

# SPORT AS POWER OF INTEGRATION AMONG MINORITIES

**Beatrix Faragó**

*National Roma Council, sports manager, researcher  
beatrix.farago.b@gmail.com*

**Piroska Béki**

*University of Debrecen, University of Physical Education, PhD student*

**Abstract:** *The opportunities and development of skills in the field of sports may open a door to social inclusion that also facilitates social integration. Based on the funding provided by the national sports strategy and integration, the research project can be developed further on and implemented. The efforts of the European Union (EU) and of the European Council towards the member states are carried out through its directives, and the analyses of these documents provide guidelines for the elaboration of the Hungarian Roma strategies. Funding is one of the key factors for the elaboration of Roma integration strategy and its efficiency. The research highlights upon the way of thinking and mentality of Roma young people about sports currently, and on the importance of sport affairs for them. Also, reflects on the factors which promote motivation to have successful career goals and achieve those based on the program. The sports integration survey suggests conclusions on the role of mentoring in Roma youngsters' studies, in sports, in building social relations, the role model motivating for them, or on the supportive role of the parents or even the lack of it in their families. The expected result would be a survey on sporting habits of the Roma minority and disadvantaged youth and their positioning in education through which we could develop programs to promote the integration of the Roma minority and to improve their general circumstances.*

*The National Social Inclusion Strategy (Ministry of Human Capacities, National Social Inclusion Strategy 2011–2020) provides the financial background of the integration project whose application also prevails in the field of sports integration. The aspirations of the EU provide guidance to the amount of funding and its allocation manners. The National Roma Self-Government's (NRSZ) sports integration project and best practice has provided the basis for the sports integration research project. The survey is examining the recreational habits, motivational factors, study levels among the Roma minority and the disadvantaged young people. Based on the questionnaire, we can draw some conclusions about the development of sports integration programs. The issues cover the field of sport activities of young people aged between 9-18 and on the significance of sport opportunities for break-out for the Roma youth, and on the effect of role models for them. The sports integration projects treat simultaneously the development of education and sport, furthermore they are significantly linked to each other. The target group of the questionnaire survey are mainly the Roma and disadvantaged people. The sample item number is 1216 completed questionnaires from the whole territory of the country, from 16 schools.*

*As shown in the survey, the sport and the level of education are significantly related to each other. Those who do any sports, obtain higher level of achievement in their studies. It can be revealed by the fact that through mentoring the sportsmen can promote their school performance and sport development together. The research highlights on another observation, namely, it also confirms the legitimacy of sports integration program and points out the direction for development.*

*For accomplishing the goal of social inclusion through sport we have at hand the appropriate concept. It is, furthermore necessary to strengthen and to develop the mentoring program, which ensures the lower drop-out rate among the participants. The effect of Sports integration is motivating for the Roma and for the disadvantaged youth. The use of sport as a tool for social inclusion proves to be of utmost importance.*

**Keywords:** *sport integration, social inclusion, sport, Roma (JEL code: Z23)*

## Introduction

There is a strong trend fighting against racial or ethnic discrimination both on international and national level. The European Union has issued a call for the Member States to elaborate, finance and implement Roma integration strategies and they would prefer the accomplishment of these strategies by 2020. The EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies provide the necessary progress steps in order to foster the national Roma integrations by 2020 (Advice of the European Council (2013. December 9.) Government program for the Roma



integration, 2013/C 378/01). In Europe there live approx. 10-12 million Roma people, many of them face with prejudice, intolerance and discrimination and social exclusion on daily basis. They live in fairly poor socio-economic conditions, edged out to the margins of society. In the 21st century European Union it is unacceptable. The integration of Roma people, besides the economic benefits associated with social benefits, also has a positive impact on the communities they co-habit with.



*1-2 picture: Roma people with their family and on the sport event (1.alfahir.hu, 2.NRSG)*

The European Commission encourages Member States to promote the integration of Roma taking into account the following objectives: access to education, employment, health care and housing. The EU Commission highlights that sufficient funding should be provided for Roma integration measures from the national budget, which can further be supplemented from international and EU funds (European Union discrimination document). In Hungary, among the Government program implied objectives it has been defined “to improve the conditions of the Roma, to promote their social inclusion” namely, coping with the problems of the Roma being a national matter and interest. The aim of the Government is to determine in a 10-year time-span the challenges of the people living in poverty, including the integration of Roma and the possible problems and solutions to the social and labour-market conditions, and to determine the goals and the necessary intervention policies. The social inclusion policy is intended to soften and decrease the social gap between the poor and the majority of the society and to reduce the proportion of people living in social exclusion, and to mitigate the social backwardness of disadvantaged children among the Roma and non-Roma population.

