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## **Social exclusion of Roma in Bulgaria**

**(Extended abstract)**

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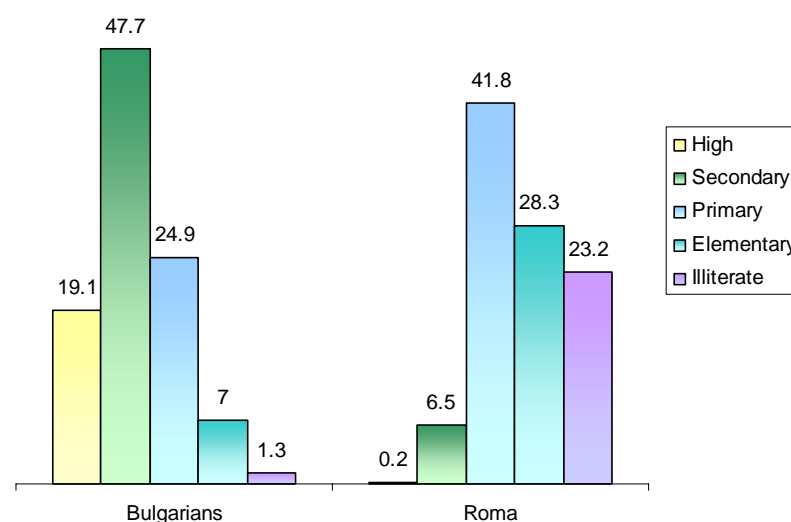
The concept of social exclusion relates to a process of pushing certain individuals or social groups to the margins of society. It usually includes a circle of disadvantages: low education level and poor skills; low incomes, poverty, and unemployment; poor housing, bad living conditions and residing at segregated neighbourhoods with high crime rates. However, the concept applies not only to the social class stratification but in high degree to the disabled people; to subcultural, ethnic and racial minorities; to women and to the elderly. Therefore, the recent paper is going to discuss the issue not only as a simple economic or social class phenomenon but also as a consequence of the symbolic social field.

The enlargement of the European Union sharply puts the question about the regional disproportions and unequal opportunities as far as in the new member states there are poverty pockets and marginalized social groups with little access to power and decision-making bodies and little chance of influencing decisions or policies that affect them, as well as a little chance of bettering their standard of living. Series of World Bank surveys and publications (Ringold 2000, Revenga et al. 2002, and Ringold et al. 2005) discover that Roma are the main poverty risk group in most of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. They are poorer than the other traditional ethnical groups, more likely to fall into poverty, and more likely to remain poor. In some cases, Roma poverty rates are more than 10 times that of non-Roma. A survey in 2001 found that nearly 80 percent of Roma in Bulgaria were living on less than \$4.30 per day while only about 13% of the Ethnic Bulgarians live below that poverty line. The analyses of UNDP (Ivanov et al. 2003, Ivanov et al. 2006) point out that together with poverty, both social distances and spatial segregation increase the risk of social exclusion and pitch Roma in the trap of dependency.

The Roma people, most commonly known as Gypsies, are "a transborder ethnic minority who lives throughout Europe. According to different expert assessments, the size of the Roma population in the world varies between 8 and 10 million, about 70 per cent of whom live in Central and Eastern Europe. The size of the Roma population in Bulgaria is 370,908 according to the 2001 census, or 4.7 per cent of the total population. Some human rights organizations reject the official statistics and estimate the number of Roma in the country to be about 800,000, or 10 per cent of the population" (Pamporov 2007a). The reason for this rather overestimation is the fact that Roma population in Bulgaria differs in its demographic pattern from the majority of the population. Roma have earlier age of first birth, earlier age of so called "traditional marriage" (e.g. cohabitation); higher proportion of births out of wedlock, relatively higher TFR (Pamporov 2006).

