DIVERSE REALITIES OF ROMA LABOUR MIGRATION FROM SLOVAKIA

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INTRODUCTION

In both Central Europe as a whole and in Slovakia, Roma represent a large ethnic minority, characterised by very poor working and living conditions and poor employment outcomes (Kahanec 2014; Kureková 2015; Filčák & Stager 2014). Roma belong to vulnerable groups subject to discrimination by the majority, low skills, and poor access to education, which reinforce the vicious cycle of poverty. Despite various efforts, the improvements in their inclusion have so far been very limited (Gerbery & Filčák 2014; Škobla & Filčák 2016). Given their poor living situation and socio-economic exclusion, Roma seek work abroad to solve their living situation and sustain their families, a process documented by some research to date (Kahanec & Kureková 2016; Castañeda 2015).

Interestingly, the topic of Roma migration remains understudied. At the same time, different evidence implies that it is a growing survival strategy within these communities, and actual migration rates of Roma might exceed those of the majority population (Kahanec & Kureková 2016). In the past, it was mostly connoted with poverty migration, begging, and asylum-seeking efforts in the richer Western economies (Tóth 2010; Nacu 2011; Castle-Kaněrová 2002), while more recent studies evidence the practice of labour migration and labour migration motives among Roma (Kahanec & Kureková 2016; Grill 2011, 2012, 2017). Furthermore, our initial literature review revealed that data about the magnitude and composition of Roma migration from Slovakia (but also from CEE countries generally) are scarce and have not been systematically analysed and presented. It is difficult to find systematic evidence about relatively straightforward issues, such as the magnitude of Roma migration, destination countries, forms of employment, and characteristics of Roma migrants. Second, little has been understood about decision-making dynamics within Roma families and various factors that can influence Roma migration at the family level. Past research shows that Roma families tend to

align with a stricter division in social roles and that in Roma communities, family plays a key source of security and support (Liegéois 1994; Žilová & Jankovičová 2009).

Several scholars have argued that, in the case of Roma, the boundary between voluntary and forced migration, or different modes of migration, is blurred, and it is inappropriate to think of them as purely economic migrants (Castañeda 2015). Furthermore, as argued by the critique of categorical fetishism: "Dominant categories fail to capture adequately the complex relationship between political, social and economic drivers of migration or their shifting significance for individuals over time and space" (Crawley & Skleparis 2018: 48). While we acknowledge such a fluid nature of migration, in this work we nevertheless seek to enrich primarily our understanding of different aspects of *Roma labour migration*, defined as migration for work purposes to gain income (legally or illegally). This motivation is driven by the fact that we view labour market integration as the most powerful tool of broader social and economic inclusion, and we find the labour migration perspective to be a useful angle to better and more broadly grasp barriers and facilitators of integration. Moreover, a better understanding of labour migration characteristics, outcomes, and decisions related to (non-) migration can bring useful insights for social work practices and public policies to improve Roma social and economic integration in Slovakia and beyond.

In this work, we seek to contribute to these gaps by gathering information about migration trends and characteristics of Roma labour migration from Slovakia in the recent past, as well as to provide a deeper understanding of how gender roles might be shaping migration characteristics through shaping selectivity of Roma migrants, decision-making about migration at the family level, and choices related to labour migration abroad. We combine available international and national data sources to present general patterns of Roma labour mobility with a qualitative research design. The latter is built on semi-structured interviews with social workers covering different localities in Slovakia conducted in 2022, many of whom are Roma. We rely foremost on their professional knowledge and experience in accessing the labour market opportunities and labour migration motives and characteristics in the specific localities. At the same time, we carefully decipher any power hierarchies that might be present in their interpretations. Thus, the findings are presented as their opinions and corroborated with the evidence gathered from the secondary literature and available data sources.

We demonstrate that there are many forms of labour migration among Slovak Roma and that despite poor working and living conditions, most

Roma do not migrate (cf. Grill 2012). We show a great diversity in labour migration(s) of Roma from the Slovak Republic abroad and demonstrate how the differences in the position of Roma men and women in the labour market and their social roles affect decision-making about labour migration. In the second part, we discuss the situation of Roma in the Slovak labour market, highlighting vast inequalities in labour market outcomes compared to the majority population. In the third part, we review existing knowledge about Roma work migration, including motives to seek work abroad. We then present findings from our fieldwork where we systematically map the labour market situation of Roma and migration characteristics as shared with us by our social workers respondents. The final part summarises our research findings and proposes areas for further research.

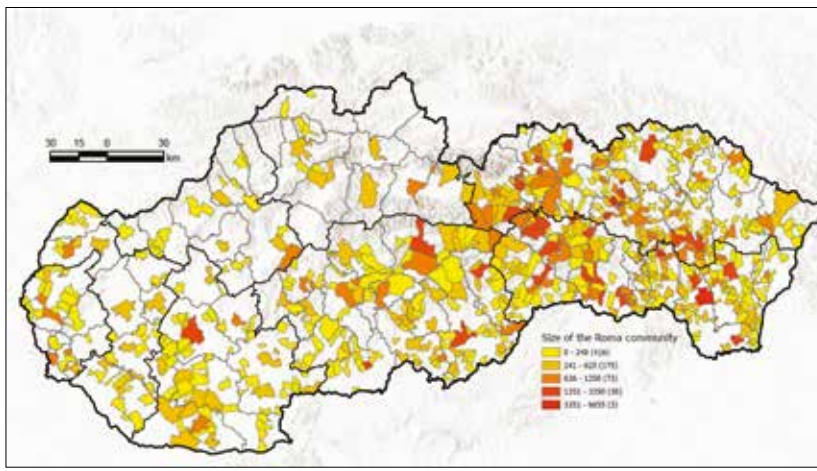
ROMA IN THE SLOVAK SOCIETY AND LABOUR MARKET