The Hungarian government strategy for the Roma emphasises the importance of strengthening the practice-oriented education, experimental vocational learning, and promoting the development of extracurricular programs, sport activities. It encourages the coordination of intervention projects in the sports disciplines programs. The Hungarian

Government counts on the financial support of the EU-funds in its social inclusion strategy, although the national budget supports the targeted areas, as well (Hungarian Government, National Roma Integration Strategies). In Hungary, the National Roma Self-Government, based on a framework agreement with the Hungarian Government has undertaken the task of involving the Roma and disadvantaged young people into the sports, by promoting sport integration programs.



*3. picture Press Conference of NRSG sport integration project, 2013 Szolnok, Hungary (NRSG)*

The NRSG has carried out a research project on the sporting habits, health awareness, parental background and education in the concerning subject matter. The implementation of the survey results in the projects ensure their efficiency and effectiveness (Faragó B. Development Strategy of Roma sport, 2014).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The guidelines of the European Union and of the European Commission provide the recommendations to the Member States to make the initial steps that would promote national integration measures. The analysis of the documents issued by the Council of Europe and by the European Union call the attention of the Member States upon the promotion of social inclusion, programmes as well as financing.

The actions initiated in Hungary has launched the sports integration projects on the basis of the Roma strategy, which were implemented by the National Roma Self-Government (NRSG) in 2013. The NRSG proved to be the first to create sports integration project in Hungary, which through the boxing skills develops the abilities of young Roma and disadvantaged people and helps them throughout the process of fulfilling their integration (Faragó B. With Sport for the integration, 2014).

The empirical research assured the basis for the development of the project. The survey examines the recreational habits, motivational factors, study levels among the Roma minority and disadvantaged young people. The questionnaire implies

items on the regular sport activities of young people aged between 9-18 years, on the opportunities for breakout of the Roma through sports, and on the importance of the effect of role models for them.

The sports integration projects simultaneously deal with the development of education and sports and are significantly correlating to each other. The target group has been surveyed by questionnaire, which included open and closed questions, mostly aiming at young Roma and disadvantaged people. The sample item number has been 1216 completed questionnaires from the whole territory of the country, from 16 schools, who study at the National Roma Self-Government own-maintained special schools, as well as the regions of the country carried out a survey in which the Roma are present in greater numbers. (Hablicsek L.2007) The data were analysed using the SPSS. The first part of our questionnaire provides the general information, which forms the demographic part of the analysis.

On the basis of these data we can define:

- The proportion of the sexes
- The regional distribution of the respondents
- Parents' social status, education, occupation,
- The existence of behavioural problems among young people,
- The level of progress, advancement in their studies.

We can obtain basic information looking at these data connections, which provides the basis for the research on the following:

- The distribution of gender,
- The learning levels of and patterns of Conduct
- The parents' education, which refers to the socialization media of the families,
- Parents' occupation, which will provide guidance on the background of the future career opportunities and life perspectives and goals of young people

We have been given answers after evaluating the results of the survey and analysing the diverse family and social backgrounds, comparing it with the sporting and learning behavioural patterns and responses of the target group.

## RESULTS

The member states of the European Union had submitted their national Roma integration strategies until March 2012. The EU separated 26, 5 billion for disadvantaged Roma communities in its budgetary period of 2007-2013. The efforts of the member states aimed at promoting social integration proved to be less effective, because from the amount provided only little proportion have been implemented in the targeted area. The measures made in the four priority area including education, employment, healthcare and housing issues have not been effective enough, further actions are required. Sport, as a tool of integration promotes social inclusion linked to the target areas. Education and healthcare are directly involved, employment and housing matters imply indirect positive economic impacts as a result of the efficiency of sports integration programs. The main component of the sports integration projects is to foster the development of educational

achievements and sporty and healthy lifestyle habits. In formal education, the mentor teachers help the young people to advance in their studies, while in boxing or in sports, the sport professionals apply and hand over the specific know-how on the nature of sport. This program applies a complex development in the field of physical and mental health. The main aspect among the expected results of the integration program is to facilitate social inclusion through sport and to promote the equality of opportunities. More broadly, it tends to contribute to the self-establishment of young people. The aim of the EU is to develop the education of Roma children, to improve their health conditions, which may lead to the rise of their standards of living. The complex development programmes through sports and the effects of sport integration and health education programs in schools, influence and considerably affect the EU's objectives in a positive way. Although, through the assessment of national strategies has turned out that most of the member states have not provided sufficient budgetary funds for the development of Roma integration. The EU Member States wish to use primarily EU funds for this task (Official statement of the European Council, National Strategy of Roma integration).

