or social activities are not in conflict with traditional values.

- They cannot change without losing their identity (Tampere Romani Association).
- "... outward characteristics of the Roma will change as education increases" (Vantaa Romani Association).

5.1. Shall the Roma have to look for new ways to live in surrounding society and what are those ways?

New ways of living get a wide support. Increasing communication between majority population and the Roma is a prerequisite for developing attitudes towards increased tolerance.

New ways should be found among healthy ways of living: sports and exercise.

For example someone wishing to enter the field of science or arts should be so qualified that a Romani identity would do no harm. On the contrary, a qualified Roma brings along "additional spice and value that is already mythical" (Southern Finland Regional Advisory Board).

5.2. Does the future leadership criterion of the Roma lean towards education, at the expense of age and experience?

These alternatives are not considered as conflicting and mutually exclusive. Education provides capacity for leadership, especially if it is combined with commitment to Romani values. The wisdom brought along by experience of older people must be respected, although educated people rise to leadership positions.

- "Leadership can be collective leadership, where younger Roma with more education bear the main responsibility under the supervision of older Roma" (Finland's Free Romani Mission).

There is no emphasis put on education at the expense of age and experience (Tampere Romani Association, and an individual opinion from Eastern Finland Advisory Board).

Because Romani community is a human relations community, an educated Romani leader must be skilled in traditional Romani values – in the art of social intercourse (Southern Finland Regional Advisory Board).

5.3. Will education extinguish Romani identity?

It will not. Lack of education can, instead, extinguish the whole Romani culture. The more educated Roma there are the more reason to be proud of being a Roma.

- It depends on how strong the Romani identity is. It is hard to think of professions a Roma could enter without breaking traditions (Southern Finland Regional Advisory Board).

In some professions (no mention what are they) the identity will disappear (Central Finland).

6. SHOULD THE ROMA GET POLITICALLY ORGANIZED?

The answer is positive. Romani people's own organizations can also be used as interest groups in Romani affairs. It is necessary to participate, so that there would be no need to be content with decisions made by political parties without Romani decision-makers.

- Individuals should take initiative in this matter; for example they could run for municipal council.

6.1. Political activity at present

The Roma are rather passive politically. The Roma are scattered in different election districts, and that is why they do not have much influence. According to the view of Oulu, if the representation of minorities were protected in municipal and state politics, the Roma would be more active.

6.2. Degree of activity of the Roma in other organizations

Their own organizations and different free churches.

The problem is that the same people influence year after year in all organizations. The others are passed over. There is also a lot of competition between Romani organizations.

The challenge of Romani organizations is to better utilize the potential of the whole Romani population.

6.3. How is it possible to combine efforts to develop Romani culture and social participation?

It is believed to happen naturally as social participation increases. Culture develops as the Roma participate and bring it out. It would be important to provide young Roma with opportunities to participate; the old experts of Romani policy have to know when it is time to step aside.

Organizational activities are considered a natural channel for developing culture and for participation. Low social standing is closely related to social passivity.

- People should participate as real Roma, utilizing the best characteristics of Romani culture. However, the best sides of majority culture should be learned too: method and organization (Finland's Free Romani Mission).

7. HOW ACCESSIBLE IS INFORMATION AND INSTRUCTION PROVIDED BY SOCIETY TO THE ROMA?

It is hard to get information. Television and Romani people's own publications are important. Actually there would be no channel without Romani newspapers and journals.

Information is fairly accessible (Central Finland, Finland's Free Romani Mission).

- "The Roma are aware of affairs that are directly related to them" (Vantaa Romani Association).

7.1. How do the decision-makers get information about the Roma?

They do not get much information, considering what does majority population know about the Roma. Part of the reason might be the small amount of scientific research done. However, information is available: TV, radio, Internet, Romani people's own publications, and for example guides like "The Roma and Health Care". An official, who handles and meets Romani affairs at work, has to be active; there is information available for those who need it.

Information is most easily spread in towns (or other communities) where the Roma work. Dissemination of information requires an employee who is present.