Roma in Slovakia represent the largest ethnic minority, but different data sources report different numbers of Roma living in the country. According to the 2021 Census, there are about 156,000 people who report Roma ethnicity as their first (67,179) or second ethnicity (88,985) (SODB 2021). This is a significant rise compared to the 2011 Census, when about 106,000 or 1.96% of the total population declared Roma ethnicity (the double ethnicity option was unavailable) (SODB 2011). However, in the case of the use of the Romani language, in the 2021 census, only 100,526 (1.84%) people considered the Romani language as their native language, which is a lower number than a decade ago when 122,518 (2.27%) declared it as such (SODB 2011; SODB 2021). In comparison, the EU SILC MRC (marginalised Roma communities) 2018 survey[1] showed that up to 74% of the interviewed Roma in Slovakia use the Romani language (Grauzelová & Markovič 2020).

1 The EU SILC – MRC (marginalised Roma communities) survey is implemented in cooperation between the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic/Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities and the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic in approximately 1,000 households in specially selected localities in the territory of the Slovak Republic. The sample is selected to be representative of marginalised Roma communities.

The Atlas of Roma Communities[2] is another commonly used reference to indicate the size and some characteristics of Roma communities (ÚSVRK 2019). The Atlas is an authoritative source used by academics in research and public administration in implementing targeted interventions among Roma. The Atlas was last updated by visiting municipalities across Slovakia in 2019 when approximately 440,000 Roma were estimated to live in Slovakia, making up about 8% of the country's total population (ÚSVRK 2019). This percentage is one of the highest rates in the European Union. According to Marcinčin and Marcinčinová (2014), Roma live in up to 40% of the Slovak municipalities. Map 1 shows that the highest concentration of Roma minority is located mainly in the eastern and southern regions of the country.

Map 1: Absolute number of Roma in municipalities in Slovakia in 2019.



(Source: Slavíková & Mlynár 2022 based on the Atlas of Roma Communities 2019.)
Notes: The number in parentheses is the number of municipalities that are in the given category.

2 Atlas of Roma Communities serves as a primary source of data for state policies in the field of integration of Roma communities and is considered an authoritative source of information about the living conditions and infrastructure of municipalities with the presence of Roma communities. It was first created in 2004 and updated in 2013 and in 2019. The latest 2019 Atlas contains data on 825 municipalities and 1102 so-called concentrations within them. It deals with topics such as the number of communities, types of dwellings, access to water supply, sewage, heating, coverage by field social work, and more. More information and dataset is available here: https://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/atlas-romskych-komunit/atlas-romskych-komunit-2019/ (accessed 3 July 2023).

Roma are economically and socially the most disadvantaged group not only in Slovakia but also in Europe (Kahanec 2014). They face multiple disadvantages in the labour market due to ethnic discrimination, low levels of education, lack of skills, poor health, and segregation. They have been facing social and economic exclusion, starting from marginalisation in access to education (Messing 2017) through very limited support in the form of social or labour market policies (Hellebrandt et al. 2020; Kureková 2015; Kureková et al. 2022). While the efforts to assist Roma have been supported mainly through European funds, improvements in social and labour market integration outcomes remain limited.

To date, Roma in Slovakia have significantly higher unemployment rates than the majority population and often fall into inactivity. Unemployment among Roma is up to 25% higher than among the non-Roma living in their vicinity (FRA 2011). Unemployment is at a high level for both Roma men (41%) and women (34%), and Roma women face even more limited options in the labour market as they frequently fulfil domestic tasks or other unpaid work (FRA 2011). Moreover, although the Slovak Roma attain the highest educational levels relative to Roma minorities living in other CEE countries, they nonetheless suffer the highest unemployment rates, relatively speaking (Messing 2014).