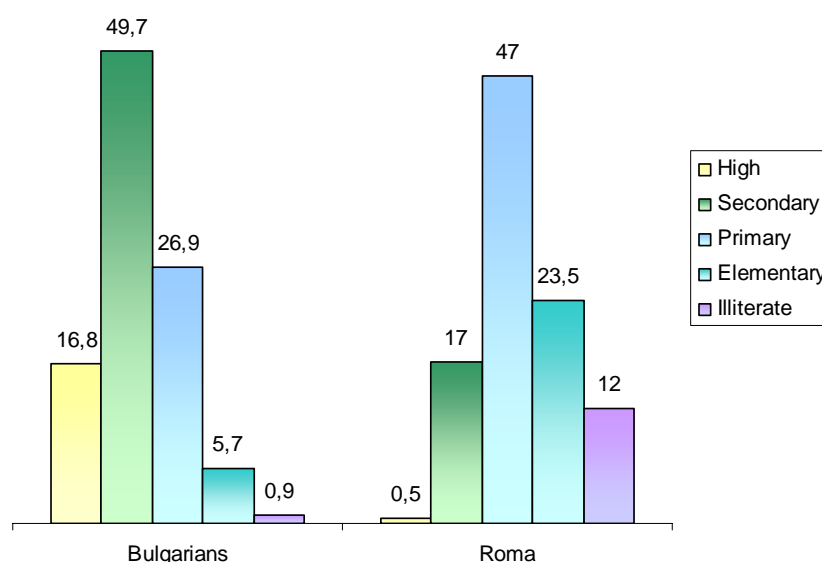
The Open Society Institute – Sofia was currently funding two national representative surveys. The Bulgarian Youth 2007 survey [BYS] – done together with the Ivan Hadzhijiski Institute – has a national representative sample of 1100 individuals, and three additional boosters: 1) youth (age 15-30) – 655 people, 2) Turks – 223, 3) Roma – 235. BYS allows us to update the social distance measurements. The Multiple Household Survey [MHHS] has a national representative sample of 4300 households, providing information about 12200 household members. Using the MHHS, we can estimate the education level, the incomes, and the living conditions. The present paper discusses some data of both surveys.

The population and dwellings census data from 2001 indicates very different educational status of majority (Bulgarians) and Roma people in Bulgaria, as it is shown on Graph 1. While Bulgarians distributes mainly in the two upper educational groups, more then half of the Roma people have lower then primary education.



**Graph 1. Level of education of Bulgarians and Roma (over age 20)**  
*Source: Tomova 2005: 162*

The MHHS confirms this negative situation. Although the proportion of Roma with high, secondary and primary education looks higher then the one of the census (Graph 2), their educational profile is still very different and they are not sufficiently included in the educational level. Moreover, a study of school dropouts discovers that there is a certain pattern of dropping out of education among the Roma, which is predetermined and prepared during the years of socialism, when a number of variants of Gypsy Teaching Institutions were created, which stimulated segregation and led to ethnical divisions in education (Milenkova 2006).



**Graph 2. Level of education of Bulgarians and Roma (over age 18)**

Source: Multiple Household Survey – Bulgaria, 2007 (preliminary data).  
World Bank & Open Society Institute – Sofia

A survey on Roma population, conducted in 2003 (table 1), reports that only 31.8% of the Romany households rely on salary income and only 29.1% on retirement, which are the main income sources about the majority of the population. At the same time, it indicates that Romany households are much more dependant on the social payments: about 44.1% rely on different poverty allowances, 57.3% on child allowance and 20.7% on unemployment benefits.

**Table 1. Sources of household income (in % \*)**

Source	Non-Roma	Roma
Salary	69,3	31,8
Pension	44,3	29,1
Child allowance	36,4	57,3
Unemployment benefits	9,1	20,7
Poverty allowances	11,4	44,1
Domestic production	29,5	6,1
Other sources	9,1	19,8

Source: Partners-Bulgaria Foundation, 2004

However, the MHHS goes above that income structure, estimating the relative significance of the source for the household income – that is the proportion of the amount of a particular source in the total amount of the household income. In contrast to the initial research hypothesis, the survey data (table 2) indicate no general difference in the significance of the income sources. The main difference seems to be in the proportions salary (employee) – business (employer). At the same time in most of the

\* The total percentage exceeds 100 due to a multiple response option in the questionnaire

cases, “business” means to be an entrepreneur running a sole proprietorship i.e. not separate from the individual and, in some cases, its nuclear family and therefore just replacing the salary. I would like to stress the fact that the sum of salary and business in both Roma and non-Roma cases is about the same – respectively 27.1% and 28.2%. It is important to say that Romany household income proportions do not differ from the non-Roma ones in respect of the social pensions, benefits and allowances. Nevertheless, Roma population is almost excluded from the sources, which demand land ownership – such as renting land and agricultural crop.