7.2. What information is not obtained on both sides?

The basic problem might be that although information was available, majority population is not very interested in it. So there is lack of necessary information about housing and customs, for example.

The perspective used in answers was what majority population does not know.

Part of the information is of such nature that there is no desire to disclose it right away.

- Negative information is being concealed (individual opinion, Eastern Finland Regional Advisory Board).

8. THE MOST IMPORTANT MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

- 1) *public media* (radio, TV, newspapers)
- 2) *Romani people's own newspapers/grapewine/local newspapers*
- 3) *grapewine/newspapers (and Romani newspapers)*
- 4) *national newspapers*

Some answers include many perspectives. For example when it comes to information dissemination between the Roma, the answer is:

1. Romani newspapers
2. grapewine
3. other newspapers

9. HOW ARE THE AFFAIRS OF THE ROMA THAT LIVE IN FINLAND WHEN IT COMES TO THE FOLLOWING AREAS OF SOCIETY? WHERE CAN YOU SEE MARGINALIZATION?

a) The financial situation creates other areas of marginalization. Economics is the most important factor. Subsistence support is considered a normal means of income generation (a so-called "acquired benefit" Finland's Free Romani Mission).

b) State of health of the Roma is worse than that of majority population. Multiplier impact adds to health problems, for example people do not go to hospital, they become ill at a young age (way of life?). Health care services are available! Unhealthy way of life (diet, lack of exercise) as a reason. The importance of close relationships to health has been noted also.

c) Fortunately the support and protection given family and close friends often prevent marginalization. However, parents are losing their parenthood. People know how to use social welfare services.

d) Young Roma are almost totally marginalized from education. There are Roma who were unnecessarily transferred to observation classes and so on. The educated Roma who are graduating now will improve the situation in future.

e) The opportunities to gain employment are considered very slight, "the Roma are almost completely marginalized from working life" (Oulu). No education, no jobs. To earn a residence and a job a Roma must do his job better than representatives of majority population must.

f) Big problems in housing. Urban decay is a threat due to prejudice.

Obs: the housing situation in Finland is good! (Central Finland and Finland's Free Romani Mission)

However, the quality of residences is considered good.

g) Almost complete marginalization from politics. However, those who enter politics get support from Romani population nowadays.

h) Especially criminality of young people is alarming. Criminality increases at the same rate with majority population. "Criminality is rampant" (an individual opinion, Eastern Finland Regional Advisory Board).

i) Abuse of intoxicants is alarming and on the rise. Not many suicides – however a new serious phenomenon. Mental health problems have increased: loneliness, life has no purpose, and people have no roots.

j) For example lack of control of life in families. Conflicts with officials - personal chemistry does not work.

- Connections between the Roma are disappearing. For this reason there is uncertainty about future (Finland's Free Romani Mission).

10. WHAT ADDITIONAL SUPPORT DO THE ROMA NEED?

- Tolerance from majority population.
- The role of organizations could change to that of service providers, when services of society possibly weaken. To achieve this, financial support from society is required.
- Social and spiritual support. It is easier to accept the support from a Roma than from someone who belongs to majority population. Romani organizations could find the right ways to help people.

10.1. Are there some characteristics in Romani culture and way of life that help prevent and treat the above-mentioned problems?

Support from family helps in many ways – problems with intoxicants, childcare, and care of the elderly – close family ties. "For the Roma a child is always a child."

- These positive characteristics of Romani way of life are already being forgotten.

10.2. Are there some characteristics in Romani culture and way of life that help cause the above-mentioned problems?

For example vagrant way of life, lack of education, different time concept (the Roma often lack long-term plans, people live in the present).

- Quarrels between families.
- Clothing.

The way parents drift apart from young people when they are growing up, due to reasons of modesty, is suggested to be a reason for young people's problems. A teenager does not get the support he/she needs. (Vantaa Romani Association)

10.3. What can the Roma do themselves to take care of the problems mentioned in question number 9? What is the part of society?