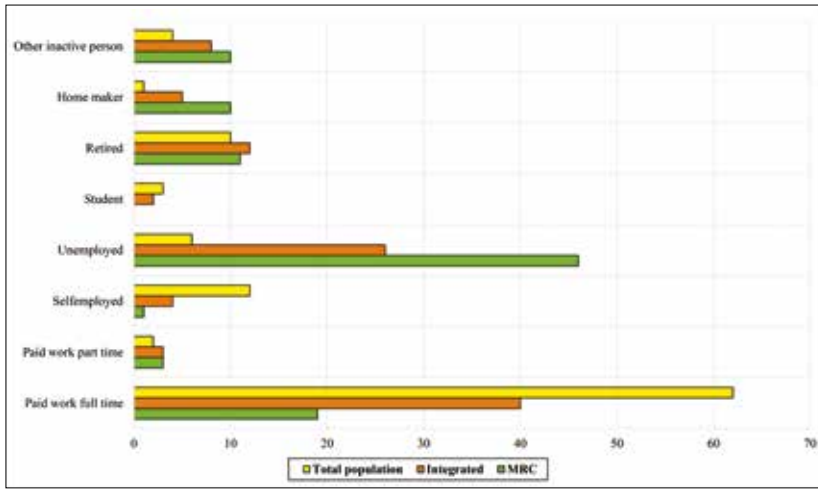
These general patterns are confirmed by a more recent source (Grauzelová & Markovič 2020). According to EU SILC MRC 2018 data, only 15.5% of Roma are employed, of which almost 70% are men. These numbers suggest a strict definition of gender roles within the household and point to other barriers that Roma women face. "Women are represented to a much greater extent among persons in the household and inactive persons. The reasons are, among other things, an unfavourable housing situation, which makes it difficult to take care of the household, or low involvement of children in preschool education in kindergartens" (Grauzelová & Markovič 2020: 14). Full-time work is at a low level for both genders. According to the survey, only 38% of households live on work income, and 62% are dependent on social income (Grauzelová & Markovič 2020). Roma work experience is further characterised by non-formal and unstable work, often ad hoc (FRA 2011; O'Higgins 2012).

In Figure 1, we have shown the latest data from the EU SILC MRC 2020 survey, where the current job situation is compared across three categories (MRC, integrated Roma, and total population[3]). Up to 62% of the total population is employed full-time ; the share falls to only 40% for integrated Roma while

3 MRC for the purposes of EU SILC MRC detection means an environment of geographically limited localities that are almost exclusively inhabited by Roma. Integrated Roma are those living dispersed among majority population and not in segregated settlements.

looms at 19% in MRC. In the case of unemployment, the situation is reversed, where the total population forms the smallest share (6%) and the MRC the highest (46%). In addition, both integrated Roma and MRC have a higher share in inactive person categories. Some members of the Roma community are at home and are not actively looking for employment, which might be due to being discouraged and demotivated.

Figure 1: Current job situation of 16-year-old+ of Roma (integrated and MRC) and total population in 2020 in Slovakia (in %).



(Source: Slavíková & Mlynár 2022 based on the Atlas of Roma Communities 2019.)
Notes: The number in parentheses is the number of municipalities that are in the given category.

Low education level is one of the causes of high unemployment (Messing 2014; Brožovičová et al. 2013). According to FRA (2011), up to 58% of Roma in Slovakia left school before age 16. Of this number, up to 17% have not completed primary education (FRA 2011). This is confirmed by newer data, which show that only about 58% of the Roma community attend school at the age of 16, paralleled by 41% no longer attending school at that age, signalling alarming school drop-out rates among Roma (Grauzelová & Markovič 2020). Discrimination during the job application further contributes to poor labour market attachment. A study by IFP (2014) found that 40.3% of non-Roma job applicants were invited to an interview by companies or employment agencies compared to only 17.7% of Roma.

SLOVAK ROMA AS MIGRANTS: REVIEW OF (SCARCE) EVIDENCE

Currently, there is no comprehensive data on Roma migration from Slovakia. Only a few studies and datasets show us a partial insight into the characteristics of Roma migration. There are a few exceptions that focus on Roma (labour) migration from Slovakia (Vašečka & Vašečka 2003; Vidra 2013; Grill 2015, 2018), while most papers address migration of Roma within a group of countries that are compared and/or evaluated with each other, or study labour migration from Slovakia generally.

To the latter group belongs the work of Kahanec and Kureková (2016), who analysed determinants of labour migration and characteristics of migrants leaving Slovakia after 2004 based on the Labour Force Survey (LFS)[4] data. While they study general patterns, they also look at the ethnicity of a migrant and find that being a young (15–24 years of age) Roma increases the probability of migrating abroad by a staggering 36% compared to a young person of Slovak nationality. We are unaware of any other source that estimates the number of Roma migrants from Slovakia on a representative dataset. However, based on this study, we anticipate that the propensity to migrate is higher among Roma than among the majority population, which already represents a high number of (temporary) emigrants annually (Kureková 2018).

Regarding the destination country Roma choose, the evidence is again fairly scarce. The study by Cherkezova and Tomova (2013) shows that the most preferred countries for Roma in CEE countries in 2011 were Germany and the UK, but Slovak Roma preferred the UK most (43%). The UK and Ireland, together with the neighbouring countries the Czech Republic and Austria, belong to the most frequent destinations of Slovak migrants generally, and we anticipate that Roma migrants generally choose similar destinations (Kahanec & Kureková 2016; Bahna 2011).

We did not find research on whether individuals or Roma families migrate abroad, but based on the age composition, we can conclude that family migration is happening. Based on the FRA 2011, we found that up to 53% of Roma aged 0–15 and 35% aged 16–29 migrated and were still currently in the country where they had migrated. From these data, we can assume that young families with children left to live abroad. This source also indicated that in the case of Roma, permanent migration (migration in order to stay in the destination country) is more frequent than among the majority, where temporary labour mobility (they

4 The EU-LFS is a representative household survey providing quarterly results on labour participation of people aged 15 and over and on people outside the labour force (Eurostat 2023).

do not intend to stay in the country permanently) prevails. While in the aspect of the type of migration, we see this difference, some similarities in migration between Roma and majority populations permeate. For example, the profile of Roma migrants is based on a young person (up to 29 years old) targeting the UK, which resembles some characteristics of non-Roma migration following Slovakia's EU accession in 2004 (Kahanec & Kureková 2016).