**Table 2. Relative proportion of income sources (in %)**

Source of income	Non-Roma	Roma
<b>Age pension</b>	39,8	48,1
<b>Salary</b>	15,9	25,2
<b>Business</b>	12,3	1,9
<b>Other</b>	7,4	4,7
<b>Social pension</b>	7,2	6,4
<b>Migrant workers</b>	6,6	5,1
<b>Crop</b>	5,0	2,1
<b>Child allowances</b>	3,1	3,9
<b>Poverty allowances</b>	1,3	1,7
<b>Rented land</b>	0,9	0,0
<b>Unemployment benefits</b>	0,7	0,9

*Source: Multiple Household Survey – Bulgaria, 2007 (preliminary data).  
World Bank & Open Society Institute – Sofia*

Moreover, not only the land possession but also the housing and living conditions of Roma in general are sharply worse than the housing and living conditions of non-Roma population in Bulgaria (table 3). The poor housing is because most of the Roma live in segregated neighbourhoods – usually in the periphery of a given settlement or in a slum out of planning. Roma was forced out to settle there on several waves in 1960s and 1970s due to the socialist spatial planning and in the early 1990s due to the underground economic interests (Pamporov 2006: 279-292)

**Table 3. Living conditions (in %)**

Conditions	Non-Roma	Roma
<b>No water supply</b>	1.4	11.5
<b>No hot water</b>	13.0	62.8
<b>No sewerage</b>	28,4	53,5
<b>No toilet</b>	13,6	27,4
<b>No bathroom</b>	12,8	55,3
<b>Leaking roof, damp walls</b>	13,2	44,2
<b>Broken window frames</b>	7,4	38,5
<b>No electric/gas stove</b>	14.6	50.0
<b>No refrigerator</b>	5.3	36.3
<b>No washing machine</b>	18.0	54.4

*Source: Multiple Household Survey – Bulgaria, 2007 (preliminary data).  
World Bank & Open Society Institute – Sofia*

The spatial segregation of Roma relates closely to the existing attitudes of maintaining social distance toward them on the base of the ethnic prejudices. Using a slightly modified Bogardus' Scale, several national representative surveys (1992, 1994, 1997, [1999, 2000 and 2005]<sup>†</sup>) measure high level of social distance and indicate decreasing tolerance toward Roma in Bulgaria. According to the rates achieved in 1997: about 40 % do not want to live in one and the same country with Roma; about 50 % do not want to live in one and the same settlement; about 60% do not want Roma as co-workers in the same occupation; 68% do not want to live with Roma in the same neighbourhood; 73% do not want to have Roma as a close personal friends; and 94% are not agreed to get married for a Romany person. The article discusses data from BYS and points out some differences in the "youths-adults" dispositions, gender perspective, educational level and the place of residence.

At first glance, the outcomes of the BYS shows three main findings, if one take a look at the generational comparison of the attitudes.

- Bulgarian Youths are much more socially distanced from Turks and Roma people than the elders are;
- There is a greater social distance between young Turks and Roma people if one compares with the older Turks. At the same time, the Turkish youths are less socially distanced from Bulgarians than Turks from the upper age groups are;
- Roma youths repeat the model of the previous generation as regards the social distance between them and Bulgarians. As far as Turks are concerned, Roma youths are far less distanced from them than the older Roma are.

Considering these results, the Roma seem to be in a situation of an increasing ethnic isolation, which to a great extent explains their spatial segregation as well. However, the results can be misleading if we do not take into account the dynamic development of the ethnic distance since the beginning of the transition period. When compared with data from previous research (Tables 4 and 5), the BYS shows that there has been a general tendency towards shortening the social distance between Bulgarians and Roma people in the past fifteen years. However, it should be noted that young Bulgarians rather tend to avoid mixed marriages with Roma and the close relationship varies. Therefore, as far as the youth's attitudes are concerns, there is not an established trend for the time being.

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<sup>†</sup> Includes and is representative only about the population age 18-30

**Table 4. Ethnic distance between Bulgarians and the Roma ethnic group, 1992 – 2007**

<i>"Would you agree to:"</i> ( «yes» response in %)	Year of survey			
	1992	1994	1997	2007
<b>Marry Roma?</b>	5	5	6	5
<b>Have Roma as close friends?</b>	30	30	27	33
<b>Have Roma neighbours?</b>	52	40	32	41
<b>Have Roma colleagues?</b>	55	51	40	55
<b>Have Roma townsmen?</b>	61	61	50	68
<b>Have Roma compatriots?</b>	66	66	60	76

Source: Pamporov (2007b)