The attempts of society to change Romani culture are considered unnecessary. Change of a community happens inside the community. The Roma must bravely bring out the problems. Society must cooperate for example with Romani organizations.

The Roma themselves must also strive for cooperation with majority population. Problems must be acknowledged and responsibility taken over oneself and others.

Society should give financial support for employment of youth workers and family workers, for example.

11. ARE THE ROMA IN FINLAND BEING DISCRIMINATED AGAINST?

- Yes, in almost every area of life.
- There is hidden racism. Competition about jobs is hard even among majority population. It is hard for the Roma to succeed in this competition. There is discrimination in recruiting and probably in social welfare services. (Finland's Free Romani Mission)

12. WHERE DO ROMANI ASSOCIATIONS GET FINANCIAL SUPPORT?

Finnish Slot Machine Association, government municipality, church, private sector.

12.1. For what purpose is the support received?

Projects, social welfare services, childcare, spiritual work, fieldwork, press, language, culture, and information.

- Church provides accommodation for activities, Finnish Slot Machine Association and government provide direct financial support.

12.2. What kind of support do Romani associations need?

Re the problems in question 9.

Money is needed – for example for education.

13. WHAT ARE THE LABOUR MARKET EDUCATION NEEDS OF THE ROMA?

Vocational education and apprenticeship contract. Those who left off comprehensive school should have the opportunity for apprenticeship contract. In future public schools should be utilized.

- There are too many courses that really do not lead to employment. Young adults/adults need vocational courses for construction work, car repairing, electrical work, and so on. Young people need basic education and professional qualifications, not necessarily more courses. (Finland's Free Romani Mission)
- Society defines future needs – training according to these needs.

13.1. How do the Roma cope and proceed in working life?

Those who find employment, cope pretty well. The problem is the inaccessible labour market.

13.2. Is there any information available on the enterprises established by the Roma?

Furniture and shoe factories, horseracing enterprises, sales companies (clothing business), music enterprises, artists and car retail salesmen are known.

14. WHAT SECTOR OF SOCIETY TAKES THE MOST POSITIVE STAND TOWARDS THE ROMA?

- 1) *church*
- 2) *municipality/ordinary citizens/politicians*
- 3) *politicians/the court system/private enterprises*
- 4) *the police/politicians/ordinary citizens*
- 5) *ordinary citizens/municipality/politicians*
- 6) *the court system/private enterprises*
- 7) *the police*

obs. The most negative stand is taken by guards in shopping centres (Central Finland and Finland's Free Romani Mission).

15. WHAT IS FINLAND'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE ROMA WHEN COMPARED TO OTHER COUNTRIES (STATE AND SOCIETY)?

Better than the others, it can even be said that Finland is the best.

"Really well" (Central Finland).

"One of the best in the world" (Finland's Free Romani Mission).

16. ARE OTHER MINORITIES IN FINLAND TREATED BETTER THAN THE ROMA?

Immigrants have certain advantages when compared to the Roma (Oulu). Measures of society are more active and systems are better. Part of the reason is international treaties Finland has committed to, for example regarding refugees. However, it is not a general rule that other minorities are treated better (Romano missio, Tampere Romani Association, Finland's Free Romani Mission).

The fact that Finland has become a multicultural country has brought out the affairs of the Roma. The situation of a Romani family is more familiar and homelike than the situation of a Somali family, for example (Southern Finland Regional Advisory Board).

17. HOW MUCH ATTENTION AND COVERAGE DID YOUR ASSOCIATION GIVE TO THE QUESTIONS PRESENTED ABOVE?

We gave in-depth answers that cover Romani affairs extensively.

There were too many questions and some of them were complicated. However, the questions created discussion (Central Finland).

18. IS THERE ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION YOU WISH TO CONVEY TO THE RAPORTEURS?

- If society were interested in supporting the Roma, it should provide financial support to activities, like regional advisory boards and Romani organizations.
- The continuity of regional advisory boards must be guaranteed (Southern Finland Regional Advisory Board).
- Attention should be paid to participation of women (Central Finland).