In terms of job search abroad, several works indicate that Roma are looking for a job with the help of relatives abroad (Šatara & Havírová 2022; Hajská 2017; Castle-Kaněrová 2002). However, some also mention social workers (Hájska 2017) or employment agencies (Martin et al. 2017). The work that Roma take abroad is described as physically difficult, including working in meat factories and other types of manual work (Vidra 2013; Grill 2011; Martin et al. 2017).

The available literature is richer in terms of discussing motivations to migrate for work abroad and the main push or pull factors. First, unemployment is generally taken as the main factor that motivates labour migration for the majority population (Kureková 2018) as well as Roma (Matlovič 2005; Vašečka & Vašečka 2003). Cherkezova and Tomova (2013) investigated the labour migration of Roma to France and found that among the main reasons are a better chance of finding a job (19%) and better working conditions (16%). However, Grill (2018) argues that because of the unfavourable situation regarding skills or language, Roma abroad are often forced to accept a disadvantageous job offer. Labour migration "can turn into an unfavorable experience, in which migrants not only do not earn, but many return home even poorer. They have to borrow part of it on the way back" (Grill 2018: 3).

Second, discrimination is often mentioned as one of the factors that push the Roma minority away or also pull them to a country with a lower level of discrimination (Cherkezova & Tomova 2013; Vidra 2013; Grill 2018). In fact, several studies mapping the integration of Roma migrants in receiving countries show that they also continue to face various malpractices abroad (Sime et al. 2018). "Based on data from the European Social Survey, it is clear that the "Roma" are the most rejected minority in the European public opinion, while the label "migrant" is also stigmatised in many countries connotations" (Magazzini & Piemontese 2019: 27). Roma migrants have to deal with the fact that they represent the intersection of two vulnerabilities and two overlapping elements of stigmatisation (Slavíková & Mlynár 2022).

Next, the objective of a better life can be understood from different perspectives as a motivation for migration. Vašečka and Vašečka (2003) frame a better life as maintaining the same standard of living as it was in Slovakia before 1990 (before the fall of socialism). In his research, Grill (2012) pointed

out the concept of "going up" when migration is taken instead as a means to ensure a better future and is, thus, a goal they want to achieve to be better off. Cherkezova and Tomova (2013) pointed to a better life from the point of view of better employment conditions (more job opportunities, higher wages) or social conditions (health and social care and political situation).

Finally, we would like to consider the role of the Roma family in shaping migration motivation and migration outcomes. Family may shape migration motivations in several facets. First, migration is seen as ensuring a better life for the family left behind in Slovakia (Grill 2011), and this is used as a justification for risky and uncertain outcomes of migration abroad. Second, children can be among the factors that can influence the migration decisions of the family, but they do not have a word in decision-making. It is mainly influenced by two factors: the age of the children and parental consideration of the best interests of their children (Bushin 2008). Third, in terms of a wider family, relatives abroad might incentivise further migration. Communities play an essential role for new migrants in the country of destination and help them create social ties with Roma in the local community (Tileaga et al. 2019).

Based on gender roles, the Roma family and community is still defined as very patriarchal, with complementary social roles of both genders (Liégeois 1994; Žilová & Jankovičová 2009). The man within the family and community is considered to have a higher status than the woman, which is reflected in the fact that a man does not often remain at home; he spends most of his time at work, in discussions with friends, maintaining social contacts, and taking care of social matters (Liegéois 1994). According to Žilová and Jankovičová (2009), the position of a woman within the family can grow or decline due to factors such as age. While the cited research is older, the complementary data about the labour market attest to a more traditional division of tasks within Roma families; Romani women take up a specific social role as they often terminate studies early, they quickly enter into partnerships and become mothers at an early, often immature age. However, given broader emancipation trends across society, we will enquire to what extent the patriarchal model of the family is changing and how this might play out in the decision-making about migration among Roma and in migration outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

In the following section, we complement secondary evidence with data gathered with semi-structured interviews conducted with experts from the field, mainly

social workers who regularly interact with respective local Roma communities. Most were Roma and worked in the localities as part of state-funded projects or in the NGO sector. This unique approach in migration studies cannot provide a representative view. However, we believe that through a relatively comprehensive coverage of localities and a systematic interview protocol, this approach helps us to illustrate trends and key features of Roma migration(s) in Slovakia on a fairly sizeable territory (Map 2). We rely foremost on the social workers´ professional knowledge and experience in the specific localities while we carefully decipher any power hierarchies that might have shaped their interpretations of realities. Thus, the findings are presented as their opinions and corroborated with the evidence summoned based on secondary literature and available data sources.

Their long-term fieldwork experience in the Roma community from a social or labour market perspective was a key criterion for the selection of the interviewees. We also applied the snowball method to reach a wider network of social workers. Social workers, most of whom were themselves Roma, know the conditions of local communities well and thus could provide insights into various issues related to labour migration as well as social roles and dynamics within families on a general level for the respective community.