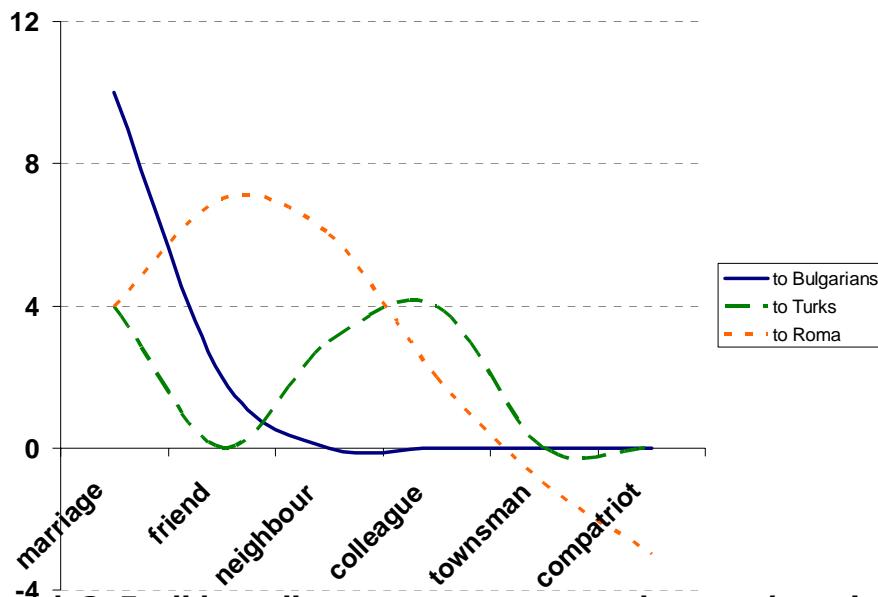
**Table 5. Ethnic distance between youth Bulgarians and the Roma ethnic group, 1999-2007 r.**

<i>"Would you agree to:"</i> ( «yes» response in %)	Year of survey			
	1999	2000	2005	2007
<b>Marry Roma?</b>	5	5	3	4
<b>Have Roma as close friends?</b>	22	29	18	30
<b>Have Roma neighbours?</b>	26	22	34	29
<b>Have Roma colleagues?</b>	29	28	42	41
<b>Have Roma townsmen?</b>	43	32	60	59
<b>Have Roma compatriots?</b>	50	41	71	66

Source: Pamporov (2007b)

Apart from ethnicity and age group, the data from the survey allows the ethnic distance to be studied from the angle of other social characteristics of the respondents. Although the data cannot be discussed in detail because of the length of the article, the method of the unidimensional Euclidean distance outlines the most essential similarities and differences in the trends of maintaining social distance towards the Roma people.

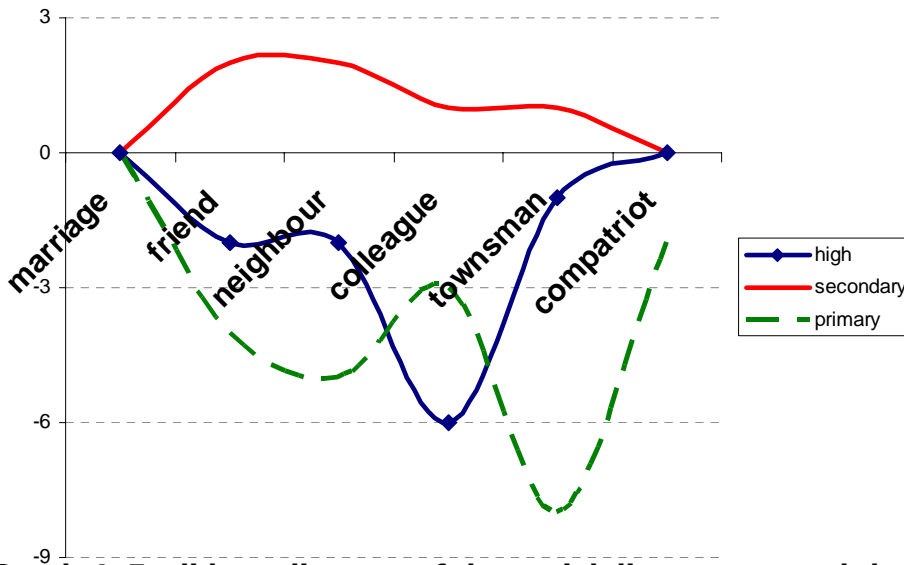
Graph 3 illustrates male and female differences in keeping a particular social distance as regards the three major ethnic groups in Bulgaria. There is a tendency for the two genders to react in a different way towards the different ethnic groups. Non-Bulgarian men tend to get married to Bulgarian women ten times as much as non-Bulgarian women marry Bulgarian men. Marriage is the greatest difference in men and women's ethnic distance as regards Bulgarian ethnic group. Because of the group's high social prestige and its full inclusion into the categories from "neighbour" to "compatriot", there are no differences as far as gender is concerned. Men are more likely to have a spouse, neighbour or a colleague from the Turkish ethnic group, whereas there is no social distance as for the other three categories "friend", "townsmen" and "compatriot". The tendency towards the Roma is extremely interesting. Men are much more willing to let them closer in the following social distance: "marriage", "friendship" and "neighbour". On the other hand, women are more likely to accept them as "townsmen".