The key point of national Roma integration strategies is the manner and amount of the distribution of national resources (The European Social Foundation separate for the program of disadvantages people, between marginalized Roma group, 9,6 billion Euro in 2007-2013 and 172 million Euro for the Programs of Roma integration). The EU examines the efficiency of use of EU funds and also evaluates how the future distribution of funds would be carried out on the basis of their prior efficacy.

The Hungarian Secretary of State for Social Inclusion project provided 10 million HUF for financing sports integration project of the NRSZ. The NRSZ has elaborated a sports development strategy for young Roma and disadvantaged people living in Hungary, promoting their integration through sports (Faragó B. Development Strategy of Roma sport, 2014). The long-term results of the NRSZ sports integration's program include the existence of profound knowledge, the gradual increase of task load-awareness, open-minded personality, realistic optimism and self-esteem, developed moral judgment, the need for further education, keen on learning about the culture, socially acceptable behaviour and the drop in deviancies. The short-term outcomes involve: development in school performance, evolution of the healthy lifestyle, increasing physical activity, creation of social network.

## THE RESULTS OF THE SPORTS INTEGRATION'S RESEARCH

30% of respondents consider themselves as Roma (Roma, Hungarian Roma), 64.4% as Hungarians, 6.7% or more can be classified in the category of others or non-respondents. The students were classified on the basis of ethnicity defined by the ethnic definition of the respondents. Most of the questionnaires were completed in schools with students mostly from the Roma minority, which shows that not everyone recognizes his/her Roma origin.



The survey respondents were more active in sports, twice as many as non-sporting. According to the gender distribution boys are more active in sports than girls, while in the girls' case the proportion of athletes to non-athletes almost equals, at the boys' case 58.4% of them do sports, while among the girls the figure is only 41.6%. Interestingly, the ethnic distribution and sporting activities correlate among those who considered themselves of Hungarian ethnicity. Among the ethnic Roma there can be shown a larger difference between athletes and non-athletes. The proportion of Hungarian athletes is of 67.6%, while the Hungarian non-athletes share of 32.4%. This ratio between the Roma respondents is of 54.4% athletes, while non-athletes is of 45.6%.

- *diagram Sporting activities among nationalities*

According to the survey, in the sport activities most of the respondents prefer the sport activity itself in 42%, but also many of them opted for the good company in 36.3%, and 33.9% of them mentioned the joy of fight.

In the question tackling with the importance of sport large proportion of the responses among both ethnicities voted in favour of sports. When comparing the ethnicity groups, it clearly outlines that the great proportion of Hungarians identified the importance of sports in a ratio of 94.5-5.5%, while the Roma young people indicated the seriousness of sports activity in a bit lower level of 90-10%.

- *diagram Importance of sport among the nationalities*

Team sports are to be more preferred among young people in the survey. The personal relationships among young people are predominantly positive, usually do not constitute problems. One key element of the sports integration project meant to be the mentoring program, which provides support to educational advancement and careers. Based on the necessary requisite of this program, we had posed our question, which showed that the youngsters do need and welcome our mentoring programme in any form (teacher, parents).

On the basis of surveys, parents are usually permissive, rigour does not appear in learning and in sports. Their expectations from their children are not strong.

- *diagram Permissive parents*

Health awareness, reinforcing the important aspects of a healthy lifestyle are important factors in raising life quality. Young people consider themselves, basically healthy, which suggests that they have a positive attitude and according to their own values their quality of life are appropriate.

## DISCUSSION

Regulation 1303/2013 / EU of the European Parliament (Advice of the European Council (2013. December 9.) Government program for the Roma integration) and of the European Council directs the Member States to implement integrated policy measures focusing primarily on the poor, and the most affected population strata, who are mainly composed

of Roma communities, set to address their social exclusion, and to reduce its negative impacts in a unique way (Regulation of European Parliament and Council. 2013. December 17. 1303/2013/EU).

The EU member states should accomplish effective measures to ensure the equal treatment of Roma boys and girls providing full and unrestrained access to majority high-quality education and promoting the goal that all Roma students should attend and finish at least the compulsory education (United Nations Child right Convention 28. clause). A key element of the EU's ambitions and efforts is the promotion of health awareness raising issues, as well (Advice of the European Council (2013. December 9.) Government program for the Roma integration, 2013/C 378/01).