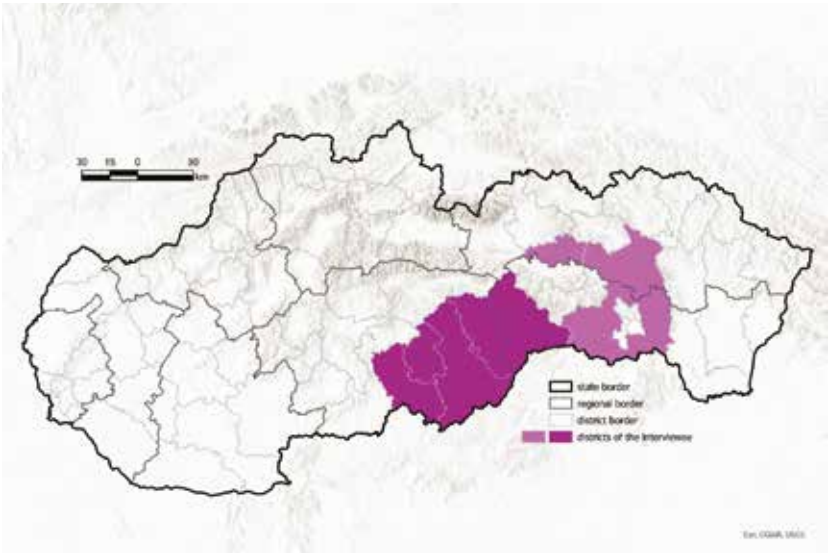
The interviews took place in the form of a semi-structured interview online or in person from May to December 2022, and nine experts were interviewed. The interviews were then transcribed and analysed based on coding. The main themes of discussion included: a) employment, b) labour migration, c) family, and d) decision-making. We achieved a reasonably broad coverage of locations across eastern (4 respondents) and central-southern Slovakia (5 respondents), reflected in Map 2. The interviews with social workers also served as the first stage of a larger research project about Roma labour migration. In contrast, interviews with Roma families took place in the latter stage. It is beyond the scope of this study to present these findings.

Description of localities

We present the key characteristics of the localities covered at the district level for anonymisation purposes in Table 1. Districts are near each other but show fairly diverse levels of unemployment, ranging from 7.9% to 19% average unemployment rate in a given district (*okres*). This discrepancy is reflected in the share of the population receiving benefits in material need, which social assistance provides to individuals and families facing poverty. Finally, Roma localities covered embody different types of settlements regarding their territorial placement: MRC localities covered can be found inside, outside (segregated),

or on the border of the given municipality to which they belong. Altogether, the estimated number of Roma living in the localities where the respondents were based ranges from 8,265 to 9,700, with a mix of smaller and larger Roma communities. Next, we present empirical evidence organised in three themes systematically enquired in the interviews: Roma in the labour market; labour migration trends and characteristics; and decision-making about migration in view of social and gender roles.

Map 2: Locations in Slovakia where the social work respondents worked.



(Source: Authors, based on Geoportál: Basic database for geographic information system, 2021.)

DIVERSE REALITIES OF ROMA MIGRATION FROM SLOVAKIA

Roma in the Slovak labour market

Our fieldwork covered social workers' personal views about the labour market situation in respective communities and implications on the opportunities and constraints for Roma labour market placement. Our respondents confirmed findings previously presented by other researchers along a number of dimensions (see Table 2 for an overview).

Table 1: Characteristics of MRC localities in the municipalities covered in the interviews.

Codes	Location within the country	Estimated population of marginalised Roma community (inhabitants)	Number of settlements	Location of settlements in the municipality	Unemployment rate in district (%) (October 2022)	Social benefits* (%) (December 2022)
E1	East	401–500	1	on the border	7.9	3.6
E2	East	251–300	2	outside	9.4	4.9
E3	East	3401–3500	3	on the border	9.7	5.6
		701–800	1	on the border	9.7	5.6
E4	East	401–500	1	on the border	7.9	3.6
S1	South	501–600	4	inside, on the border	10.1	5.6
S2	South	1405–1700	5	outside, inside	19.0	10.8
		202–400	2	inside	11.6	5.0
		501–600	4	inside, outside	10.1	5.7
S3	South	202–300	2	on the border	16.2	10.8
S4	South	202–400	2	inside	11.6	4.7
		501–600	4	inside, outside	10.1	5.6
S5	South	202–400	2	inside	11.6	4.7

(Source: Authors, based on the Atlas of Roma Communities 2019 (USVRK, 2019) and Central Labour Office of the Slovak Republic (2022) (unemployment rate and social benefits)).
*Notes: * – Benefit in Material Need, share of recipient population*

First, a lack of skills and poor education pose significant barriers to labour market integration. Qualifications and skills were mentioned in two related ways: as a work habit and formal education. Many Roma are long-term unemployed and have lost their work habits, making it difficult to re-learn them, which might deter employers. Due to low formal education combined with demonstrated high employer expectations in Slovakia (see, e.g. Beblavý et al. 2016), they find it difficult to place themselves in the labour market. Many marginalised Roma might not be aware of the full consequences of dropping out of school.

> When they have been at the employment office for ten years, it is difficult for them to come from one day to the next to a job and become active because they will have lost those work habits in those ten years. (Interviewee S1)

> Since they only finished elementary school, they don't know the consequences that await them in the future. (Interviewee E2)

> In the case of Roma, we are talking about primary education or incomplete primary education. (Interviewee S3)

The low level of education as a key barrier has been described in previous research, alluding to the difficult situation in the national and regional labour market(s) (Messing 2017; Kahanec & Kureková 2016; Castañeda 2015). However, respondents also contextualised the situation of Roma into a broader labour market situation, pointing out that in regions with high levels of unemployment, the majority (non-Roma) population also faces difficulties in finding a decent job. The lack of work in the regions can also significantly influence the decision to move to another city or abroad.