**Graph 3. Euclidean distance among men and women's social distance towards the three main ethnic groups**

Source: Bulgarian Youth Survey, 2007. Open Society Institute – Sofia & Ivan Hadzhiski Institute

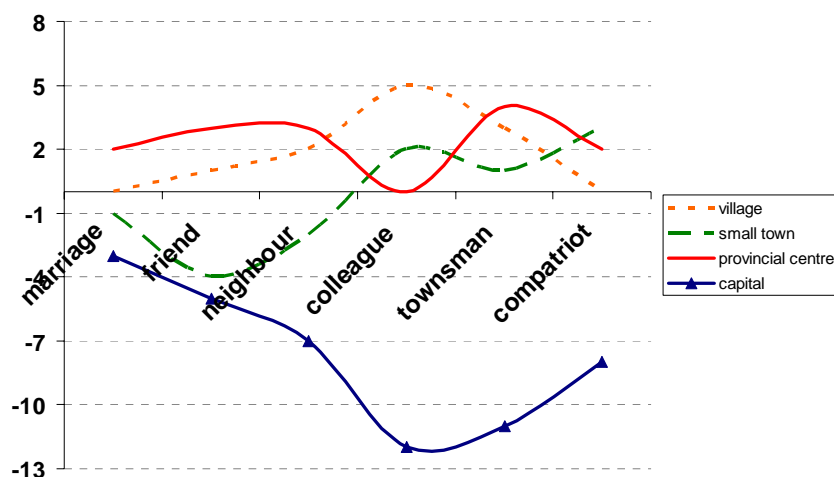
Just like the data about gender, the tendency to keep a social distance because of the other person's ethnic "otherness" considerably varies as for the different education levels. It can be observed that non-Roma people with education lower than primary in the social distance towards the Roma are included in the categories from "neighbour" to "compatriot" to a much greater extent. However, the number of non-Roma respondents with education lower than primary who are likely to accept marriage or friendship with Roma people is smaller by four points. If we ignore the data about the respondents with education lower than primary (graph 4), the difference in the social distance towards the Roma and the other three educational groups is much more noticeable. The respondents with secondary education are much more tolerant than those who have primary or higher education. As for the respondents with higher education, there is an extreme negative difference in the tendency to work in the same place. This can be explained with the fact that this educational group consists mostly of Bulgarians. Moreover, the Roma are usually associated with non-prestigious and low-status occupations. (Pamporov 2006: 231-279). It is also important to note that the respondents with primary education demonstrate the least desire both for a close (in the same neighbourhood) and for a more distanced co-existence (in the same town/village).



**Graph 4. Euclidean distance of the social distance toward the Roma by the non-Roma respondents' level of education (excluding the data about the respondents with education lower than primary)**

Source: Bulgarian Youth Survey, 2007. Open Society Institute – Sofia & Ivan Hadzhijiski Institute

As for the place where the respondents live (graph 5), non-Roma people residents of the capital have an extremely negative attitude towards the Roma, especially when it comes down to living in one and the same neighbourhood, having the same occupation and in general being townsmen. In contrast, the citizens of smaller towns are much more tolerant as far as the far distances are concerned (colleague – compatriot). Yet, they tend to keep a greater distance as for the categories from "marriage" to "neighbourhood". The residents of the province centres and the villages are least socially distanced from the Roma. Even the situation in the villages mirrors the one in Sofia.



**Graph 5. Euclidean distance of the social distance towards the Roma according to non-Roma respondents' place of residence**

Source: Bulgarian Youth Survey, 2007. Open Society Institute – Sofia & Ivan Hadzhijiski Institute

The Bogardus' Social Distance Scale provides an opportunity to examine ethnic prejudice by measuring people's tendency to keep a social distance and therefore here it is regarded as an additional tool of measuring social exclusion. However, the scale does not clarify the reasons why it is so or, in other words, the ethnic stereotypes behind the social distance remain hidden, as well as the direction of influence "exclusion-prejudice" does so. A future research may focus on the extent to which prejudice is engrained and this will help to explain adequately the differences and the variations in ethnic distance as far as age, gender, education and residents' place of living is concerned.

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