The EU policy directives have been incorporated into the Hungarian political system, with the significant assistance of the National Roma Self-Government. Sport integration programs and researches are based on the minority political aspirations which rely primarily on the two key elements of the EU Roma integration strategy recommendations, which from one hand directly affect the health awareness-raising, health promotion and education, and on the other hand, indirectly influence two other important factors, namely, employment and housing (Advice of the European Council (2013. December 9.) Government program for the Roma integration, 2013/C 378/01).

The sports integration project elaborated by the NRSRG, along the EU recommendations on Roma integration development phase, are meant to deal with and improve the elements that promote social inclusion, such as the development of educational achievement, health awareness, development of healthy lifestyle, improvement of living standards, and prevention activities. The program offers the Roma and the disadvantaged young people the chance of educational career model with mentoring support, and also the provision to sports activities, development of socialization area, more learning opportunities and access to funds.

A great percentage of the survey respondents consider sporting as an important thing, which shows that they prefer the sport possibilities, so it constitute a motivating factor for integration through sport. The answers highlight that no other factors influence the sport activities but the movement itself, the joy to do sport is their primary motivation, the sports activities and the games as such. Most of the participants in the research prefer the team sports, so when developing the sports programmes, we should focus on is observation.

Analysing the motivational factors, from the survey reveal that which are those sports activities, that stimulate the young people in choosing and taking part in various sports in the sport in the long run. Successful career and life is one of the motivating factors that can be echoed and emphasized to assist the young athlete to find their ways and chances in their civilian life ad to become valuable members of society. From the answers can be seen that the opportunities offered by the sports have a sort of facilitating effect on young people, moreover the role models, as sports people would represent a bright future option as well as a more stable standard of living.

According to the questions referring to the social relations

and social cooperation, these issues are mostly solved among the respondents of the survey. The social relations bear significant effects upon the process of socialization and integration. The parental permissiveness and lack of rigor in learning and sports allow us to conclude that there isn't strong parental expectation from the children, which would however strengthen their motivation. Concerning the assessment of the health status, the research results prove to be inconsistent with the previous surveys, although the current research concerns the evaluation of those involved in the survey and do not rely on previous examinations. It can also imply the fact that main age of the surveyed group is 13 years, when those typical complaints and problems have not occurred, which may be inherently characteristic features later on.

## CONCLUSION

The EU Roma integration strategy focuses on four key areas, namely, education, employment, healthcare and the national approaches to housing in the member states. The EU aims to ensure that all Roma children should complete at least the primary school and should receive quality education (National Roma integrations strategy until 2020, European Council, COM (2011) 173). Regarding the EU framework on increasing the educational attainment of children, Hungary has implemented sufficient measures to fulfil the prerequisites of the EU (The first step in the National Roma Strategy among the advice of the EU), which aims to reduce the employment gap between the Roma people and the rest of the population (The situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States; Survey results at a glance. Fundamental Rights Agency, World Bank, United Nations Development Programme, 2012). One of the major objectives of the EU is to reduce disparities in the health status between the Roma and majority population in the focus areas. Hungary lays special interest and emphasis on the healthcare issue of children and women. The sport integrations project and research linked to EU's minority policy aspirations all take into account the following recommendations of the EU:

The Member States through an integrated approach in the field of healthcare, should take as priority task, for example:

- *to focus on Roma people, especially on women and children with preventive health measures*
- *to improve the living conditions of the Roma people, particularly in segregated settlements.*

The European Committee after reviewing the National Roma Integration Strategies considers that the Member States have made efforts to promote a comprehensive approach to Roma integration. However, this is not sufficient to achieve the goals effectively. The EU expects stronger measures from its member states in the social integration of the Roma people, with transparent and separated budget funds and evaluation systems designated to these projects. According to the EU proposal, the member states should allocate sufficient resources for their national Roma integration strategies, so as to reflect their special ambitions in this matter. These measures, as part of the integrated strategy may be also financially supplemented from EU funds, as well. The cohesion policy recommended by

the EU Commission has separated minimum resources for the purposes of social inclusion and tackling poverty and it also facilitates the allocation and utilisation of these funds, all the same time it proposes their strict coordination and integration, particularly for the most marginalized and badly affected communities – as being priority projects targeting integration and sharing the pre-requisites of using the structural funds particularly to projects linked to Roma integration strategies in accordance with the European framework system (European Council discriminations documents). We can expand and develop our Roma integration strategy in Hungary relying on national and EU funds, as part of the Hungarian minority policy; based on the “good practice” of the NRSRG and the efficient application of the survey results carried out by the Roma research-centre, the inauguration of a nation-wide sports integration project could be initiated in Hungary.

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