> When unemployment in Slovakia was somewhere around 10%, in the Prešov region, it was 17%. (Interviewee E1)

> Finding a job in this region is difficult even for an ordinary [non-Roma] person. (Interviewee S3)

> When they are not successful in Slovakia, they go abroad. There, they find employment and have a job. (Interviewee E3)

Further aspects posing barriers, especially to women, are the need to care for small children and also the problem of poor language skills as some communities continue to use predominantly Roma language or might be part of the Roma-Hungarian minority. Some respondents problematised the general belief

that Roma are lazy and avoid employment, as the following quote illustrates: "It's a big myth that Roma don't want to work. That's not true" (Interviewee S2).

A lack of job offers was commonly mentioned as a structural barrier to the employment of low-skilled Roma. Such looseness of the labour market is further reflected in the character of employment, as most employment of Roma is on temporary job contracts or through non-formal channels. Some job offers are very poorly paid and have bad working conditions, but sometimes, they have no other option than to accept that job. "One only goes there [local factory] as a punishment, but they hire anyone there" (Interviewee S2).

However, we also noted some variations between the two localities. The lack of employment options as a barrier were mentioned less frequently in the eastern Slovakia with relatively better labor market conditions (i.e. lower unemployment rate) than in the southern part. (Table 2). Nevertheless, across localities, the respondents confirmed that Roma work mainly in physically demanding jobs (Vidra 2013; Grill 2015). Only one respondent mentioned to us that retail work is becoming more and more common. Ethnic discrimination also significantly affects job searches, where Roma often face rejection based on their ethnicity.

> Some [employers] also set their own requirements that they do not take people from the Roma community. (Interviewee S1)

> When they come for the interview, suddenly, the job is not available anymore. (Interviewee E2)

Based on previous research (IFP 2014), discrimination has already proven to be a significant barrier and has been identified as an important impetus for going abroad, where Roma experience less discrimination (Cherkezova & Tomova 2013; Vidra 2013; Grill 2017). On the other hand, some respondents acknowledged that past bad experiences of employing Roma might deter businesses from hiring fellow community members.

> They worked for a short time and then took sick leave or did not come to work at all and did not let anyone know. All this is lingering because a group of people showed employers that they are uncooperative, irresponsible, they lack work habits, went to work for a month and then took sick leave, and all this casts a bad light on the whole community among employers. (Interviewee S1)

Table 2: Labour market situation in the localities according to the respondents.

Codes	Reasons for unemployment	Type of work available to Roma in/near the locality				Work
		Formal	Non-formal	Temporary	Permanent	
E1	Qualification, locality	Less	Mostly	Mostly	Less	Construction, agriculture, forestry
E2	Qualification, discrimination, language	Less	Mostly	Mostly	Less	Factories
E3	Qualification, discrimination	Mostly	Less	Mostly	Less	Construction, factories, automotive industry
E4	Lack of job offers, discrimination	Less	Mostly	Mostly	Less	Factories, construction, forestry
S1	Lack of job offers, discrimination, qualification	Same	Same	Mostly	Less	Factories, cleaning
S2	Lack of job offers, discrimination, qualification	Less	Mostly	Mostly	Less	Factories, forestry
S3	Qualification, unemployment, generation problem	Same	Same	Mostly	Less	Factories, retail
S4	Qualification, unemployment, childcare	Same	Same	Mostly	Less	Factories, forestry
S5	Lack of job offers, qualification	Mostly	Less	Mostly	Less	Factories

Notes: Formal – with an employment contract; Non-formal – without a contract.

Migration trends, characteristics and experiences

The next set of questions we asked our respondents focused on systematically mapping key trends and characteristics of Roma migrations in their respective localities. We asked them to estimate the magnitude and main motivations and describe key features of labour mobility of the Roma from the areas that their jobs cover, such as destinations, the main form of migration (individual or family), duration, or key characteristics of migrants in terms of age, wealth, or status in the community, character of work, and job search strategies of migration. Table 3 summarises the respondents' answers to these more factual questions about the main characteristics of migration. We prompted respondents to evaluate – to the extent possible – general trends, characteristics, changes, or specificities in the locality in which they work. We observe several similarities but also differences across the communities in a few aspects of labour migration.

First, it is evident that the estimated shares of Roma migration are fairly large. In some localities, up to 40% of (mostly male) Roma were estimated to have worked abroad. However, the intensity appears to also vary whereas it seems higher in the locations with relatively lower unemployment. This difference might be linked to the fact that it is seldom the poorest (financially or in terms of social capital) who migrate, as migration requires non-negligible (financial, human) resources to happen. Thus, localities with relatively better social situations also enable more migration to improve the living standards of respective families. The countries where Roma migrate to are rather diverse, with the Czech Republic, Austria, and the United Kingdom mentioned the most frequently. Several respondents confirmed that migration to the UK significantly weakened after Brexit and was more pronounced in the past.