APPENDIX 2

PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS THE RAPPORTEURS VISITED IN SPRING 1999

Present at the meetings Rapporteurs Väinö Lindberg and Kyösti Suonoja
Secretaries Pekka Harjunkoski and Krista Virtanen

23.2. RYHDYS inc, MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND HEALTH, ADVISORY BOARD ON ROMANI AFFAIRS:

Isberg Tiina
Jääpuro Unto
Stenberg Seija

12.3. SIPOO, Children´s Home of Romano Missio, Romako training project:

Students in certificate in youth and leisure instruction training program, teacher Tiina Lindberg.

26.3. PROVINCE OF OULU REGIONAL ADVISORY BOARD, County Government, Oulu:

Lindgren Hannu
Lappalainen Ilkka
Lindberg Armas
Murtomäki Henna
Toukomaa Pertti
Valtanen Tuija
Åkerlund Tuija

6.4. PROVINCE OF SOUTHERN FINLAND REGIONAL ADVISORY BOARD, County Government, Hämeenlinna:

Ellala Esa
Grönfors Hilja
Grönfors Kalle
Hedman Henry
Hedman-Valentin Hellevi
Lehmusta Taito
Niskanen Birgitta
Nyman Dimitri
Nyman Seppo
Rantala Veijo
Roth Rainer

9.4. PROVINCE OF WESTERN FINLAND REGIONAL ADVISORY BOARD, County Government of Western Finland, Jyväskylä:

Florin Kyösti
Hedman Allani
Hedman Marika
Hedman Seppo
Hämäläinen Tuija
Korhonen Marketta
Manner Lauri
Rothman Taisto
Välimäki Sari

13.4. PROVINCE OF EASTERN FINLAND REGIONAL ADVISORY BOARD, County Government of Eastern Finland, St. Michel:

Blomerus Pauli
Hagert Eetu
Hyytinen Iris
Koukka Sisko
Valentin Helena

20.4. MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR, Police Department, Helsinki:

Kekomäki Kalle

22.4. VANTAA ROMANI ASSOCIATION, Myyrmäki Health Centre:

Stenroth Seija
Åkerlund Rosa
Åkerlund Tuula

23.4. TOWN OF PORI, Town Office Block, Pori:

Forström Raimo
Häti Pirjo
Mattila Tuula
Palmroth Ulla-Maija
Reunanen Sirkka
Vilen Marja

28.4. PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, Helsinki:

Aaltonen Heikki
Vilavaara Auni-Marja

29.4. ADVISORY BOARD ON ROMANI AFFAIRS, Helsinki:

Rapporteurs' notice on the Report on Romani Affairs.

3.5. MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT, Helsinki:

Lauronen Jorma
Vesänen Pirjo

6.5. THE ASSOCIATION OF FINNISH REGIONAL AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES,
Office Block of the Association, Helsinki:

Långvik Berndt
Raitoaho Outi

7.5. MINISTRY OF JUSTICE, Helsinki:

Aarnio Eero

10.5. MINISTRY OF LABOUR, Helsinki:

Ilonen Matti
Lamberg Brita
Sihto Matti

10.5. MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR, Helsinki:

Korkealehto Matti
Virtanen Sirkka-Liisa

10.5. MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, Helsinki:

Hagerstam Petra
Holopainen Outi (chair)

10.5. MINISTRY OF FINANCE, Department of Administration Development, Helsinki:

Simola, Anja

17.5. TAMMELA, town hall:

Kaarina Teppo
Lehmusta Taito
Rauhala Sirpa

19.5. MIKKOLA SCHOOL, Vantaa:

Reinikainen Riitta-Liisa
Sarsama Arja
Åkerlund Tuula

20.5. NATIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION, Helsinki:

Lillberg Eine
Ranta Anja

25.5. MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND HEALTH, Helsinki:

Alakärppä Sirpa
Leppo Kimmo
Viitala Riitta

15.6. WORKING COMMITTEE OF ADVISORY BOARD ON ROMANI AFFAIRS,
Parliament.