Second, both types – individual and family migration – take place in the south and east of Slovakia, but each location is also specific. Migration of families from southern Slovakia is much less frequent than migration from eastern Slovakia. This tendency can be linked to the selection of destination countries, as Roma from the east tend to migrate to more distant countries. Moreover, we identified a relatively new trend of female migration from the south whereby women prefer short-term pendulum labour mobility, which allows them to stay connected to their families. This specifically relates to a fortnightly migration of caretakers to neighbouring Austria, which has also become very popular among the mature non-Roma women (Bahna & Sekulová 2019). Despite the existence of female migration, male migration is still dominant.

Regarding a typical migrant profile, it follows from these interviews that a typical Roma migrant is a man who is from the Roma middle class, is

approximately 20–30 years old, finds a job in a factory or on a construction site, and was helped in a job search by his relatives or family abroad. From the point of view of the type of employment, when abroad, Roma seem to take up similar manual jobs in industry and construction as they would (mostly non-formally) at home. Whether he brings his family abroad depends mainly on the help of friends and family. Employment agencies are also used in the employment search. They are mainly used under specific conditions when women go abroad to care for the elderly. However, in some cases, women will help each other and arrange a place without the employment agency.

In the case of individual migration, gender plays a particular role. Men usually migrate individually to prepare grounds for their families to follow. "The wife is unhappy because the man is not at home. Financially, he also doesn't have to send the money, so they want to unite the family and therefore look for a way to get the wife to England" (Interviewee E1).

A woman's motivation is to earn money; she does not intend to move the whole family abroad. However, this is enabled by thecaretaker migration model to the neighbouring countries. "It is advantageous for them because they are away for two weeks and at home for two weeks, and she earns so much that it is enough for her for the two weeks that she is at home" (Interviewee S4).

Based on previous research data (FRA 2011), we were able to assume that family migration is ongoing. However, our interviews helped to understand better the conditions and context of a particular type of migration. Temporary migration is more typical with respect to individual migration, and as it turns into permanent, the family members also migrate (and vice versa).

Third, regarding migration motivations, there are several reasons for the Roma community to leave their home country, but the main reason is a desire for better living situations in the destination country (Cherkezova & Tomova 2013; Vidra 2013). On the one hand, this entails the necessity to earn more for the same type of work, which in some situations can be the only way to gain income for the family. Relatedly, migration is often an escape from discrimination and its consequences, which they experience in Slovakia either at work or during the job search.

> There you are not just a Roma with a shovel, but a person who is really needed. (Interviewee S4)

> They felt that they were acknowledged. (Interviewee E2)

> There, when they come to work, there he is a human being. Nobody cares that he is a Roma. (Interviewee S3)

Table 3: Characteristics of labour migration of Roma from Slovakia in the localities according to the respondents.

Codes	How many?	Who?		Where?	Motivation	Status		Profile				
	%	Individual	Family			Temporary	Permanent	M/F	Wealthier/Poorer	Age	Work	Search
E1	approx. 40%	shorter distance	longer distance	CZ, UK, BE, SE	Better life	Mostly	Less	M	Wealthier (individual), poorer (migration networks)	30–40	Construction	networks
E2	only young people	Less	Mostly	UK, CA	Better life	Less	Family	M	Wealthier	20–30	Factories	networks
E3	10–20%	Less	Mostly	UK, IE, CZ	Better life, migration networks	Individual	Family	M	Wealthier	Young families	Construction, factories	networks
E4	approx. 10%	Mostly	Less	UK, AU, CZ	Discrimination, lack of job offers	Mostly	Less	M	Wealthier (individual), poorer (migration networks)	Younger	Construction	networks
S1	few families	Mostly	Less	UK, IE, AT, DE, CH	Better life, migration networks	Individual	Family	M (F)	Wealthier (individual), poorer (social benefits)	20–30	Factories (F – carers for elderly)	networks; labour agencies (mainly F)
S2	25% men in productive age	Mostly	Less	HU, CZ, AU, DE	Finance, less discrimination	Mostly	Less	M (F)	Wealthier and poorer	15–64	Construction, factories (F – carers for elderly)	networks; labour agencies (mainly F)
S3	increased during COVID-19 pandemic	Mostly	Less	HU, AU, DE, CH	Finance, less discrimination	Individual	Family	M (F)	Wealthier and poorer	Young families	Factories (F – carers for elderly)	networks; labour agencies (mainly F)
S4	approx. 8 families	Mostly	Less	CZ, DE, AU	Positive example	Individual	First man and then family	M (F)	Wealthier and poorer	-	Factories (F – carers for elderly)	networks; labour agencies (mainly F)
S5	approx. 40%	Mostly	Less	IT, CZ, AU	Finance, lack of job offers	Individual	Family	M (F)	Wealthier and poorer	Younger	Construction (F – carers for elderly	networks; labour agencies (mainly F)

Country codes: CZ – Czech Republic, UK – United Kingdom, BE – Belgium, SE – Sweden, CA – Canada, IE – Ireland, AU – Austria, DE – Germany, CH – Switzerland, HU – Hungary, IT – Italy; M – Male, F – Female.

Another motivation for migration is a positive example presented as someone they know who migrated abroad and is now doing better, whether someone within the community or within the family. In these cases, they are even directly connected to the view of a better life. "They left and found out that the situation in England or Ireland is much better than it is here in Slovakia, and it is as if their family relatives or some friends inspired them that you have a better life there, a better opportunity, more employability, the life is better there than here in Slovakia" (Interviewee S1).

As the network theory argues, it is easier to travel abroad if one already has family, friends, or relatives there, and Roma families are an example of this. In most cases, they migrate because they have someone they know abroad to help them with work and accommodation. In this case, the exception is women who migrate through employment agencies as caretakers.

Decision-making about migration in Roma families: Gender roles

Past research proposed a strict separation of gender roles within Roma families. While our research implies that the current situation is gradually changing, this aspect of interviews also revealed the greatest dissimilarities across the respondents, often aligned by the gender of the respondent.

"No husband would let his wife go abroad" (Interviewee E1). This quote by a male respondent agrees with the traditional view on the Roma family presented in some literature (Liegéois 1994; Žilová & Jankovičová 2009), which argues that within the Roma family, the man is the head of the family and also the decision-making authority (Boyd & Grieco 2003). In eastern Slovakia, male authority is deeply rooted, but the situation seems to be different in southern Slovakia. Our research strongly indicates that the situation began to change gradually, and the drift in social roles between men and women within the family might be shifting.

"Ten years ago, it was still unthinkable that a woman from a Roma family would leave and leave the caring of the whole household to a man" (Interviewee S3). Several of our respondents also confirmed that while males might be the primary migrants, dynamics within families are such that both men and women jointly decide about migration. "We are now at a very good level as regards the position of the Roma woman within the family. She has the right to make decisions and to make decisions about herself" (Interviewee S4).

However, there are still examples, mainly in eastern Slovakia, where women have almost no say in decision-making. "Ninety per cent of the time, it is so that the man orders and so it is done" (Interviewee E1). A respondent

described a situation in which there is no discussion between a man and a woman, but discussions take place between men within the broader family (E1). Importantly, when asking the respondents about the aspect of social roles, we also noted different views about the role of females depending on the gender of the respondent. Nevertheless, our research implies a growing diversion from this perception and suggests a gradual balancing of gender roles. This trend, however, may not be generalised throughout Slovakia, and in some places, the perceptions of gender are still very complementary.

CONCLUSION

While migration of Roma has in the past been often viewed in the context of begging and misuse of social rights in the Western European countries, in this work, we portray it in its diverse forms in which labour migration with economic and social motives prevails, looking specifically at Slovakia. We map underlying reasons for migration linked to the social and economic status of Roma in Slovakia. We present the characteristics of Roma migration in Slovakia based on social workers' experiences and in-depth knowledge of the given communities. A limitation of our research is that we only interviewed social workers, so the findings are presented as their perspectives on the situation. In our interpretation of their views, we considered possible power hierarchies, but in most instances, they have shown to be prudent and conscientious evaluators of respective local communities.

Our approach theoretically speaks to the New Economics of Migration theory, which argues that migration is not an individual decision but a collective one (Massey et al. 1993; Stark & Bloom 1985). We bring forward the Roma family to understand how decisions to migrate for work are made and which factors contribute to these decisions within and beyond the family. We argue that Roma labour migration is the prevailing form of mobility for Roma from Slovakia, and in many features, it resembles the migration characteristics of the majority population. We have shown that Roma migration takes many forms, with a growing share of Roma females seeking work abroad.

We confirm that the Roma community in Slovakia faces several obstacles when entering the labour market. Previous research has already presented low education, lack of skills, lack of job opportunities, and discrimination as the key barriers to finding and attaining decent employment (Messing 2017, 2014; Kahanec & Kureková 2016; Castañeda 2015; Brožovičová et al. 2013; IFP 2014), which we further document in the views of our respondents. Regarding

migration motivations, labour migration is presented as improving their living conditions by our respondents and by previous research (Cherkezova & Tomova 2013; Vidra 2013; Vašečka & Vašečka 2003). However, we offer a more nuanced interpretation, showing that two main aspects are hidden within the concept of a better life: income and discrimination. Financial resources from the point of view of a living income or a higher salary are one of the key factors that push Roma abroad. As we know from the available data (IFP 2014), Roma experience discrimination in the labour market in Slovakia, which is one of the factors why they go abroad. Away from Slovakia, they feel more accepted and less subject to discrimination.

Both family migration and individual work migration take place among Roma communities in Slovakia. In the case of individual migration, both men and women migrate, but men still dominate. Family migration seems to dominate mainly from eastern Slovakia to destinations further away and results in permanent migration and settlement abroad. In the framework of the previous research (Liegéois 1994; Žilová & Jankovičová 2009), the status of men and women within the Roma family was strictly separated. However, this status is gradually changing to a stronger position of women within the family, reflected through the lens of migration decision-making and, most importantly, the growing migration of Roma females. This trend is more obvious in southern Slovakia than in eastern Slovakia.

Our work demonstrated a dearth of data mapping Roma migration and revealed both its specificities and similarities with migration patterns among the majority population. We therefore encourage further research into the characteristics and motivations of Roma labour migration. While this research gathered some evidence based on the interviews with social workers, in future research, it is imperative to speak with Roma (migrant) families to validate or expand some preliminary findings presented here, such as those implying changing gender roles reflected in new migration patterns of Roma females. Next, research could also more deeply investigate some of the differences identified between southern and eastern Slovakia in migration characteristics among marginalised Roma communities.

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